

A.M.D.G.

Fire That Kindles Other Fires: Selected Writings

St. Alberto Hurtado, SJ

The Course of Life

Holy Week meditation for youth, written while returning to the United States in 1946, on board a cargo ship.

This 30-day voyage by ship from New York to Valparaiso has been a gift from my heavenly Father. Thanks to the generosity of the Captain, I was given a bench on the Captain's bridge, next to the helmsman where I would be able to work with tranquillity, light, fresh air and a beautiful view... The only distraction has been the sound of voices giving orders with respect to the ship's course. I have learned from the Captain that the helmsman holds our lives in his hands in guiding the ship's course. In navigation, the course of the ship is the most vital element. A pilot is permanently verifying the course, following it step by step on the navigation chart, checking it by calculating the angle of the sun and the horizon; on cloudy days he is restless due to the difficulty of verification. The course is written on a slate in front of the helmsman and he is given orders, each of which he must repeat to assure that these have been understood. "*Starboard, larboard, easy as she goes*", orders once learned, never forgotten.

Each time I climbed to the bridge and saw the work of the helmsman I could not help but reflect on this the most fundamental task of all, steering a course through life.

In New York I saw numerous ships of every kind. What fundamentally differentiates them? The course they will ultimately take. The same ship *Illapel*, while in Valparaiso was headed for New York or Rio de Janeiro; here in New York it is destined for Liverpool or Valparaiso.

It is necessary to appreciate the need to take the course seriously. If the pilot or helmsman of a ship becomes careless, he is fired without pardon for failing to take such a sacred function seriously. And as for our lives, are we fully aware of the course they are taking?

What course is your life taking? If it is necessary to give this more thought, I would beg each one of you to give it the highest consideration because being correct in this regard is tantamount to success; to err is quite simply to fail.

A magnificent ship, the *Queen Elizabeth*, 70,000 tons (while the *Illapel* fully loaded weighs only 8,000). If her beauty tempts me and I board her without taking into account the destination, I run the risk of landing in Manila rather than Valparaiso. And of seeing Filipino faces rather than yours.

How many set out in life without a course and forfeit their lives... wasting them miserably, squandering them senselessly, without benefiting anyone, without happiness for themselves and after a time, face the tragedy of a life without purpose. Some

eventually get back on course; others capsize on the high seas or, having gone astray, die of starvation or end shipwrecked on a lonely shore.

The tragic problem of a lack of direction or course is the most tragic problem of a life. It is responsible for the loss of more lives and for the majority of failures. I think that if moral difficulties were physical reefs and if our conduct were like a ship of iron, no matter how solid the construction, there is little doubt we would have nothing but shipwrecked remains.

If faith helps us set our course and our experience points out the obstacles, let us take them seriously. Grasp the helm firmly and since the waves and currents deflect us from the true course, correct, correct constantly, day and night, get back on course... Not in the direction of the beckoning coastlines but our true course. Ask God for the great grace of being men always on course.

First point: The port of departure. This is the first basic element to be determined. And here I must fasten my soul firmly in the basic fact: God and myself. The first solid fact of all philosophy, of every life system: I come from God, yes. From Him and from Him alone. Nothing is more certain, and upon this fact I will build my life, upon this first fact I will set my course.

And here as always, arises the question: Is this true? Is this a fact? Because religion is founded on facts, not theories.

Take these truths seriously: They must serve as a foundation for my life, to set my course. One is a Christian in so far as he infers and assumes the consequences of the truths he accepts. As a result of this, our faith gives us a sense of courage, serenity and confidence. We do not base our decisions on quibbling or splitting hairs but on a solid truth.

Second point. The port of destination. This is the other point that sets the course. Valparaiso or Liverpool? The airplane carrier *Liberty* left the port of New York together with us... Where are they headed? From the University of Chile or from the factory, where to? The culmination of my life's journey is God.

