

THE HOPE BOOKLETS

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15

**PREPARE ONESELF FOR LIFE BEYOND LIFE
BY CULTIVATING GOOD THOUGHTS**

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C O N T E N T S

1. Thought, as such, is creative
2. How our earthly thoughts create our future afterlife
3. How good religious thoughts open up a journey of elevation for us for the course of life beyond life
4. Faith, prayer and meditation
5. Today our continual bustling is a hindrance to the development of inner life
6. Meditation and intimate listening to God
7. The love of God
8. The love of God stimulates us to collaborate in His creative work
9. The solidarity that unites all humans
10. Love for all creatures
11. Participating in the life of the whole world
12. The need for a gain of consciousness and voluntary work in the whole world to accomplish the right globalization
13. Love for our neighbour and listening to the single individual
14. Knowing the deepest needs of our neighbour and of ourselves
15. Thinking well includes humanism
16. For a culture of thinking well and for a corresponding education
17. Thinking well as preparation for the life beyond life

1. Thought, as such, is creative

Even before *acting* well, we should worry about *thinking* well.

It is quite obvious that a good action originates from good thoughts. However, there is not only this. Thought is already creative in itself.

The mind moulds the matter itself. It is clear that the habit of thinking good quality thoughts ends up by giving a certain expression to the feature's of one's face itself.

A spiritual man will have a spiritual physiognomy, whereas it is likely that an individual confirmed in low thoughts for decades finds himself with a dull, inane countenance, or even with a face of a real imbecile, or a face depicting decidedly delinquent features like that of many identification photos that are kept in police files to record his "old acquaintances".

2. How our earthly thoughts create our future afterlife

I have news to give those who didn't know, which then seems to essentially confirm what the religions have been telling us for thousands of years. This news comes to us from the communications with the afterlife. It can only be received by he who is already somewhat initiated into these phenomenologies, or at least potentially open to them.

He who is refractory to the subject of frontier parapsychology has to be patient, or refrain from reading any further. I feel that I ought to give this discourse the whole breadth that it could take on from all the experimental knowledge that can be had on all levels.

Therefore, I was about to say that the good and bad thoughts shape the soul in such a way, so as to determine its afterlife condition.

Now I'll explain myself better, by taking a little detour. On this earth also a proud rascal can benefit from the fact of possessing houses and villas, shares and bank accounts, a yacht, perhaps a small personal jet, and so on. He will have people at his service, body guards, clients and subjects.

Needless to say, everything he has will guarantee him a certain affluence and wellbeing until he remains here on this earth in the fullness of physical health. However, these are all possessions which, on his death, he will have to abandon. At the most they may be able to ensure him a more than decent funeral and - at the most - a Pharaonic mausoleum; however, these will truly be the last of his possible earthly gratifications.

By leaving behind everything he *has*, he will arrive on the threshold of the other dimension with only what he *is*. What he is corresponds to his own soul and to what he will have done to mould it with the quality of thoughts.

One may well wonder: is this unpleasant condition in which a soul is immersed with his negative thought, definitive and irreparable? Of course it isn't, since, always according to what has emerged from mediumistic testimonies, a soul maintains itself free to self-determine itself in a different manner. It could well change course, also after passing away.

Divine mercy is infinite. It acts through the work of good souls, who aim to redeem those lost and suffering.

An English scholar of mediumistic communications, and of what emerges from them, proposes a suggestive image: after passing away the soul is like a bullet that has already been fired, whose gun has already marked out the trajectory.

Let's image that there is a little man inside the bullet, a small pilot equipped with all the possible directional devices. He tries to change the bullet's course, and perhaps does succeed in the end: but with how much hard work!

No deviated soul should ever lose hope of redeeming itself. However, many times, a long extremely difficult and painful journey is necessary. How much better it would be to aim correctly, in other words, make the right choices, at the best time!

When I was a boy, priests and nuns took pleasure in spreading frightening tales of men and women, young boys and girls and even children, who, having died in mortal sin, had gone to hell; or had been saved, but were destined to serve long years of punishment in the flames of purgatory.

These souls manifested themselves to relatives and friends in danger, to warn them so that they would convert themselves and change their lives. Such apparitions were described in the most terrifying way. A classic situation is the bead of sweat that drops from the ghost's hand onto that of the sinner, burning a wound into his skin that nobody will be capable of ever healing.

They are examples of terrorism distributed with good intentions, however questionable the pedagogy was! I hope it is no longer used. Needless to say, as far I am concerned I definitely have no intention whatsoever of terrorizing my friends, even if it is with the commendable intention of saving their souls.

The problem is not so much to imagine the retaliation of an angry Divinity against he who neither listens to the warnings nor takes the threats seriously. It is rather more pointing out a cause and effect relationship that could be established between the thinking that degrades the soul and the finding of the soul in a degraded condition.

How can one explain the passing from one condition of material wellbeing and wealth to a condition of total malaise? I would say thus: on this earth matter, a certain material situation, could make us wealthy and feel well, despite the decadence of the spirit and, at worst, its degradation.

An individual who is entirely focused on the exterior looks after his comforts and his objectives of wealth and control over others, and ends up by silencing his own voice of consciousness.

Very different is the situation in the other dimension, which is an exclusively psychic reality. Here it is the psychic condition that automatically determines the whole way of being, the entire situation of the soul.

I have tried to give a more general idea of the need to cultivate good thoughts, in order to mould our soul in the best way. If it is true that “birds of a feather flock together”, then only a luminous soul enters into a condition of light on passing away into the other dimension.

3. How good religious thoughts open up a journey of elevation for us for the course of life beyond life

From now onwards I will try to clarify in more detail what I have called “good thoughts”: the thoughts that mould our soul well, and so make it magnanimous and generous, sensitive, noble and beautiful.

The most essential ones seem to be those directed at God and religion. Whereas the earth seems to be the place of humanism, the afterlife seems to offer the setting that is most in keeping with the religious ascent, the mystical journey.

From what the concordant mediumistic communications prove to us, the afterlife takes place through a succession of phases.

By taking into consideration only those of a positive and happy existence “in the light”, one can notice a first phase in which the soul, still dominated by earthly images, finds itself, so to speak, in a mental environment of collective dreams that is very similar to those of this world.

