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January 10, 1875

ADVICE TO THE OLD SISTERS

My dear Daughters,

I spoke to you the other day of the renewal that must take effect in us near the crib of the Infant Jesus. There is something to which I wish to come back today, although it only concerns a limited number of our Sisters, but since all will get to that, I must speak to you about it.

One must bring a greater care in renewing oneself in the measure that one advances in the religious life. If, on entering, one has difficulties to conquer, struggles to keep up in order to avoid certain faults, in order to remove one's heart from the world, from too natural affections, from old habits, from certain bonds, if one has some difficulty to take up the manners and habits of the religious life, when all that has been done, one must take care that a certain "laissez aller" does not creep in and does not establish itself in the soul, and that instead of conserving oneself in a generous obedience, in a fervent poverty, in prompt fidelity to the Rule and in an habitual care to mortify oneself, one does not allow oneself to fail in one thing or the other. One does not do things through habit, through custom, and as Father d'Alzon says, "We do things carelessly".

I do not say that there is any religious in that state since through daily prayer, one renews oneself, but the main thing is that one begins again without ceasing for the perfection of each of the actions that make up our life thus, to renew oneself in the manner of saying the Office of praying, to bring therein the care, the required fervor, apply yourself to it and do not lose one's time in it, renew yourself in obedience, in the common life, in fidelity to the vows and to the

Rules, in a word, in all the points that ought to be the mark of the fervor of Novices but which must also mark with a more pronounced religious character the last years of our life for us who approach the crown that is reserved for us if we have fought the good fight (I Tim. 6:12).

One can recognise a fervent order by the profound religious character of the older persons that compose it. Oftentimes, one finds a less profound religious character in the persons to whom age, fatigue, and infirmities seem to have brought a little more of "laissez aller". I have often noticed that in various communities which I have visited. If on one hand one finds in the old Sisters humility, fervor, and in the young respect, submission, modesty, it suffices to have lived in that house for two hours to appreciate the religious spirit therein.

It is necessary, Sisters, that we give this profound religious character to our Congregation. May the old Sisters keep watch on all the points of humility and may the young keep deference, respect, modesty in order to arrive at that. And may all in this time of graces and blessings, find near the Infant Jesus what will make their life holier, more pleasing to God, more perfect, worthy of greater blessings and of greater graces on the day in which they will ask of God the crown that we all hope for and for which He has called us into Religion.

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Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus
January 12, 1875

ON THE WORD: "THIS IS MY WELL-BELOVED SON IN WHOM I HAVE PLACED ALL MY DELIGHTS; HEAR HIM"

My dear Daughters,

After the beautiful and pious word you have just heard, one is not very encouraged to add anything. But, however, we see no many things in the mysteries of this season, that speak to us of the love of God that we cannot too often speak about them.

I ask myself if several among you have meditated enough on this mystery of Jesus Christ going to the desert to find John the Baptist and receive baptism from him and finally on this second manifestation at the Jordan on this word from heaven: "This is My well-beloved Son in whom I have placed all My delights, hear Him" (Matt. 17:5).

You know that the Church honors in the feast of the Epiphany a triple manifestation of our Lord. The first is the adoration of the Magi, the second, the supreme manifestation at the Jordan, and the third is the first miracle of Jesus at the Wedding of Cana by changing water into wine - mysteries which are reunited in a same feast because it seems they have been accomplished on the same day although on different years.

Well, it seems to me that this word: "This is My well-beloved Son in whom I place all My delights, hear Him", is one that must occupy the religious soul during all this season of the Epiphany. One must often come back to this thought of God delighting in Jesus Christ. On earth, God was able to take but some pleasure in the Patriarchs, in the Prophets, in those who waited for the Messias. If He had great joy

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in seeing Job walk through straight paths, to find Abraham firm in faith and in hope, He was not, however, fully satisfied. But see Him in whom He has placed all His delight - Jesus who renders to His Father all honor and all glory; see Him who gives Him pleasure without limit, who is the object of all His attention, of all His thoughts and of all His joys.

This Jesus, Sisters, is yours, is mine, belongs to all of us and He has so made us His children, He has so adopted us that, if we truly walk after Him, if we establish a similarity such as God would like to find between Him and us, then God will certainly say of us also: "Look at this soul, I have put in her all My delights." This is very beautiful, my dear Daughters, and must be for us a subject of reflection.

