

ty to the Rule and to the commands of Superiors.

Often what is remote from the ordinary attracts us more; but the practice of perfection in the accomplishment of each day's task, in the fidelity to ordinary exercises of piety, constitutes for all the true, and for most, the only way which leads to the life of perfection.

Humility, obedience, and charity render mortification pleasing to God and to ourselves. They are like the sauce that adds flavor to the dish.

Mortification, for the soul who boasts about it, is like a bucket which leaks; all the merits and good effects are lost.

The one who covers the faults of others with his silence has already gone a great way on the path of perfection.

The one who admits his weakness without surprise is on the path which leads to true humility.

The one who never hides the truth out of fear of displeasing others, proves he is already very detached from people.

The one who helps others at his own expense proves he follows the gospel path of love for neighbor.

The one who finds his only consolation in God does not court danger for his soul.

The one is quiet about his good qualities, just as he is about his faults, demonstrates a great spirit of mortification.

The one who joins a recollected mind with the joy of optimism shows that he practices the interior life.

The one who never speaks ill of evil doers, but shows compassion for sinners and not contempt, lives according to the mind of the Lord.

The one who is not surprised or scandalized by the imperfection of his companions will love them easily, and better.

## The Wise Men

I gave a short talk last week to some lay Carmelites, and began with Chesterton's poem *The Wise Men*. And then after a few comments on the poem, used some passages by Bl. Edward Poppe, which moved my soul. In the right direction! As I really appreciated his writing, and as the Carmelites wanted a copy of what he wrote that I read to them, I thought I'd give it to the parish. Here's the poem:

Step softly, under snow or rain,  
To find the place where men can pray;  
The way is all so very plain  
That we may lose the way.

Oh, we have learnt to peer and pore  
On tortured puzzles from our youth,  
We know all the labyrinthine lore,  
We are the three wise men of yore,  
And we know all things but truth.

We have gone round and round the hill  
And lost the wood among the trees,  
And learnt long names for every ill,  
And serve the made gods, naming still  
The furies the Eumenides.

The gods of violence took the veil  
Of vision and philosophy,  
The Serpent that brought all men bale,  
He bites his own accursed tail,  
And calls himself Eternity.

Go humbly ... it has hailed and snowed...  
With voices low and lanterns lit;  
So very simple is the road,  
That we may stray from it.

The world grows terrible and white,  
And blinding white the breaking day;  
We walk bewildered in the light,  
For something is too large for sight,  
And something much too plain to say.

The Child that was ere worlds begun

(... We need but walk a little way,  
We need but see a latch undone...)  
The Child that played with moon and sun  
Is playing with a little hay.

The house from which the heavens are fed,  
The old strange house that is our own,  
Where trick of words are never said,  
And Mercy is as plain as bread,  
And Honour is as hard as stone.

Go humbly, humble are the skies,  
And low and large and fierce the Star;  
So very near the Manger lies  
That we may travel far.

Hark! Laughter like a lion wakes  
To roar to the resounding plain.  
And the whole heaven shouts and shakes,  
For God Himself is born again,  
And we are little children walking  
Through the snow and rain.

Chesterton packed a lot into that poem, but as a commentary on it here is the passage from Bl. Poppe, from a little book which is not yet available, but which should be shortly. It is called Under the Gaze of God.

Obedience pleases God more than penance. Mortifying one's will is worth ten times more than mortifying one's body. And the use of chains and hairshirts is, for rebellious and proud souls, more harmful than useful. All corporeal mortification which hinders the complete accomplishment of the duties of one's state in life is prohibited and inadvisable.

The greatest mortification consists in recognizing, joyful, God's will in the difficulties of each day; in accomplishing the daily duties without complaint, whatever tedium accompanies them. The most meritorious mortification is punctual fidelity.