2. THE ADMISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN WHO RENOUNCES THE WORLD

3. **ONE,** then, who seeks to be admitted to the discipline of the monastery is never received before he gives, by lying outside the doors for ten days or even longer, an evidence of his perseverance and desire, as well as of humility and patience. And when, prostrate at the feet of all the brethren that pass by, and of set purpose repelled and scorned by all of them, as if he was wanting to enter the monastery not for the sake of religion but because he was obliged; and when, too, covered with many insults and affronts, he has given a practical proof of his steadfastness, and has shown what he will be like in temptations by the way he has borne the disgrace; and when, with the ardour of his soul thus ascertained, he is admitted, then they enquire with the utmost care whether he is contaminated by a single coin from his former possessions clinging to him. [...] 

5. **WHEREFORE** each one on his admission is stripped of all his former possessions, so that he is not allowed any longer to keep even the clothes which he has on his back: but in the council of the brethren he is brought forward into the midst and stripped of his own clothes, and clad by the Abbot’s hands in the dress of the monastery, so that by this he may know not only that he has been despoiled of all his old things, but also that he has laid aside all worldly pride, and come down to the want and poverty of Christ, and that he is now to be supported not by wealth sought for by the world’s arts, nor by anything reserved from his former state of unbelief, but that he is to receive out of the holy and sacred funds of the monastery his rations for his service; and that, as he knows that he is thence to be clothed and fed and that he has nothing of his own, he may learn, nevertheless, not to be anxious about the morrow, according to the saying of the Gospel, and may not be ashamed to be on a level with the poor, that is with the body of the brethren, with whom Christ was not ashamed to be numbered, and to call him-self their brother, but that rather he may glory that he has been made to share the lot of his own servants.

**CHAPTERS 32-39**
(THE DISCOURSE OF ABBOT PINUFIUS ON THE ADMISSION OF A BROTHER TO THE MONASTERY, DESCRIBING THE RENOUNCIATIONS NECESSARY)

[...] You know, said he, that after lying for so many days at the entrance you are to-day to be admitted. And to begin with you ought to know the reason of the difficulty put in your way. For it may be of great service to you in this road on which you are desirous to enter, if you understand the method of it and approach the service of Christ accordingly, and as you ought.

33. **FOR** as unbounded glory hereafter is promised to those who faithfully serve God and cleave to Him according to the rule of this system; so the severest penalties are in store for those who have carried it out carelessly and coldly, and have failed to show to Him fruits of holiness corresponding to what they professed or what they were believed by men to be. For “it is better,” as Scripture says, “that a man should not vow rather than that he should vow and not pay;” and “Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord carelessly.” Therefore you were for a long while declined by us, not as if we did not desire with all our hearts to secure
your salvation and the salvation of all, nor as if we did not care to go to
meet even afar off those who are longing to be converted to Christ; but for
fear lest if we received you rashly we might make ourselves guilty in the
sight of God of levity, and make you incur a yet heavier punishment, if,
when you had been too easily admitted by us without realizing the
responsibility of this profession, you had afterwards turned out a deserter
or lukewarm. Wherefore you ought in the first instance to learn the actual
reason for the renunciation of the world, and when you have seen this, you
can be taught more plainly what you ought to do, from the reason for it.

34. Renunciation is nothing but the evidence of the cross and of
mortification. And so you must know that to-day you are dead to this
world and its deeds and desires, and that, as the Apostle says, you are
crucified to this world and this world to you. Consider therefore the
demands of the cross under the sign of which you ought henceforward to
live in this life; because you no longer live but He lives in you who was
crucified for you. We must therefore pass our time in this life in that
fashion and form in which He was crucified for us on the cross so that (as
David says) piercing our flesh with the fear of the Lord, we may have all
our wishes and desires not subservient to our own lusts but fastened to
His mortification. For so shall we fulfill the command of the Lord which
says: “He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me is not worthy of
me.” But perhaps you will say: How can a man carry his cross
continually? or how can any one who is alive be crucified? Hear briefly
how this is.