Third point. The journey. I have both navigation points, both ports. Where must I direct my ship? To the port of destination, along a course which is the will of God. The concrete fulfilment of what God desires. Here lies the greatest wisdom. All the work of a life of wisdom consists in this: in knowing the will of my Lord and Father. One must work to discover this, work seriously, during one's whole life, every day of one's life, Lord, what do you want from me? One must work to fulfil it, to serve Him at every moment. This is my great mission, better than working miracles. God wants us to be saints. This is His will: not mere mediocrities, but saints.

What is the course of my life? The will of God: that I sanctify myself, collaborate with God, and fulfill his plan. Is there anything greater, more worthy, more beautiful, more capable of inspiring? Dropping anchor finally at our destination!

And to arrive safely in port, this is the only suitable course... The others lead to other ports that are not mine. And here is the whole problem of life. To arrive at the port that is the fulfilment of my existence. The person who gets it right, gets it right and the one who doesn't is grossly mistaken though he be a millionaire, a Hitler, a Napoleon or lucky in love; if he fails here, his life is worthless; if he succeeds it means happiness forever

more. So be it!

Where do I come from? Where am I going? What an adventure! What path will I follow? Face the route head-on. The helm firmly in my hands and when the winds become stronger: head for God, and when siren voices call from the coastline: head for God; and when I tire, head for God!

Alone? No. Together with all the crew that God has entrusted me to lead, to nourish and to help cheer along the path. What a wonderful life mine is! How full of meaning. With many paths to heaven. To give to men the most precious of all gifts: God, and to give to God what he loves most, those for whose sake he gave His son: mankind.

Lord, help me to hold tightly to the helm till heaven, and if I am about to let it go, fasten me to my course through the intercession of your holy Mother, Star of the Sea, sweet Virgin Mary.

The Call of Christ

St. Alberto Hurtado's Meditation on the Kingdom, Holy Week retreat for youth, 1946.

Christ came to this world not to do his great work alone but with us, with all of us, to be the head of a great body whose living, active cells we are. We are all called to incorporation in him, this is the fundamental level of Christian life... But for some there are higher calls; a call to surrender oneself to him, to live only for him, to make him the norm of one's intelligence; to consider him in each of one's actions, to follow him in his endeavors, even more, to make one's life Christ's project, Christ's venture. For the seaman, his life is the sea; for the soldier, the army; for the nurse, the hospital; for the farmer, his land; for the generous soul, his life is Christ's venture!

This is the essential part of the call of Christ: Do you wish to consecrate your life to me? The problem is not sin; it is a problem of consecration! Consecration to what? To personal holiness and to the apostolate. Personal holiness or sanctity that is a faithful imitation of the sanctity of Christ.

If he calls you what will you do?... I would like you to think deeply about this because this is what is essential in spiritual retreats. Retreats are a call to our deepest generosity. They do not move us through fear, nor do they try to frighten us. They remind us of the commandments because they can do no less than remind us. The commandments are the foundation, the cement for the whole construction, because we are obliged to obey them by the will of God. But they are little more than the cement and one does not live in the cement, there is little beauty in the cement... Retreats are for souls that wish to go higher, and the higher the better; they are for those who have understood the meaning of Love and that Christianity is love, that the great commandment, par excellence, is that of love.

The proof of faith is love, heroic love and heroism is not of obligation. The priesthood, the missions, works of charity are not of obligation under the pain of sin; nonetheless they

are absolutely necessary for the Church and are works of generosity. The day there are no priests there will be no sacraments, yet the priesthood is not obligatory; the day there are no missionaries, the faith will not advance, yet the missions are not obligatory; the day there is no one to care for the lepers and the poor the distinctive testimony of Christ will disappear, yet these works are not of obligation... The day there are no saints there will be no Church, yet sanctity is not of obligation. What a splendid idea this is! The Church does not live and thrive because of the fulfillment of obligations but because of the generosity of its faithful!

