

means of sickness or troubles, or by some truth He teaches them during prayer, for tepid as they may be in seeking Him, yet God holds them very dear.

6. Do not think lightly, sisters, of this first grace, nor be downcast if you have not responded immediately to Our Lord's voice, for His Majesty is willing to wait for us many a day and even many a year, especially when He sees perseverance and good desires in our hearts. Perseverance is the first essential; with this we are sure to profit greatly. However, the devils now fiercely assault the soul in a thousand different ways: it suffers more than ever, because formerly it was mute and deaf, or at least could hear very little, and offered but feeble resistance, like one who has almost lost all hope of victory.

7. Here, however, the understanding being more vigilant and the powers more on the alert, we cannot avoid hearing the fighting and cannonading around us. For now the devils set on us the reptiles, that is to say, thoughts about the world and its joys which they picture as unending; they remind us of the high esteem men held us in, of our friends and relations; they tell us how the penances which souls in this mansion always begin to wish to perform would injure our health: in fine, the evil spirits place a thousand impediments in the way.

8. O Jesus! What turmoil the devils cause in the poor soul! How unhappy it feels, not knowing whether to go forward or to return to the first mansion! On the other hand, reason shows it the delusion of overrating worldly things, while faith teaches what alone can satisfy its cravings. Memory reminds the soul how all earthly joys end, recalling the death of those who lived at ease; how some died suddenly and were soon forgotten, how others, once so prosperous, are now buried beneath the ground and men pass by the graves where they