35. The fear of the Lord is our cross. As then one who is crucified no longer
has the power of moving or turning his limbs in any direction as he
pleases, so we also ought to affix our wishes and desires — not in
accordance with what is pleasant and delightful to us now, but in
accordance with the law of the Lord, where it constrains us. And as he
who is fastened to the wood of the cross no longer considers things
present, nor thinks about his likings, nor is perplexed by anxiety and care
for the morrow, nor disturbed by any desire of possession, nor inflamed
by any pride or strife or rivalry, grieves not at present injuries, remembers
not past ones, and while he is still breathing in the body considers that he
is dead to all earthly things, sending the thoughts of his heart on before to
that place whither he doubts not that he is shortly to come: so we also,
when crucified by the fear of the Lord ought to be dead indeed to all these
things, i.e. not only to carnal vices but also to all earthly things, having the
eye of our minds fixed there whither we hope at each moment that we are
soon to pass. For in this way we can have all our desires and carnal
affections mortified.

36. Beware therefore lest at any time you take again any of those things
which you renounced and forsook, and, contrary to the Lord’s command,
return from the field of evangelical work, and be found to have clothed
yourself again in your coat which you had stripped off; neither sink back
to the low and earthly lusts and desires of this world, and in defiance of
Christ’s word come down from the road of perfection and dare to take up
again any of those things which you have renounced and forsaken. […]
Beware lest at any time, when
you have begun to dip into the knowledge of the Psalms and of this life,
you be little by little puffed up and think of reviving that pride which now
at your beginning you have trampled under foot in the ardour of faith and in
fullest humility; and thus (as the Apostle says) building again those things which you had destroyed, you make yourself a backslider. But rather take heed to continue even to the end in that state of nakedness of which you made profession in the sight of God and of his angels. In this humility too and patience, with which you persevered for ten days before the doors and entreated with many tears to be admitted into the monastery, you should not only continue but also increase and go forward. For it is too bad that when you ought to be carried on from the rudiments and beginnings, and go forward to perfection, you should begin to fall back from these to worse things. For not he who begins these things, but he who endures in them to the end, shall be saved.

37. For the subtle serpent is ever “watching our heel,” that is, is lying in wait for the close, and endeavouring to trip us up right to the end of our life. And therefore it will not be of any use to have made a good beginning and to have eagerly taken the first step towards renouncing the world with all fervour, if a corresponding end does not likewise set it off and conclude it, and if the humility and poverty of Christ, of which you have now made profession in His sight, are not preserved by you even to the close of your life, as they were first secured. And that you may succeed in doing this, do you ever “watch his head,” i.e. the first rise of thoughts, by bringing them at once to your superior. For thus you will learn to “bruise” his dangerous beginnings, if you are not ashamed to disclose any of them to your superior.

38. Wherefore, as Scripture says, “when you go forth to serve the Lord stand in the fear of the Lord, and prepare your mind” not for repose or carelessness or delights, but for temptations and troubles. For “through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.” For “strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it.” [...] And to this state of perfection you may attain by the following steps and in the following way.

39. “The beginning” of our salvation and the safeguard of it is, as I said, “the fear of the Lord.” For through this those who are trained in the way of perfection can gain a start in, conversion as well as purification from vices and security in virtue. And when this has gained an entrance into a man’s heart it produces contempt of all things, and begets a forgetfulness of kinsfolk and an horror of the world itself. But by the contempt for the loss of all possessions humility is gained. And humility is attested by these signs:

- First of all if a man has all his desires mortified;
- secondly, if he conceals none of his actions or even of his thoughts from his superior;
- thirdly, if he puts no trust in his own opinion, but all in the judgment of his superior, and listens eagerly and willingly to his directions;
- fourthly, if he maintains in everything obedience and gentleness and constant patience;
- fifthly, if he not only hurts nobody else, but also is not annoyed or vexed at wrongs done to himself;
- sixthly, if he does nothing and ventures on nothing to which he is not urged by the Common Rule or by the example of our elders;
- seventhly, if he is contented with the lowest possible position, and considers himself as a bad workman and unworthy in the case of everything enjoined to him;
- eighthly, if he does not only outwardly profess with his lips that he is inferior to all, but really believes it in the inmost thoughts of his heart;
• ninthly, if he governs his tongue, and is not over talkative;
• tenthly, if he is not easily moved or too ready to laugh.

For by such signs and the like is true humility recognised. And when this has once been genuinely secured, then at once it leads you on by a still higher step to love which knows no fear; and through this you begin, without any effort and as it were naturally, to keep up everything that you formerly observed not without fear of punishment; no longer now from regard of punishment or fear of it but from love of goodness itself, and delight in virtue.