If he calls you what will you tell him? What are you likely to do? Ask, pray to be in the best of dispositions! St. Ignatius asks that the person who enters upon the *Exercises* have great courage and generosity with God, our Lord. That he desire to be stirred and motivated and to surrender himself completely.

Lord, if in this tormented twentieth century that has emerged from such horrendous butchery: concentration camps, deportations, bombings, the search for more terrible weapons to kill even more, the destruction to obtain riches, more industry, more comfort, more honors, less pain; if in this twentieth century world a new generation were to understand its mission and desire to give testimony to Christ, a new generation that believes and is not limited only to shouts of *Christ, conquers, Christ rules, Christ reigns*, phrases that mean little without testimony... Where would we find them? Nowhere else but in the humble, silent offering of their lives to make it possible for Christ to rule in the ways in which he desires to rule: in poverty, meekness, humiliation, in his sufferings, in prayer, in humble and self-sacrificing charity.

If Christ finds this generation. If Christ finds even one... Would you want it to be you? The humblest. The most useless in the eyes of the world could be the most useful in the eyes of God... Lord, I am not worth much... but confused as I am, in fear and trembling I offer you my heart. Our Lord entered Jerusalem on the day of his triumph seated upon an ass and he continues faithful to this practice, he enters the souls of the "donkeys" of good will, poor, meek, and humble. Do you want to be Christ's donkey? Christ does not wish to deceive me, the great venture compels me... It is difficult, very difficult. It is necessary to fight against one's own passions that desire the very opposite of Christ's project. They will not die all at once, forever, but must continue to die a little each day.

It is necessary to struggle against the milieu in which we live: our friends, family, the world, attractions... they will all seem to rise up scandalized before the example, though humble and modest, of those who aspire to point out their errors. If you love me you would want to give me what is really good and take away these ridiculous, old fashioned exaggerations "*that do more harm than good.*" What are these exaggerations for? Why don't you do what the rest do? Struggle against the scandal of others... struggle against the discouragement of the enterprise, the weariness of age, dryness of spirit, tedium, fatigue, monotony... Yes, you have to struggle but I am here. *Have confidence in me, I have overcome the world. My yoke is sweet and my burden light... Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest... He who thirsts let him come to me and drink. Streams of living water will flow from within him unto eternal life.* (Jn 16,33; Mt 11, 30. 29; Jn 7, 37-38.)

I need you... I do not oblige you, but I need you to carry out my plans of love. If you

do not come, a work will remain undone because you and only you can do it. No one can take over this work because each has his part in the good that must be realized. Look at the world; how the fields grow yellow, how much hunger and thirst in the world. Look how they search for me even when they persecute me... There is an ardent tormenting hunger for justice, for honor and respect for the human person; a resolved will to make the world jump if necessary to put an end to the shameful exploitation; there are people among those who call themselves my enemies who practice out of hatred what I teach for love... There is a hunger in many for religion, for the spirit, for confidence for a sense of life.

Difficult? Yes! The world will not understand you... It will ridicule you... It will say these are exaggerations, that you have gone crazy. Many said that Jesus was crazy, they dressed him as a fool, accused him of having a devil... and finally crucified him. And if Jesus were to come today to our earth, I am horrified to think about it, he would not be crucified but shot. If he were to come to Chile... they would incite a rebellion against him. What would they say about him in the press, in the universities? Who would do the talking? God willing we would not form part of the chorus of his accusers, nor of those who would shoot him. Difficult? Yes! But only here will we find life. In the great work of Christ each one of us has his place; different for each, but a place in a plan for sanctity, holiness. In the chain of grace that God destines to goodness. I am called to be a link. I can be this link, I can also refuse; what will I do? The answer: I must raise this problem for my consideration in all its depths and respond in all seriousness.

The response of youth

Many will not have the courage to even raise the problem. It will be beyond their capacities but if they would think rather in the strength of Christ.....? If only they would think that they could also be saints with Christ, depending on his strength rather than taking refuge in the cowardice of mere obligation.