The soul is still possessed by the mental habits that it cultivated during its earthly existence. It is still incapable of portraying itself a person unless in its exterior appearance. This explains why we always find ourselves in possession of a body in our dreams and, even when we meet a defunct person, we always see him/her in his/her physical aspect, which that soul should nevertheless no longer possess.

The phase in which all of this happens is nevertheless temporary. The mental habits gradually fade away. Therefore, step by step, the earthly attachments fall away. The soul rids itself of every thing and also of its own egotism, to be, in the end, entirely and only of God. It will have everything once again in God, but on a superhuman, divine level.

And so a journey of spiritual elevation, a mystical journey is marked out. As far as we know, the afterlife is a precise unequivocal place of such an ascent, whereas the earth remains the place of humanism, of progress, of scientific research, of artistic creation, of technological progress, of economic enterprise, of the social and political life.

In the end, the universal resurrection means the meeting of the two dimensions with the reciprocal gift of the respective accomplishments, so that the great synthesis can take place: the full, total, definitive triumph of a kingdom of God enriched by our humanism.

Whilst waiting for this final event, each one of the two dimensions will attend to carrying out its own specific task. The other dimension, as we have said, is called to pursue sanctification. It is an essentially religious dimension.

It follows that an authentic religious commitment is the best preparation for the afterlife. It makes the soul more luminous, therefore more suitable to enter a condition of light.

The religious life is a life of prayer: intense, frequent, insistent, continuous prayer carried on until the person himself is transformed into living prayer.

Prayer opens us up to God, it enables us to experience, to have true to life proof that God is the Source of all grace and all good.

It would be better that, before God, we assume the attitude that is exactly the opposite to that of sufficiency, of the Pharisee's self-congratulation (Lk 18, 9-14).

The only decent attitude for us, is that of the publican, the sinner who is aware of being as such, of the humble who knows well how little he is worth and what enormous distance separates him from the transcendent Divinity, of the weak who knows that he will be able to draw all strength only from God.

In prayer we turn to God as our Creator, as our ultimate End and only real Good, as the Source of our being, as the Centre of all life that is in us, as our All.

Every religion places us in relation with the Divinity and, in some way, prepares us, gets us ready for that mystical journey that is waiting for us in the afterlife.

In particular Christianity points out to us that God Himself makes Himself man so that man can make himself God. It shows us in Christ the ideal of the Man-God and urges us to follow him and to establish an intimate vital relationship with him to grow in him and, at the most, become like him.

The Christian saintliness is the best journey, which we can already start on this earth to complete it in the other dimension.

4. Faith, prayer and meditation

Prayer is committing oneself to God. This commitment is faith. We commit ourselves to a person in whom we trust. This act of trust prepares us to receive help.

In this sense, the success of miracles themselves largely depends on faith. "Your faith has made you well", said Jesus to a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years (Lk 8, 48). Jesus himself, due to the little faith of his fellow villagers from Nazareth, couldn't manage to work any significant miracle on them (Mk 6, 1-6; cp. Mt 13, 53-58).

In the same way, as we prepare ourselves to receive a miracle, faith efficaciously prepares us for the passing away to the other dimension. It is worth repeating that thought is creative: now faith is a form of thought, which not only involves the intellect but the entire being of man, therefore it is a thought that leaves a deep mark in the soul, which affects it greatly and in a certain way transforms it.

We have seen how, on passing away, the soul automatically enters in the condition which corresponds to its own state. This helps us to understand how a faith that transforms the soul in a more spiritual sense makes it more suitable to gain entry in the kingdom of the spirit.

Despite our efforts, despite all of our good will, we don't always manage to heal certain defects, to improve our behaviour, to make ourselves saints. Nevertheless, we can abandon ourselves to God, feeling confident that He will welcome us in His paradise despite our unworthiness. Such is the act of faith that saves us. It is the same faith that saved the robber crucified next to Jesus (Lk 23, 39-43).

Is there a way of helping our faith to root itself even better and more deeply in our being? It is meditation. This consists in going back to savour the truth we believe in, the contents of our intuitions. Meditating is a pondering of the spirit.

It concerns being silent within ourselves, silencing all those voices and impulses that induce us to distracting ourselves from the consideration of the spiritual realities. These manifest themselves to us from our heart of hearts. We should therefore divert our attention from exterior things and focus it exclusively on our inner self.

God is more intimate than what we could ever have that is intimate in ourselves. It is from our heart of hearts that He manifests Himself, and it is here that we should set to listening.

They are inspirations that we have to welcome and make our own. We have to make it possible for them to root themselves in us and acquire increasingly greater strength in us, until we are completely transformed, until we are deified.

We have to prepare our whole being to welcome the divine inspirations and every energy that God inspires in us.

Our psyche controls and regulates all of our vital functions. It could exert a more limited control over our mind on a conscious level, but the far wider, incomparable control is that which the psyche exerts over our whole organism. Here, however, the psyche acts on an unconscious level: it is the famous unconscious, or subliminal.

The problem at this point concerns involving the unconscious; and this can be obtained by placing certain psychic techniques into action: more precisely, the techniques of suggestion.

The subject can essentially give himself a suggestion in two ways:

1) by visualizing certain realities, or also imaginary scenes, to then propose them to his unconscious - in a more, precisely, suggestive manner - so that it acquires them and elaborates them;

2) by repeating a formula of resolution to himself, a brief prayer, a mantra, a significant phrase, matching the inner recitation to the rhythm of breathing and perhaps even the cardiac rhythm itself.

This kind of concentration proves to be more efficacious if, before giving the green light to the practice of visualization or repetition, the subject will have placed a technique of relaxation into action. It is necessary that the whole being of this person keeps silent in every one of his fibres so that his mind can exclusively concentrate on his inner self and, at the same time, on the moulding action that the mind itself is practicing on it.

Good thoughts, valid thoughts, revealing sensations, positive and significant feelings, all of this must be engraved on the soul, it has to be rooted into it. Here we have the opportunity of developing a contemplative attitude in us, a habit of savouring experiences.