We can arrive at a very close union with God through imitation of Jesus Christ, through the acceptance of what has been here below the condition of His human life, through poverty, humility, renunciation, through sacrifice and suffering, through a life in which there is nothing that pleases nature nor the world, but in which all is conformed to the spirit of the Gospel. It is thus that we can become objects capable of pleasing our heavenly Father.

Following the thought that St. Augustine developed in his "City of God", there are two lives that the world shares: that in which love of God grows until contempt of self, and that where love of self grows to the contempt of God. It is between these two ways that the world walks and agitates itself. It is necessary, Sisters, to examine oneself from time to time to see where one is in this regard. One must ask oneself in which of these two ways one precisely is and in what measure one works to form in herself the resemblance Jesus Christ so that our life may be a reflection of the Gospel.

In our Lord Jesus Christ, everything is renunciation, humility, sacrifice. See Him on the Cross, see Him at the beginning of His earthly life, in the poverty of the crib, see Him in Egypt, fleeing from the persecutors with His mother and His father who live from the work of their hands, see Him hidden, despised, ignored, unknown, see Him later in His public life treated as a seducer, an impious man, prosecuted, obliged to go from one place to another to escape from His enemies. And who are His companions during all this time? Some poor, ignorant and rough fishermen having nothing that can give consolation neither according to nature nor according to grace since we hear Jesus Christ reproach them and tell them: Nescitis cujus spiritus estis? You know not of what spirit you are, and to St. Peter "Go behind Me, Satan, and so many other words.

This is the life that Jesus Christ deigned to embrace for us. That is how He lived. Then He finally died on the Cross in the midst of all sorts of sufferings, of all the humiliations, of all the pain and this cruel death was always before His eyes.

And so; we must ask ourselves in what measure we accept these conditions of similarity with Jesus Christ, in what heartfelt affection we face all the dispositions of providence, what courage we put therein so as not to reject anything, not to deny anything even when something more painful or more difficult presents itself.

We must not forget another word of the Gospel, a terrible word, but one that is very good to make us think - "He who is not with Me is against Me, he that does not gather with Me, scatters." One sees without ceasing that one must give all to God without reserve, without any restriction all in the measure, in the light of the Gospel that is, until down to an iota,

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since all must have its fulfillment. Without that we place ourselves in a dangerous and doubtful situation, we risk entering in this way where we take pleasure in ourselves, instead of God taking pleasure in us, in this way where love of self begins to diminish love of God, in this state where one goes to the extreme of making love of self banish love of God.

My dear Daughters, that is very serious. You will perhaps find that it is not the word for a feastday. But I have been very much struck by it and I wanted to tell you how necessary it is to enter into oneself to see the degree of one's sacrifice with regard to God and what is the degree of one's detachment, one must even say of hatred, with respect to self. Hatred is a very strong word, but is in the Gospel. Yes, we must despise ourselves, we must deny ourselves all the days of our life. We must separate ourselves from all that gives joy and sweetness to nature and say that be offered and sacrificed to God by mortification in order to have the joy of hope, the joy of love, the joy of union.

There certainly is great joy for a poor creature to think that she can absolutely be agreeable to God and become an object on which God fixes His glance with pleasure, who consoles His Heart, who gives glory to His divinity, whom He can show to His angels, as He at other times showed them His Son, saying: "See this creature, see how she follows the footsteps of My Son, see how her heart is pure and faithful, see how she has entered into the spirit of faith, of generosity, of sacrifice that My Son came to teach on earth, see her generosity in all the dispositions that I ask of her! Whether I ask her much or little, she does not refuse anything. I can do with her as I please, leave her or crucify her, impose on her a big or a small sorrow, it matters little to her, she is in My hands. See, there is nothing in her that is unlike her Spouse, that

is not completely abandoned."

I conclude with this thought because, if the first thought had something severe, this one is infinitely consoling since it shows us the union that sacrifice, generosity, such gift of self that God who is absolutely the Master prepares for us and that He can dispose of us in all things.

January 24, 1875

THE MIRACLE OF CANA, FIGURE OF THE EUCHARIST
AND MODEL OF THE TRANSFORMATION THAT OUGHT TO
TAKE PLACE IN OUR SOULS

My dear Daughters,

I spoke to you last Sunday of one of the manifestations of our Lord; that of His baptism. But I have not told you anything about that of the Wedding at Cana, the first miracle that our Lord made at the request of the Blessed Virgin.