Others will give an alms of "something." Something is better than nothing. But it is not what Christ asks. One mustn't offer "something" else, insisting that it is as good when Christ asks for something better: nothing but the will of God alone.

The real treasures are the generous ones, those who surrender themselves, and to be sure of doing the will of God, "acting against one's sensibilities", they embrace the most difficult in spirit, they ask for it and beg that it will be given them...and they will only abandon that gift of themselves if the Lord shows them their path in other, gentler terrains. But as far as they are concerned, they head right for it!

The Risks of Faith

Retreat meditation: an invitation to follow Christ.

"Are you able to drink of the cup... We are able!" (Mt 20, 22). James and John with noble ambition ask the Lord to be allowed to sit at his side in glory; a sublime ambition, and Jesus responds with the great adventure upon which they will embark, if they truly desire this: You will have to run a tremendous risk to achieve this. Are you able to drink my chalice, and be baptized with the baptism with which I will be baptized? - Yes, we are able! Here we have our duty: to risk ourselves every day

for the sake of eternal life... To risk oneself means to run a risk: a total lack of security! He who wishes to save himself has to risk all. There is no risk when there is no danger or doubt, anxiety or fear. The nobility and excellence of faith, which singles it out from the other virtues, is the greatness of heart it presupposes in the one who dares to risk.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb11,1). The essence of faith is to make present what we do not see; to work in hope for what we await with hope but do not yet possess; to risk all to finally attain it.

The Apostles James and John were not completely aware of all they were proposing but in the depths of their hearts a prophecy relating to their future conduct was being revealed in these words. They surrendered themselves without reserve and were taken hold of and made captive by Someone stronger than themselves. Although they knew little of the extent of their offering, they gave themselves from the heart and were accepted in this spirit: *Are you able to drink... Yes, we are able! You shall indeed drink of my cup and be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized!* (Mt 20,22)

Our Lord acted in the same way with St. Peter: He accepted the offering of his service though he advised Peter of how unaware he was of what he was proposing.

The rich young man who went away sad when Jesus asked him to leave all and follow him, offers us a case of one who does not dare to risk this world for the next, basing his trust on the word of the Lord.

Conclusion: If faith is the essence of the Christian life, it follows that our duty is to risk all that we have on the basis of Christ's word, for the hope of what we do not yet possess; and we must do so in a noble, generous way without levity although we cannot see all that our offering involves, nor what we are to receive, but we are confident that He will be true to His promise, and that we will be given the strength to fulfill our promises and thus abandon all anxiety and concern for the future.

When we consider the consequences, the objections begin to arise.

Many concede to priests the right to preach abstract doctrine but when they discover that they themselves are involved, they begin to search for excuses: they do not see that "this" follows from "that" or else they think that "this is an exaggeration" or "foolishness", that we have forgotten the times we live in, the customs of today's world, etc... With reason it has been said: *"Where there's a will there's a way."* There is not a truth, no matter how resplendent, which a man cannot escape if he closes his eyes; nor is there a duty so urgent, that 10,000 reasons cannot be found to avoid it. Such people are sure that it is an "exaggeration" when one is doing nothing more than applying the evident.

Think about it. What have you sacrificed for the promise of Christ? In each risk something must be sacrificed: we venture our lands for a profit when we have faith in a commercial project. What have we ventured for Christ? What have we given him, confident in his promise? This is the problem: what have we dared to risk?

For example, St. Barnabas had property in Cyprus: he gave it to the poor of Christ. Here we have a sacrifice, he did something he would not have done if the Gospel of Christ were false... And it is clear that if the Gospel of Christ were false (an impossibility) this would have been a bad business deal; it would be like a businessman who failed or one whose ships were sunk at sea.