5. Today our continual bustling is a hindrance to the development of inner life

One could say that today our whole way of living is anti-contemplative. In our work we do nothing but rush around, and even rest itself has become anything but restful.

We go on an organized excursion and the guide shunts us all over the place without a moment's respite: the program of things to see is so jam packed that we don't even have time to enjoy what we see. It is forbidden to contemplate: there is no time, and we have to rush off to see other things, we are already late.

In the meantime someone is talking to us, he's explaining everything to us, with such a torrent of information, that his voice overlaps all of our thoughts, it crushes them, it kills them before they are even hatched.

This kind of indoctrination or cramming of skulls is pursued also by the radio and the television. This is a cut above, as it has the image; but the image is so commented, that one can no longer face it, as such, true to life.

Music itself is often covered. The Holy Mass is undoubtedly an act of worship that has an extremely spiritual meaning; but is it possible to follow a mass on the television without being bothered by the commentator's "words, words, words" which explain everything and much more, adding a personal sermon to that of the preacher, who, in order to translate verse by verse the Latin prayers prevents you from listening to the wonderful singing of the most celebrated choirs of the world?

One becomes such a slave to this continual babbling to the point that one feels the need to hear it all the time - without really listening to it most of the time - whatever one is doing, whether it's doing the housework, working in the office, even when studying.

The chattering on the radio and the television has become indispensable for us. One is terrified of being left alone with himself even only for five minutes.

We have the continual need to be entertained, advised, led by the hand from one experience to another, from one fact to another, in extremely rapid succession. The succession of images is frenetic, whirling at breakneck speed, kaleidoscopic: it sometimes reaches the pace of more than one image per second.

A continual violence is exerted on our perceptive and reflective faculties. And we are addicted to it like to a drug: used as we are to doing violence to ourselves, we can no longer manage to be alone even for a moment without someone doing violence to us.

If we want to re-establish an inner, spiritual life for ourselves, then it would be good for us to free ourselves of all this conditioning and of every connected masochism.

Let's create ourselves an autonomous space once more.

Let's give back our inner, spiritual life all the breath it needs.

Let's take possession once more of our breaks, of magical moments, of our creative freedom.

The recovery of what belongs to us is the first step in acquiring control or domination over things: that domination over matter that the primacy of the spirit demands.

6. Meditation and intimate listening to God

Meditating is not only ruminating, reconsidering, going back to contemplating already acquired truths, experiences already had. Meditating is also opening ourselves up to new inner experiences, to new accomplishments of the spirit.

Here we have the need to put ourselves in the position to listen to God who speaks to us from our heart of hearts; furthermore, first of all, of making silence in ourselves in order to be able to hear that voice, that is like a "whistling of a gentle air" of Elias' experience on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19, 12).

Here we have, once again, the opportunity to take some notes on what one experiences, so that one doesn't lose it due to the transience of our memory.

The new contents we have searched for are, and always will be, inspirations, which God bestows on us by grace and which we can only receive by making every one of our discourses silent, opening ourselves up to Him, invoking Him.

This does not at all mean that we have to receive any inspiration without the minimum discernment.

Our spiritual sensitiveness will help us to sift through and thoroughly examine our new inner, spiritual experiences.

It would be better for us if we compared them to the experiences of those that are generally considered the most authentic, authoritative spiritual masters.

It would also be better if we thought them over a bit. Here, more than the *rationality* of pure logic and exact sciences, we would follow the *reasonableness* of good sense and spirit of insight, of psychology and sciences of man, the reasonableness of those agile and flexible concepts that know how to grasp all the nuances of every human situation.

A spiritual sensitiveness that is increasingly better refined will allow us to deepen our intuitions. Not only, but it will allow us to penetrate the intimate spirit of the religious revelations better and better, beyond that of the letter of the Holy Scriptures in which they are expressed.

As far as we are concerned, we have to remove that formidable obstacle that is fundamentalism: we have to eradicate every tendency of ours to interpret the tales of the scriptures by the letter, of which the mythical nature is more evident.

These tales have a meaning, which we are intimately urged to grasp and deepen, to taste and savour with meditation.

It is important to grasp the symbols of the scriptural narrations, even if, needless to say, one cannot reduce everything to symbols. Certain narrations can also have their own historicity, which they should not be emptied a priori.

It concerns, also here, learning to cultivate the right thoughts.

7. The love of God

In meditating and setting to listen to God, we open up our entire being to the revelation He makes of Himself. God manifests Himself for us, step by step, in an increasingly more adequate manner, until in the end we can in this way reassume what God is for us: as we have already said, God is our Creator, our ultimate End and only real Good, He is the Source of our being, He is the Centre of our life, our All.

He creates us from nothing to give us, in prospect, all good, beyond all our expectations, hopes and imagination. God wants us to be perfect like He Himself is. He makes Himself man, He becomes incarnate amongst us and in us, to deify us.

God's love for us, His creation, proves to be limitless: and likewise limitless is the gift He makes of Himself for us.

The saint that has a true to life experience of the immensity, the infinity of the divine love, feels he can do nothing else but love God limitlessly and offer Him his entire existence.

“The first and greatest commandment” of the Gospel is “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Mt 22, 37-38).

Amongst the good thoughts we have spoken about in this written work, the most essential one is definitely that of love of God.

And the first exhortation to give oneself is: to remember what God has done, does and will do for you. Always bear it in mind. Keep and nourish this thought in your heart. Express it by repeating every now and then some brief prayers or short loving expressions.

Already, in an analogous manner Moses vigorously exhorted the people of Israel to remember the benefits received from Yahweh, to whom these people owed their own historical creation: “*Shemà Israel*, hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

“And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates... Then take heed lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Deut 6, 4-12).

The saint is a man, or a woman, who in his/her own spiritual experience, in his/her own heart of hearts feels that he/she has discovered how good and lovable God is, and has grown passionate about Him. The saint has been seduced by Him. The saint is in love with God.

The memory itself that we carry within us of our experiences of human love makes us understand why the person in love thinks about his loved one all the time, and thinks about nothing else but his/her loved one, and repeats his name, kisses his picture, recalls the magical moments of their time spent together.

There is something similar in the love of God. One feels the need to flee from any distraction, to withdraw into solitude to be alone with Him to express all the love one has for Him.