This miracle is, however, one of those that ought to occupy our soul because it is in a certain sense the miracle that fills our whole life; in one way, because we live of the Eucharistic Blood of our Lord and that this transformation of water to wine at the wedding at Cana was the first figure; in another way, because we ought to work without ceasing to change ourselves, to transform ourselves into something divine, supernatural, and heavenly, which is truly to change water into wine, because our nature, in relation to this supereminent state of grace to which God calls us, is like water weak and without strength, that ought to be changed into a generous and divine wine.

You all know that the mystery of transubstantiation is also the mystery and the model of our own transformation. As it is said in the Canon of the Mass, we ought to be changed into something

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divine by the grace of this mystery. We should work on this all our life. We must know also that one is nothing but water of oneself and always do one's utmost to change this water into wine. Two great means are given us for this: faith and prayer.

Many persons grieve and are surprised after having worked on this for a long time, to see that their nature is not changed. No, nature does not change at all, it is always poor, always infirm, always subject to temptations, always carnal and earthly and having sensual and earthly inclinations. Sometimes, however, as one advances in life, the supernatural invades the soul more, but not nature. It reigns more in the will, in the intelligence, in this holy of holies, in this reserved sanctuary of which St. Francis of Sales speaks, in which the soul entertains itself alone with God.

And the means of changing oneself thus, of transforming oneself in this divine manner, is to live of faith, to live of prayer. It is to retire often where creatures do not reach, where human seductions do not penetrate, because there is an intimate depth where they cannot enter that God alone sees and knows. It is also the foundation of this great rule of St. Ignatius: "That, when the soul changes by a profound impression that is not stirred up in it by any remembrance, by any impression coming through the senses, it is ordinarily God that acts, above all if this impression makes us love God more, makes us expand, makes us enlarge our heart, and makes us act for God."

Thus, the best way, then, to arrive at this transformation is to live by faith and to work at separating oneself from impressions of exterior things. It is to give them up, to leave them.

Think at times, Sisters, know how hard and difficult the condition of Christians in the world at this transformation. The Divine Blood has been shed for them as well as for us. What is said at

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the Canon of the Mass, that this sacrifice is the model of the one which ought to take effect in our souls, is also said for all Christians. But how difficult it is for them to be alone and not to feel impressions of exterior objects!

For us, many things already separate us and deprive us of them. We have renounced that which is the most agreeable in the world, its pleasures, its distractions. We are obliged as if by force to re-enter into the intimacy of the soul, into this holy of holies, to love of faith and listen to God in prayer. For those who do not do this, I admit that they have the first sparks of faith and of love necessary to save them, but think what work there remains to be done at the moment when they will fall into purgatory! How this intelligent and purifying fire must cleanse their soul of all these pleasures, of everything that has remained of these more or less muddy waters of the world, that have penetrated all their faculties.

We too, Sisters, still have much to purify. It is a work we do everyday and to which I still wish to exhort you.

"The just man lives by faith" (Rom. 1:17), and, the greater the faith the more it transforms the soul. The more faith animates our prayer, the more we have continual recourse to God; the more we separate ourselves from external things, the more do we enter into the intimacy of the soul, and, as St. Therese says, into this mansion of the soul, into this abyss where God is as a sun, and where He wished to penetrate us with His light, provided that our soul be like a pure crystal through which this light can shine. The more we do that, the more we advance this work, the more do we make our Novitiate of heaven and of eternity, which is the only and unique reason for which God has placed us in this world.

Because this world is nothing but a passage, it is a trial. We should find, there, neither our

dwelling nor our rest. This is not the place that we ought to inhabit nor where we ought to seek to create relations. "That one would be insane", says St. Therese, "who, during a journey would stop at each inn that he would come across on his way saying: 'I am well here. I find people that agree with me. I am going to make my abode there.'"

And he is infinitely more foolish who believes that he can stop time. Time takes hold of us, it carries us away, at each instant. We see it with our Sisters. What is important is that death find us nearer the end which is God because the only reason for which we are subjected to the trial, the only motive of our life as pilgrim here below is eternal life.

It is in this constancy, in this fidelity, that we succeed, my dear Daughters, in possessing God as much as it is possible to possess Him on this earth, and that we assure ourselves of seeing Him and of possessing Him without a very long delay between the hour that we leave this world and the time when we reach the object of all our desires.