A man has confidence in another man, he trusts his neighbour, he risks, but Christians do not risk much in virtue of the words of Christ and this is the very thing we should do. Christ warns us to *"Make use of your base wealth to win yourselves friends, who when you leave it behind, will welcome you into eternal habitations"* (Lk 16, 9). This is to say, sacrifice for the future world what those without faith use so badly: *clothe the naked, feed the hungry...*

In the same way, those with potentially successful prospects in this world who abandon them to be closer to Him, to make their lives a sacrifice and an apostolate, are thereby risking all for Christ. Or those others like Daniel or St. Paul who desire perfection, abandon their earthly projects and with dedication and enormous effort live lives illumined only by the life to come. Or another who finds himself surrounded by what the world calls evil and though he trembles he prays: *"Your will be done."* All of them risk what they can in faith.

The acceptance

God hears these and their words are listened to, although they may not know the extent of what they are offering, but God knows that they give what they can and risk a great deal. They are generous hearts like John, James and Peter who often speak a great deal about what they want to do for Christ, they speak sincerely but in ignorance; nonetheless they are heard for their sincerity although with time they will learn the seriousness of their offering. They tell Christ: *"We can"*, and their words are heard in heaven.

This is what happens to us in many things in life. For example in Confirmation, when we renew what was promised in our name at Baptism, we do not know all that we are really proposing but we trust in God and we hope that He will give us the strength to fulfill it. We see this again when people enter religious life, they do not know what they have embarked upon, nor to what extent, nor do they realize how seductive are the worldly things they have left behind.

And in many similar situations a man finds himself choosing to follow a path in the name of religion that might perhaps lead him to martyrdom. The goal of his path remains hidden. He only knows that this is what he must do and he hears a whisper from within that tells him whatever difficulty may arise, God will give sufficient grace to make him equal to the demands of the mission.

His Apostles said: *We can!* and God gave them the capacity to suffer what they suffered: James, the first of the Apostles, pierced through in Jerusalem; John even more, the last to die, years of loneliness, exile and weakness. With reason, John will say at the end of his life: *"Come Lord Jesus!"* (Rev 22,20), like those who are weary of the night and hope for the morning.

We are not content with what we possess; beyond the joys, we aspire to carry the cross so that later we may wear the crown. What are our risks today, based on his Word? Jesus expressly tells us: *"Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life...But many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first."*

He who gives himself grows

Personal reflection written in November of 1947.

You begin by giving yourself. He who gives himself grows. But one must not give oneself to just anything, nor for just any motive but only to what is truly worth the effort: to the poor in their misfortune, to this area in its misery, to the exploited classes, to the truth, to justice, to the emergence of humanity, to a great cause, to the common good of one's nation, of one's group, of all humanity; to Christ who sums up all these causes in himself, who holds them, purifies and elevates them; to the Church, messenger of the light, giver of life, liberator; to God, to God in all plenitude, without reserve because He is the highest good of the person and the Supreme common good of all. Each time I give myself in this way, sacrificing what is mine, forgetting myself, I acquire more value, I am a more fulfilled being.

Look at things on a grand scale, love on a grand scale, think on a grand scale, achieve on a grand scale. When you begin a work you must prepare it patiently. Improvising is generally disastrous. Love to see a work well done, and in order to achieve this, put all the time necessary into the task.

Think and think again. In each thing acquire the sense of what is really essential. There is no time for anything less. Foch used to say: *"When a man of moderate gifts concentrates his energies on one goal, he will achieve it."* Life is too short to lose time in intrigues. Many do not look for the truth nor for the good, but rather for success.

Frequently men are taught *not to do something, not to involve themselves, not to risk*. This is precisely the reverse of life. Each one has only a certain potential for struggle and it must not be wasted in skirmishes.

One must embark on the journey without knowing what ships will be found on the way or what storms will come up... Once the normal precautions have been taken, set out! Learn to love the combat, consider it normal. Don't find it strange, accept it, show courage, don't lose control of yourself; never be unfaithful to the truth and to justice. The weapons of a Christian are not the same as those of the world. Love the struggle, not for itself but for the love of the good, for the love of your brothers who must be liberated.