“In the path of your judgments, O Lord, we wait for you; your memorial name is the desire of our soul. My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you”, exclaims the prophet Isaiah (26, 8-9).

In this way the religious man is lavish with his praise of his Loved One, like the Psalmist, who said emphatically: “I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name for ever and ever. Every day I will bless you, and praise your name for ever and ever” (Ps 145, 1-2).

There could be a precise interest in proposing some other passages from the Psalms where the theme of the loving praise for God is repeated.

“One thing I have asked of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple!” (27, 4).

“O taste and see that the Lord is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in him!” (34, 9).

“As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?” (42, 2-3).

“O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; as in a dry and weary land where no water is. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name. My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips, when I think of you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me” (63, 2-9)

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre” (92, 2-4).

“I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord” (104, 33-34; there are more examples in 18, 2-3; 23, 1-3; 40, 5; 46, 2-3; 54, 6; 56, 5; 95, 1-7).

8. The love of God stimulates us to collaborate in His creative work

In love there is not only the honeymoon. It could be followed by a period of difficulty to be faced together, in which the beautiful expressions given to each other will be put to the test, and one will well see if and to what extent it actually concerned authentic love.

He who really loves also shows it in his deeds. In the same way, he who loves God does not limit himself to worshipping Him, but does His will. If necessary he is ready to sacrifice himself.

Jesus himself admonishes: “Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 7, 21).

But what does this will of God consist of exactly? Is it something we should accept with total confidence, to be put into action only because it is God’s will? Or is it not rather something of which we had better be aware of, convinced of and part of?

Another human example will help us to clarify. I have some ideas, plans, something that I have at heart. A person who loves me helps me to put these ideas, these projects into practice. Why does he/she do this? Perhaps he does it for the pure and simple reason that he loves me, without either knowing or wanting to know what it’s all about.

I must confess that I would by far like this person to collaborate not only because he/she is fond of me, but likewise because he shares my interests. I would prefer him to regard my needs as his own.

Let’s go back to God. What does He hold above all, infinitely at heart? Needless to say, His creation. God loves His creation like an artist loves his own work. He who really loves God through and through loves His creation itself.

In order to move on from the human language of art to the one, almost too human indeed, of sport, I think that he who loves God should be a “fan” of the kingdom of God. I see him eagerly waiting for all the signs of its advent and collaborating in its fulfillment in the same spirit with which he makes an effort for his own interests.

We can find this concept expressed in some way in Psalm 119: “I delight in your law”, says the Psalmist to God (v. 70). Furthermore: “Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day” (v. 97). Further on: “My eyes shed streams of tears, because men do not keep your law... My zeal consumes me...” (vv. 136-139). It is the same as saying: Lord, that which You love and hold to heart, I also hold to heart like something which intimately belongs to me.

The author of Psalm 92 also speaks about the creation with participating enthusiasm by saying: “At the works of your hands I sing for joy” (v. 5). But he immediately seems to portray himself as astonished when he exclaims: “How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are really abysmal!” (v. 6).

It is almost as if he is saying: Lord, your thoughts seem really inscrutable to me in their depth; and yet I wish as much as possible to share them. Therefore I beg You to inspire me so that I may become more part of Your omniscience, of Your inner life and Your creative action.

9. The solidarity that unites all humans

In the infinite love that He nurtures for His creation, God donates Himself without limits. And we, in reciprocating His love, aspire to participate in His life on the highest level possible.

Therefore, in making progress in knowledge, we aspire, at best, to the divine omniscience itself.

In artistic creativity we imitate the divine Artist of the universe.

In promoting the progress of the technologies and of the psychic techniques themselves we aspire to the full dominion of nature and of us ourselves: of a whole that has to be administered in compliance with the divine will.

We humans are creatures made in the image of God according to His likeness (Gen 1, 26). Our infinite dignity corresponds to the infinite possibilities of us humans. Each one of us studies to become God, he is a small God at the beginning of his own divine career.

From the great commandment of the love of God comes a second similar one: “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mt 22, 39). It does not say “*more* than yourself” (which would be overdoing things), but “*as* yourself”: I have to love every other person without limits, but I also have to love myself without limits. Needless to say, in the right sense! *Truly* loving oneself means wanting one’s *true* good.

Having come from the divine Root, we grow like a one and only immense plant that is united in all its parts, branches, leaves and flowers.

We are all one and the same being that grows until the heavens: not like the tower of Babel for the pure and simple human presumptuousness, but because it is the heavens themselves that guide us to heaven and make all help, all inspiration, energy and grace rain down on us.

In this kind of prospect each one of us fulfills himself not by exclusively thinking about himself and his own wellbeing in competition with the others, but by considering his own wellbeing as a common good in full solidarity with every man or woman and every single being.

So what are the good thoughts? They are feeling one with all and everyone. They are sympathizing with every single person. They are sharing the worries and hopes, pains and joys of everybody. They are regarding every one’s problems as one’s own.

It is quite normal for one to worry about one’s own family and friends. But in the Christian prospect we are all close relatives and friends: it is not by chance that we call each other “brothers”, at least in church, even if we have met for the first time.

Loving everyone, taking on everything, is not at all easy! And yet we have to try to widen the circle of our solidarity.

We are more easily inclined to identifying ourselves with the characters of novels or films, whose vicissitudes we follow with trepidation.

What are fashionable today are stories about policemen, the TV series about the police of San Francisco, New York, of the Australian state of Victoria. But we have already been familiarized for decades with stories about gangsters whether completely free to act, or confined in expiation of punishment in prisons run by the most sadistic of prison directors: we have therefore understood that also murderers have a heart, a profound humanity that yearns for redemption.

Furthermore, we have learned to sympathize with those people who are indeed much less pleasant and friendly when they cheat us, steal our wallets, burgle our houses, rob us, kidnap us and even kill one of our family members.

There are also television programmes in which not only a famous person, but any old mortal is called to talk about his own “business and events”.

Another television programme proposes us the cases of missing people, to know whether someone has “seen” them somewhere or other. Here too a desire to participate in the anxieties of the missing person’s family is kindled as well as doing something to contribute in finding him.