February 21, 1875

THE ONLY WAY OF PLEASING GOD IS TO IMITATE
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

My dear Daughters,

We have in the Gospel of today (Second Sunday of Lent), a word which I think I have spoken of some time ago with regard to the feast of the Epiphany, a word which descended twice from heaven on our Lord: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear Him." If Holy Church recalls to us this word, it is because everything consists for us in listening to our Lord Jesus Christ

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and in listening to Him according to the two senses given to this word by Holy Scripture.

To listen is also to obey. It is not only to give the attention of one's mind, but it is to give the attention of one's heart. The mind ought to be filled with truth, it ought to be filled with the words of the Gospel, of all that our Lord has said, of that which He has done, of that which He has taught. Then, it is necessary all the days of one's life, through meditation, to put before one's eyes some words of this divine life, in proposing to oneself to imitate it. This is the way the mind is filled with Jesus Christ.

Then comes the attention of the heart, the attention of the will that urges us to do what our Lord has told us, what He teaches us, what He shows us. Let us not forget that if He is the well-beloved Son, we can be, after Him, the well-beloved daughters of our heavenly Father. If we then wish to please God, let us enter in to this divine sonship that will render us very agreeable in His sight, but let us remember that one does not enter therein except through resemblance to our Lord Jesus Christ, the only and unique manner to please God.

Often, if instead of these complicated examinations in which one loses one's time in coming back with anxiety on each of the actions of the day, in which one does not apply oneself to anything but vague things, one would ask oneself: "How do I stand in the resemblance that I ought to have with our Lord Jesus Christ? I see on one hand the perfect, divine Model, so holy, so humble, so poor, so gentle, and at the same time so strong, so given to others, doing the will of God at all hours of the day, always doing 'that which pleases His Father' (Jn. 8:29). And, behold me on the other side, where am I an image of Jesus Christ? Is there anything

that resembles our Lord in my behaviour, in my thoughts, in my sentiments, in my words, in my manner of making my spiritual exercises and in each of the actions of my day? Like Jesus, is it faith that rules all my relations with my Superiors, with my equals and my inferiors?" How every thing would go better if we did this!

This is, Sisters, an examen that is not a detailed one, that is not of a kind that will give distractions but which, I believe, is an examen of perfection and which will help us singularly to make greater effort to resemble Jesus Christ more, and to accomplish this word come down from heaven: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear Him."

We all know by faith that our Lord is the dear and well-beloved Son of the Father, that God puts in Him all His delight. All that remains now is to accomplish the last part of the word: "hear Him", hear Him, that is to say, fill your heart with His teachings, do what He tells you. Hear Him with the ear of the heart that brings about the accomplishment of sanctity which is in our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is nothing in this examen that can give us scruples. It would be absurd to torment oneself because one does not entirely resemble our Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone knows well that one cannot be similar to Him, but it is one of these examens that brings the soul more keenly to shake off all the grains of dust of its imperfections, to acquire the divine resemblance.

Tell yourself: "Poor soul that you are, it is necessary that you, who are also a daughter of God, do what you can so that He may be able to put in you His delight. Remember this: you have left all you have had the good fortune of being taken and drawn from the midst of men, and chosen by God. He has done a real miracle in placing you in religious life in order that men may find in you the holy Gospel. If it were lost, people ought to be able to read it in the life of a Christian and,

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with greater reason, of a religious. And so, my poor soul. At what point are you in this work? Do you truly work to form in you the resemblance with Jesus Christ? Do all your efforts go there? Is it what occupies the dreams of your nights and the thoughts of your days? Is it the end of all your desires, of all your ambitions, of your preoccupations, of your reflections? Is that the object of your wishes and of your fears? What troubles you, is it the worry of not yet being similar to your divine Model or the fear of not arriving at that? - the only important desire in this world and the only fear that is allowed.

Therefore instead of troubling yourself if you have not been able to achieve a detailed examen, remember that this would be better than all the detail and that besides, it encloses all. For, in reality, how well a person who would act thus, would pray. With what recollection she would assist at Holy Mass. How well she would receive Holy Communion, and make her thanksgiving! How religious she would be at recreations, how faithfully she would discharge her employments, how perfect she would be with regard to works of zeal, if everywhere she carries this care, this preoccupation, this attention, this desire to resemble our Lord, if all her application were to listen to Him in prayer so as to follow and imitate Him all the rest of her life.