You must persevere. Many are left wasted after the first battles. Know that ideas walk slowly. Many imagine that because they have found some truth, this will captivate other spirits. They become irritated with delays, with resistance. Resistance is normal, it arises from apathy or from differences of culture or environment. Each one starts out from what they are, from what they have received.

Don't be daunted or irritated by the opposition, this is normal and frequently is correct. Better to be happy that they resist us and dispute with us because in this way our mission penetrates more profoundly, is rectified and enlivens the discussion.

They will tell me: *"Your work is going through a crisis."* But my friend, a work in progress always has elements that are not up to par. A work that endures is always in crisis.

Remain pure, solid, seek only what is true, what is good, what is just. Be simple and take pains to remain simple. Go on believing in the ideal, in justice, in truth, in the good, in the goodness of human hearts. Believe in the resources of the poor. With good faith engage in combat against the powerful. Don't try to deceive nor accept resources that bring corruption.

When the obstacle you face is the opposition of others, the best tactic is often to go on your way without protecting yourself against this opposition. Precious time is wasted in polemics when the only thing that counts is the goal. If the opposition comes from men of good will, from the *saints*, from superiors, I must verify my direction, be sure that I am in step with the Church.

Remember: *"one goes further after one has been tired out."* The great asceticism is not to pause to pick flowers along the way. Suffering, the cross consists above all in persevering in the struggle once begun. This above all is what conforms us to Christ.

There are those who wish to develop themselves without pain. They have not as yet understood what it is to grow... They want to improve themselves through music and song, through study, through pleasure but not through hunger, anxiety, failure and the hard struggles of every day, nor through accepted weakness and incapacity that teaches us to unite ourselves to the power of God; nor through the abandonment of one's own plans to discover the plans of God. Pain of any kind is a benefactor because it teaches me my limitations, it purifies me, instructs me to take my place on the cross of Christ, it obliges me to turn back to God.

In a realistic group of apostles phrases like these are often heard: *"After one hard rock, comes another...."* 90% failure, be glad anyway! Begin by convincing yourself: Failure builds. Joy, peace... That's life... and life is beautiful! Don't stir up a storm, raise your voice or become

indignant and irritable. Go on laughing and boosting everyone's spirits. Above all, persevere in what you are doing. Nothing is ever completed in a month: at the end of ten years the accomplishment is enormous. Every drop counts.

To give myself without cost, without cheating, in all fullness, both to God and to my brothers and God will take me under His protection. He will protect me and I will remain unharmed in the midst of countless difficulties. He will lead me to do His work, the work that really counts. He will take charge of polishing and perfecting me and put me in contact with those who seek Him and whom He animates. When He takes over, He does not let go easily.

To achieve this optimism there is nothing better than the vision of faith. Faith is a light that permeates. The longer the life the stronger the light. It penetrates everything and makes us see all things in light of the essential, the eternal. One who follows the light of faith will never walk in darkness. It has a solution for all problems and, thanks to it, in the midst of the struggle when one can do nothing more under the pressure, like the cork that explodes from the champagne bottle, one escapes upwards and unites with Christ and in him finds peace. Faith makes us see that each drop counts, that the good is contagious and that truth triumphs.

Work at God's Rhythm

Personal reflection written in November of 1947.

When a man leaves the beaten paths, the hackneyed ways of his times, he attacks the established evils; he speaks of revolution, he is considered mad, a lunatic. As though the witness of the Gospel were not madness, as though the Christian were not capable of a great effort to construct, as if we were not *strong in our weakness* (cf. 2 Cor 12,9). We need many "lunatics" like these, strong, constant, animated by an invincible faith.