Certain misfortunes move the crowds and push them to take part en masse in the funeral, for example, of a little child who died in an accident, or who drowned, or was fatally wounded by a stray bullet finding himself by chance caught up in the middle of a “rendering of accounts” between two rival gangs.

These feelings should be cultivated but also extended in increasingly wider circles. Our “dear loved ones” are not the only few people that belong to our close family and friends; but they are all destined to being dear to us one day when there will be no more hate, prejudice divisions, social and psychological barriers of all kinds.

Far too often our way of showing an interest in others is through malevolent gossip. I learned that there is a much worthier way when I was a boy from a member of my family: to be precise, from my grandmother on my mother’s side.

I remember her as a woman of high feelings, profoundly human and a wonderful educator. Sometimes it only took two words that she said to me in the most concise and calmest manner to make me stop a nasty habit, to free me from a little fault, to make me do my best in some praiseworthy work.

Well, my grandmother was not very fond of speaking about herself but very fond of speaking about others. And she reasoned about them with a sensitiveness and equilibrium of judgment, but above all with sympathy and participation. The idea that this is how one should speak about others has always been clear to me.

My grandmother also used to love reading books, as well as magazines and newspapers, she used to subscribe to particular interesting weekly magazines; therefore she was very up to date with what was happening in any corner of the planet no matter how remote, as well as being informed and aware of all the great problems of humanity, which she held very close to heart.

10. Love for all creatures

I would like to dwell a little while longer on my grandmother on my mother’s side to mention her love for flowers and plants in general, for nature, for the countryside which she depicted in paintings and coloured drawings of great finesse and delicacy.

She used to look after flowers by leaving them in peace attached by their stems to their plants so that they could draw their vital lymph from them, well aware that - I hope those in love will not be offended - picked flowers are nothing but delightful corpses, whose cells maintain themselves alive a little while longer due to pure inertia.

In a religious vision love for life becomes love for creation. Remember St. Francis of Assisi, who considered every being of this world an object of affectionate love. In the extension of his Christian love of his neighbour to the whole creation he truly is the model on the most sublime level.

It is an application of the Gospel which is almost unheard of in a Biblical context, where animals are generally treated in a far too brisk manner, until the herd of swine in which Jesus himself does not hesitate to transfer demons, that drive them to throwing themselves down a steep bank into the sea to drown all together (Mt 8, 28-34; Mk 5, 1-17; Lk 8, 26-37).

Even without necessarily elevating oneself to the sublimity of someone like St. Francis who preached to the doves and converted the wolf, I think that each one of us should be more respectful towards animals and more lover of them.

It is painful and upsetting to approach a dog or a cat - who, out of all the animals, should be man’s best friends - and see him run away afraid, which immediately gives us the idea of the extremely sad story that is behind so much mistrust and wariness.

Nevertheless cats, dogs and various other animals are much loved by many people, a love which becomes united also on a practical level but nevertheless remains limited to those animals nearest to man.

An American friend of mine, a professor of philosophy, an excellent kind hearted gentleman, is an animal lover and yet he enjoys going fishing from time to time. One day in Vermont, he and his wife invited me on a short fishing expedition amongst the rocks of a brook, where a tiny island had been formed around which the waters lapped by pleasantly.

It upset me to see how the good husband and wife speared the unfortunate worms destined as bait to hide the hook. In accepting the invitation, indeed with very little enthusiasm, despite our friendship, I warned them that I would have cheered for the fish with such might that they wouldn't catch even one. And this is exactly what happened. Months after I had returned to Rome I received a postcard from them telling me that they still hadn't been able to catch any fish.

One day I asked dear Joe, who was such an animal lover, how he could be so fond of fishing. He answered me that he considered mammals as the only "animals". With a play on words referring to male chauvinists, I asked him if he wasn't by chance a *mammal chauvinist*: "Are you really a mammal chauvinist?"

As far as I am concerned, on the contrary, in the same way as mankind includes women by full right, all animals, right down to the last one, should be considered as such without exception.

Needless to say, there are animals that are more similar to man, who, by living with man, almost become humanized. I remember not only pet dogs and cats of mine, but also a little sparrow that entered our house one cold December day and spent the winter there, staying with us for three months.

The little sparrow used to have lunch with us at our table. He stayed with us in the sitting room when friends visited and used to take a nap on a certain lady's skirt that was covered in flowers and leaves (reminiscence of a tree?). He used to go to bed at a certain hour in the evening by nestling down on an old towel bundled up in the form of a nest, and heaven help he who got too near that which, even without paying rent, he considered his "territory"!

Nobody had ever kept us better company. He was, quite completely, a little man, extremely pleasant, with his own little character and remarkable traits that were almost human.

Nevertheless, it is not only those who are most similar to man that deserve the name of animal. There are those who are furthest away on the evolutive ladder, of the most diverse, often monstrous shapes. It goes without saying, monstrous for our standards and tastes. Love blooms between them and they find each other beautiful. All the same, each one has his own beauty and they are all God's creatures.

Many people take their love and respect for animals, this time for all animals, to the point of refraining from eating meat, all kinds of meat. I have no desire whatsoever to imitate them. I certainly acknowledge the fact that I am a hypocrite when I sit down to enjoy a savoury steak. In order to reconcile my respect for animals with my carnivorous habits which I cannot give up, I like to remember a classical attitude of primitive men and almost aspire to making it my own.

The primitive men feed off the meat from the animals they hunt, but with all due respect and after having asked permission to do so from the species' Spirit, justifying it with the difficulties of human condition, of hunger, with the need for good warm furs to protect them from the cold. Here we have, in its naïvety, the example of respectful behaviour towards animals and nature in general. Nature is required to give help and

comprehension, in a spirit of affectionate solidarity which is far more Franciscan than that of many civilized Christians.

Entire creation is united to us. It is the extension of our being. It is like an immense collective body which extends our corporeity and in a certain way belongs to us in common.

I think that the apostle Paul is very close to this idea in the famous passage of his letters to the Romans (8, 19-22) which says: "...The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" and "the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now".

Why is it that some of my friends prove to have, unlike others, a particular feeling for certain animals, particular "green fingers" for plants? It is an undoubted charisma, which is confirmed in the attraction this person exerts on animals - which come willingly and freely to him/her and are fond of him - and the plants themselves, which, having been looked after by him/her, germinate and flower flourishingly.

What makes us love animals and plants and which pushes us to them with such spontaneity causing them to love us in return is an impulse which originates from good thoughts and feeds good thoughts.

11. Participating in the life of the whole world

In the chapter that comes before the one we have just finished, I mentioned the right need to be informed with the necessary ampleness of what is happening in the world and not only in our country. However, I have to immediately say that generally speaking this need is not really treated with much respect in the means of mass communication.

In order to offer an example, if I may enter into the minutest details of what today are the most common sources of information, I frankly have to disapprove of the way in which the television news is structured. In half an hour's television programme there is some news about what is happening in Italy, but hardly relatively anything regarding what is happening abroad.

The president of our republic goes on an official visit to another country, but we don't see hardly anything of that nation and not even of how he got there or how he left.

We learn nothing about the people of that country, of its political and economic situation, of its culture, of what kind of people they are and what their way of thinking is: a precious chance we have missed, when so much money is spent to celebrate the friendship between that country and ours.

It may happen that our president gives a press conference, and then we have some news about some of his evaluations regarding Italian problems, as if only these existed.

In order to hear about what important things are happening in foreign countries other than the usual ones we know about, one has to listen to the Vatican radio, as our private and national radio and television news programmes are not much help.

There is the "audience", who prefers to hear about the mother who poisoned her son, or vice versa, of the husband who threw his wife out of the window. And where there is the question of audience, of audience ratings, of competition with private stations, one no longer thinks rationally, the national broadcasting station itself forgets what should after all be its duty: to educate the public better, to involve them in things that are effectively the most important, making them know that not only Italy exists and very few other countries, but also the rest of the world.

If it is true that we humans are bound by an intimate solidarity like the one we have tried to connote, it is also true that we have to strengthen and deepen as much as possible the feeling of belonging all together to the one and only same great universal

family. This is why we have to learn to think in terms that are no longer of nation but of humanity.

First of all it would be useful to realize that the rest of the world not only exists but has problems that are connected to ours. It is opportune to focus more attention on other populations.

In the praxis of our school there are two Cinderella, or neglected subjects: geography and civic culture. It is good that the latter should not only be made object of effective study, but should also enlarge its outlook until it embraces all the nations of the world, in the unitary vision in which it appears to be one united block. And it is here that an in-depth study of the other neglected subject, geography, would be of the utmost opportune help.

The man in the street very often speaks about other nations, but confuses them with their football teams. He very unlikely has any really clear idea of where these countries are, geographically speaking.

Those who go there on holiday have much more precise ideas. Including a certain number of my friends. However, when I ask them about what they mainly noticed in these countries, the most common answers are that this and that product there is much more expensive, or is less than half the price compared to here.

As the good consumerists that Mother Television and Auntie Advertising has educated and brought up properly, it is, on the other hand, very difficult to require anything more.

12. The need for a gain of consciousness and voluntary work in the whole world to accomplish the right globalization

Today, out of many negative phenomena, one that is extremely positive and comforting in the process of being developed, is voluntary work. It too starts off from good thoughts. The good thought that above all informs it is solidarity.

The community sense is putting down its roots. More sensitive men and women are starting to feel that each one of us truly forms a one and only being with others.

The concern we show for our family and friends is extended to others, to those in need, to the sick, to the oppressed.

We are beginning to feel that not only our family problems, problems concerning our home and condominium are our own, but also those of our village, our neighbourhood, our city, our county and the whole nation.

And so phenomena and their related problems of a much greater importance are taking shape: we have discovered that the entire world is a one and only whole, where what happens thousands of kilometres from us affects us as if it were happening just round the corner.

One speaks about the global village. Globalization is in progress. This globalization is still imperfect, incomplete: its completion would indeed be the foundation of a universal federal state.

There is a growing need for this, given the insufficiency of international institutions and the United Nations themselves. The particularist interests are pressing, and there is a lack of both a real universal parliament which lays down fair laws as well as a real universal government that has the strength to impose everyone to comply with them.

One only company, a one and only economic enterprise could be more powerful than a state. This consideration is enough to deduce the urgency of giving life to a *super*

partes power, that is capable of regulating everything, of channeling every strength involved in general interest, for the common good.

This superior power over everything and everybody could be established and supported only by the impulse of worldwide public opinion. It is necessary that all men of good will, all citizens involved in every nation get together to put the new order into being.

In order for this to happen, a gain of consciousness is nevertheless necessary. Therefore, we go back to the subject of good thoughts: affectionate, fraternal solidarity between all humans; consciousness that our destinies are closely linked, and that no problem of great importance is resolvable unless in the ambit of a strong universal institution; consciousness of the need to help the underdeveloped countries or those in crisis, of the need to consider the problems of far off countries as our own problems, of the need to collaborate in everything.

These are applications of a love to be given to others like to ourselves, for a good that is our common good. The good success of these applications will be the casting out of the revolutionary importance of good thought: that good thought is really capable of transforming the world.

13. Love for our neighbour and listening to the single individual

I have tried to explain, although in extreme synthesis, the good thoughts that could inspire our active, efficacious solidarity towards the enormous family of humans taken as a one and only family. Now, however, no authentic human solidarity could forget the single individuals. A love for humanity in general would be something abstract, unless the love for the single individuals is not corroborated and put into concrete form. The single individuals are the “neighbour” which the Gospel speaks about.

Here we have the importance of those good thoughts which are addressed to the good not only of the enormous human family spread all over the earth, but of the single person who lives next to us: to the good of our son, our mother, our sister-in-law, but also to the good of the elderly lady living in the flat next door to us, who is far to often a stranger to us, and goodness knows just how much she needs us.

Many people need material help; but others, much more than we think, need, above all, a smile and a little bit of listening.

Listening is not easy, because everybody wants to talk. Speaking is something that makes us feel at the centre of attention, with everybody’s attention focused on us. Generally speaking nobody likes to be emarginated, and listening places us somewhat on the fringe.