In the first place, an organized apostolate requires a man surrendered to God, an apostolic soul, completely won over by the desire to communicate with God, to make Christ known; souls capable of self sacrifice, of self forgetfulness, with a spirit of conquest. The rational organization of the apostolate requires precisely that the supra rational be in first place. Be a saint! In short, don't seek support from the resources of human action, but lean on God alone. The rest will follow: do not work like a warrior but as a member of the Mystical Body, in union with others, taking advantage of all the means available so that Christ can grow in others, but taking care that the flame burn brightly in oneself.

It is impossible to be a saint if one is not first a man; I am not saying a genius, but rather an integral man within his proper dimensions. There are few integral men. We teachers do not concern ourselves much about forming them; and few take this goal seriously for themselves.

Man has within himself his light and his strength. He is not the echo of a book, the mirror image of another, the slave of a group. Judge things for yourself; he loves spontaneously, not forcibly, he submits to what is real without constraint and no one is freer than he. If he moves slower than the events around him; if he sees things less significant than they really are; if he chooses to do without the indispensable, he will fail. And we cannot be indifferent in the face of failure because my failure is the failure of the Church and of humanity. God did not create me to seek failure. Only when I have exhausted all available means and only then can I console myself and appeal to resignation. Many work to keep themselves occupied; few do so to build; they are satisfied because they have made an effort. This is not enough. It is necessary to love effectively.

Balance is an indispensable element for a rational task. A balanced man is worth more than

a genius without balance, at least for day-to-day work. Equilibrium is not to be understood as a good mixture of mediocre qualities; but rather harmonious growth that may be proper to a brilliant man, or to a sickly one, or to one with very advanced specialization. This has nothing to do with destroying the union of the powers or gifts he has, but rather going beyond them through firm adherence to truth, to self-fulfillment in God alone, through love.

Christian morality permits the harmonizing and prioritizing of everything, no matter how intelligent, ardent or vigorous one might be. Humility comes to temper success; prudence bridle haste; mercy sweetens authority; equality tempers justice; faith supplements the deficiencies of reason; hope sustains our reasons to survive; sincere charity impedes folding back on itself; the dissatisfaction of human love leaves space for the fraternal love of Christ; sterile evasion is replaced by the aspiration for God that is filled with prayer and insatiable desire. Man cannot become balanced except through a dynamism, through aspiring to the highest values of which he is capable.

The daily rhythm must be harmonized by the balancing of rest, difficult work, and meals, sleep. It is good to remember that in many cases one can rest from one type of work by going on to another, not necessarily by seeking leisure or idleness.

At what pace should one move ahead? Once one has taken the necessary precautions to safeguard one's equilibrium, one must give without measure in order to achieve maximum efficiency and, as much as possible, eliminate human suffering.

One works almost to the limit of one's strength but finds in the totality of the giving and in the intensity of the effort, an inexhaustible energy. Those who give themselves by halves are soon worn out, any effort tires them. Those who have given their all, maintain their pace under the impulse of their profound vitality.

Nevertheless, there is no need to exaggerate and squander one's strength in an excess of conquering tension. The generous man tends to move along too quickly: he would like to restore the good and destroy injustice, but he must contend with the inertia both of men and of things themselves. Spiritually it is about walking in step with God, about taking one's exact place in the plan of God. All effort that goes beyond this is useless, even harmful. Activity is replaced by activism which goes to the head like champagne, aspires to unreachable goals and takes away any time for contemplation; a man ceases to be in charge of his life.

In fragmenting the life of the spirit, one acquires an attitude of extreme tension that denies oneself all rest. But since neither body nor soul is made for this, a lack of equilibrium soon becomes evident, there is a breakdown. It becomes necessary to humbly call a halt, to stop and rest under the trees and enjoy the view; we might say add a fantasy zone to our life.

The danger of excessive action is that of compensation. An exhausted man easily seeks compensation. This moment is all the more dangerous when one has, to some extent, lost self control, the body is tired, the nerves are agitated, the will is irresolute. The greatest stupidities are possible in these moments. One simply has to slow down: restore one's calm among kind friends, recite the rosary mechanically and go to sleep sweetly in the Lord.