Although it is indeed the listener who gives life to the speaker. I know very well what a teacher or lecturer feels like when he who is listening is an unprepared, inexperienced individual or a characterless audience, and when, on the contrary, the listener follows us with interest and understands us.

May I take the liberty of straying a little to mention those ladies who tell us all their business all in one breath ending almost in apnea. And those others who, when talking a long time, although passing from one subject to another, from one chapter to another, cut out the full stop and transform it into a comma in order not to allow even the smallest pause: so that it almost requires the sense of timing like that of jumping onto a moving tram for the listener to get a word in edgeways.

I remember one day on my arrival in Belgrade I was staying at a certain hotel right in the middle of a congress of the deaf and dumb. In the dining room where we ate

together they also formed tables where extremely animated conversations were kindled. The only language was sign language. And even here there was someone who led the discussion, he who listened for a long time but then hit back forcefully maintaining the attention of everybody on himself, there was someone who kept totally quiet not making any gestures whatsoever and someone who timidly tried to say something every now and then but not with much success, maybe because he was not as fluent as the others.

In other words, here too there was the phenomenology of reciprocal overwhelming. Needless to say, a true love for one's neighbour that one wishes to apply to talking with others requires a very different style.

The style of listening takes shape in the most spontaneous manner when we have got used to doing it, and also the actual enjoyment of listening. In order to develop this enjoyment or taste, it would be better to nurture an authentic interest in the person speaking.

So here we have once again the good thought: the inclination to identify oneself in the other person, to identify oneself with him, to place oneself on the same wavelength as him, the feeling that the other person is part of ourselves. This too is one of the good thoughts that make us better people: it would therefore be better to cultivate it, to water this delicate, tender little plant every day to make it grow strong and thriving.

14. Knowing the deepest needs of our neighbour and of ourselves

One of the first acts of charity is listening. It allows the interlocutor to relieve his feelings, to get rid of all the bitterness in him, but also to express his needs. So therefore it is better to listen attentively, in order to be aware of what one can do to help.

To be of effective help to a person one has to know exactly what he is asking us to do. Such are the needs of the person concerned, as he himself sees them.

However, it would be better here to make the entire discourse take a decisive step forward. Is each one of us truly capable of seeing what he himself really needs?

There are more profound needs, there are the needs of the spirit, of which it is difficult to have a clear idea, also because our more superficial, more carnal, sensual nature, is ill-disposed to gaining consciousness of it.

What we have to therefore do is to distinguish not only our most profound necessities but also those of others. Here is another good thought to be put into being. Here is a gain of consciousness: thinking well, to which we should convert ourselves to first of all, in order to be able to guide others, to get them to think well too.

It is a whole pedagogy to be put into action. Socrates would have called it a "maieutic". His mother, Phenaretes, was a midwife: she used to practice the *maieutiké tékne*. Moreover her son also professed to be a practitioner of the maieutic art: which is not that of teaching a pre-established truth, but of helping the interlocutor to give birth to the truth that is in him.

There are profound truths which we have gained consciousness of and whose consciousness we try to deepen more and more every day. In helping others to gain consciousness we do our best as maieutic persons like Socrates and his good, skilful mother.

15. Thinking well includes humanism

As we have already mentioned in some way, humanism completes the kingdom of God; human creativity completes creation; sciences and every form of human knowledge imitate and pursue, at best, divine omniscience; technology, with the addition of psychic techniques, pursue, at best, divine almightiness. All of this takes place due to the initiative of God and has to continue according to His will, never out of it, never against it.

One could draw the conclusion that thinking well is not at all limited to religious thoughts, but includes all scientific and historical knowledge, but also spiritual and mystical knowledge, insofar as it approaches the truth; and then all inventions, every positive act of will aimed at realizing and building; and finally every upright and valid creative act in the arts, in music, in poetry, in the entire ambit of culture.

16. For a culture of thinking well and for a corresponding education

Not only the importance of thinking well in oneself is by now sufficiently clear, but likewise the importance that thinking well assumes in relation to acting well.

As a result of this with likewise clarity is the need to educate ourselves to thinking well: to educate ourselves and others. In my opinion education and instruction should be above all and essentially understood in these terms.

I would like to propose a historical example here. Today Europe tends to be more closely united. Needless to say nothing is perfect in our world. Nevertheless, we can look at this phenomenon with extreme satisfaction. But also remember how, right from their very beginning, the European countries had fought one another bitterly for a long series of centuries.

Relatively speaking, the last thirty years of the nineteenth century and the first thirteen years of the twentieth century was a period of peace, so to speak; however, we should immediately add, peace that was kept continually hovering between the aspirations of *revanche*, heated periods of chauvinistic fever, irredentism, imperialism, colonial and naval rivalry and so on.

The royal families married into each other very often, but generally speaking the conflicts between relatives are sadly well-known. The late lamented, affable and wise King Edward VII, the Uncle of Europe, did his best to settle quarrels and maintain all branches of his large family in perfect harmony, but, after his inauspicious death, hardly four years had gone by and the European countries flew into conflict against one another with all the negative energies accumulated and held at bay for about forty years and there was something like a formidable crash of worldwide expanse that had never been seen before, only to be beaten by the one that was to break out twenty years later.

I have every good reason to date these most disastrous events back to the bad thoughts that were in circulation at these times.

Personally I was nine years old when the fascist government declared war on Ethiopia and subjected it offering its imperial crown to King Victor Emmanuel III.

The majority of Italians seemed to consider this enterprise as something well done, and, although they were rather perplexed regarding the opportunity of entering the war in 1940, they deemed that the intervention of the First World War had, after all, done the health of Italian people good.

Every now and then a good war is what a nation, which has to gain experience, toughen itself and keep itself up, needs! Did not someone who was very popular at the time say that “war is the hygiene of the peoples”?

In such a frenzy of many voices patriotism slipped down into nationalism and therefore into imperialism. We have mentioned Italy, but what can we say about many other nations and especially the biggest ones?

Is not the *Te regere imperio populos Romane memento / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* (“Remember, Roman, to rule the people in your domain, to forgive the subjects and vanquish the proud”) rather echoed in *Rule, Britannia, over the waves!* and in the most varied vocabulary and phraseology of the imperialist culture of the powers that mostly found their model in Caesarism, and their symbol in the queen of birds of prey?

It was precisely the “culture” that was in force when I was a boy. And it was probably not entirely a subculture: it got its roots from people like Petrarch and Machiavelli, and continued to express itself in the verses of people like Carducci, even in some memorable expression of the meek Pascoli, whereas it is useless to talk about D’Annunzio.

It was the culture given at school. There was no doubt that it could have also been expressed in valuable poetry-literary texts. However, within the limits in which it gave voice to nationalism of warmongering fighting spirit, I would nevertheless define it an orgy of bad thoughts.

What is far too clear at this point is the influence the school has in educating, or miseducating the minds and hearts of so many countless people, who would then be those same people who operate, or contribute to the real ascent or ruin of nations and continents.

Here there is the need for a school that teaches and spreads the true values: the love for God and the spirit of prayer, love for one’s neighbour and solidarity towards all men, peace and worldwide cooperation, science and knowledge of the spirit, humanism and culture, literature and the arts, technological invention and every form of creativity, development of one’s personality and his self-control through psychic techniques, commitment for a better society.

Since the more efficacious schools are today the means of mass communication for better or for worse, what results is the need that these should also be transformed into real educative instruments.

It won’t be easy to look after readers, spectators, television viewers and those who listen to the radio who crave for inane stories and foul deeds (whether they are true, or only a readapted by the imagination of scriptwriters and directors who have an inclination for the sadistic), and then of sporting competitions that have been degraded to circus shows, and an extremely vast and varied range of rubbish and foolish actions.

It is, without doubt, a slow and difficult task that we have to set about doing, beginning with the re-education and detoxification of ourselves.

17. Thinking well as preparation for the life beyond life

In the cultivation of good thoughts it is truly essential to take care of those relative to life beyond life. All good thoughts are preparation for it.

The afterlife is a condition in which the soul is sanctified, but it is not, specifically speaking, the place of humanism. As I already mentioned at the beginning, the recovery of humanism will be had at a later moment, with the resurrection.

Since the afterlife is the religious dimension par excellence, religious thoughts are clearly those needed in order to prepare us for a good afterlife. On the contrary, those thoughts which appear to be more formative in the sense of humanism, I would say are more aimed at preparing us for a good resurrection, or rather, a happy recovery of humanism and its sublimation of the highest degree.

It is the resurrection that gives humanism a true sense, an eternal sense. Otherwise humanism would have only a temporary and precarious meaning and value.

If one wishes to consider good thoughts as a whole and then, in a likewise overall way, the future they prepare for us, then it seems appropriate for me to say that they prepare a good *post mortem*, a good life after death for us.

A final finishing touch: let's forget this "death", which is also an unpleasant and incorrect word. There is no death! Let's say that good thoughts prepare us for a good "life beyond life".

This term sounds much better, and this is why I have used it right from the beginning of this chapter. In this way it seems to me as if I have given the terminology itself a discreet, suitable and advantageous little adjustment.

It would be useful now to go deeply into the matter of these thoughts that are to be directed at and needed for our life beyond life.

We can have strong experiences, which on a whole induce us to believing and hoping, with good foundation, that our life is destined to continue, not only, but to elevate itself to extremely high peaks of perfection.

It means that we will find our dear deceased loved ones once again and will once again have our old relationship with them only this time in new elating forms.

It means that the values themselves are kept and grow, until they become absolutized.

This could be of very little importance for many people, but of extreme interest for those who have the cult of values and passionately work in the sciences, in the arts, in the most varied expressions of humanism. Nothing is lost here, everything is recovered and carried to a level of perfection that exceeds human concepts.

We are destined to a divine life: do we realize what this means? How can one not burst out in the highest of expressions of gratitude and praise for He who creates us from nothing to give us everything, to give us Himself without limits, to make a donation of His infinite perfection and happiness for us?

Out of all the most beautiful thoughts one can nurture there is the one of being in communion with all other humans of every country, language and condition. Even more beautiful is extending this sense of communion, of solidarity to the defunct: to the men and women who lived on this earth in all epochs and who are now in the most different spheres of the other dimension.

There are those who live in the light, as they themselves say, but also those who are in a negative condition of solitude, of darkness and unhappiness.

Out of these one should distinguish the souls without peace who have still not detached themselves from our world, but who continue to wander around it because they are still weighed down by the dross of their earthly attachments.

There are then those souls who have gained consciousness of their own mistakes and are going through phases of purification which could also be long and painful for many of them.

In a world of purely psychic nature it is easy to imagine the creative impact of thoughts, whether for good or for worse.

It is therefore easy to imagine how our good thoughts can help the souls and be of authentic comfort for them.

The good thought can edify ourselves and, at the same time, the souls who perceive it. Moreover, it acts as a beneficial force.

The good thought is almost a prayer, but then it is this which proves to be particularly efficacious. Finally what can be said about certain rites not only of the Christian religion, but a little of all the traditions of authentic and sure spirituality?

What has resulted from our mediumistic communications and those of others is that the holy masses, or divine liturgies as they are called in the Churches of the East, are particularly efficacious. This is what can be understood, given the origin and the divine substance of the Eucharist. We must also consider that “additional” force that has been engraved by the intense fervour, by the passionate devotion with which countless numbers of saints have participated in the sacrament throughout the centuries.

The good thought and prayer are the best that we living beings on this earth can offer to those who have gone before us to the other dimension. This manner of still being able to offer advantage to them could make us still feel of use to them. Needless to say, this is undoubtedly very comforting.

Another reason of comfort could be the justified certainty that our dear loved ones who have left us can read our thoughts. It is the consolation of knowing that we are not alone.

What is also of a comfort to us is the certainty that, by reading our thoughts, our dear deceased loved ones can also be aware of the sincerity of our feelings. In this way there are no more of the old misunderstandings. With no more of these rather serious misunderstandings, one finally understands once and for all: it is never too late!

In this communion of good thoughts we can all live together, each one in the dimension in which he is at the moment; we can all cooperate, each one in his place of work and responsibility; we can all make progress together, each one along the path he is called to take.

May our good thoughts be of comfort to us in our wait for the kingdom of God, and hasten its advent.