Now, in this our time, there is something particular: the time for gaining the jubilee has come. Why do we not all wish to gain it as perfectly as possible? Why should we not all wish to profit of this time of graces in order to be purified of our past sins?

What is required above all, is that we may gain the jubilee, is great purity of heart, habitual contrition, hatred of the imperfections into which we ordinarily fall, profound regret of all the venial sins from which we wish to purify our souls and obtain forgiveness. It is a look of love, a sincerity of love, a renewal of love towards God, a purity

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of heart and of conscience which are obtained
above all in looking at our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since we will begin the stations very soon,
why should not we try to bring therein this spirit
of love, this true evangelical zeal, which, on one
hand, hates all that in ourselves is not Jesus
Christ, and which, on the other seeks to develop
in us everything that has been deposited by grace
in order to make us resemble Jesus Christ? This
is a disposition in which the soul would purify
itself marvelously and would marvelously earn the
grace of jubilee

May 2, 1875

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

My dear Daughters,

As we begin this month of Mary, I think that
what I should recommend to you is, the spirit of
prayer. This is certainly the foundation of the
religious life; but there are moments when it
would be good to renew and rekindle oneself of it.

To begin with, silence is given to us in or-
der to facilitate the spirit of prayer, in the
same way that separation from the world and the
exercises of the religious life help to possess
it, but to establish it deeply in one's soul, one
must always recapture it, give oneself to it with
fervor. Upon entering one's cell at night, one
must be occupied with God and the things of God.
If one cannot sleep, one must turn oneself to-
wards the Blessed Sacrament. Upon awakening the
next morning, the first movement of the soul
should be to enter into the spirit of prayer so
that the Great Silence penetrates the soul with
thoughts of the Saints and unites her to God be-
fore she comes in contact with creatures. The
Blessed Virgin always lived in the spirit of prayer.

The Fathers say that while she slept her heart kept watch. Even in sleep this privileged creature did not interrupt the habitual act of love and union with God. This she asks also of her daughters. During this month consecrated to her, she invites us to spend as much time as we can during the day, talking to her, calling on her for help, putting ourselves under her maternal protection. She calls on us to fill with devotion those hours dedicated to prayer, because between this Office well said, and this prayer well made, this visit to the Blessed Sacrament, we recollect ourselves frequently and renew ourselves as often as possible in the presence of God.

Happy are those whose employment do not overburden them with responsibility. There is nothing better in religious life than to be in an employment that does not require a great deal of preoccupation, and leaves one a certain liberty of spirit. Thus, the co-adjutrix Sisters do not have preoccupations of mind in their work and can easily immerse themselves in God during the hours of the day. This also applies to other employments. For instance, when a sacristine or a linen room Sister is at the moment doing her work, or when a Sister is keeping the children at a time when hardly anyone talks to her, each of them can remain in this state. If prayer is mingled with action you may be sure that more good is being done.

I would like this month of Mary to be for each of you, Sisters, a renewal in this spirit that I have recommended to you today.

May 30, 1875

THE PERFECTION OF THE LOVE OF GOD AND OF NEIGHBOR
CONSISTS IN PREFERING TO GIVE RATHER THAN TO
RECEIVE.

My dear Daughters,

On these beautiful feasts of the love of God for men where our Lord gives Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament and pours on us His graces, the question that ought to occupy us most is that of the love we ought to bring in return to God, and in this love of God, it is also necessary to see the love of our neighbor.

I read this morning a beautiful passage of St. Teresa wherein she explains that the more a soul belongs to God, the more it knows God, the more also it loves to give. It even desires to give much more than to receive. This rule would put perfection in the love that we ought to have for creatures, because we should not reduce our heart and merit the reproach that St. Paul addressed to the Christian of being without affection. It is necessary to have love, but according to the beautiful definition given formerly by M. Deplacé: there is: to love and to be loved; to give and to receive.

Thus the religious soul ought to tend without ceasing to sacrifice this desire to receive and to offer to God this need to be loved because it relates to self and the sign of perfection in the religious life is to arrive at counting oneself, as much as one can, as nothing. You have been able to notice, Sisters, that, what shines out the most in the truly advanced souls, is a certain annihilation of themselves. They treat themselves and let themselves be treated as something of little importance and think that, when it is just a question of themselves, it is

a very little thing. They thus surmount the principal obstacle to perfection.

During retreats, the first obstacle that is pointed out among the obstacles to perfection, is self-love, the "ego." There may be secondary obstacles, but this remains the principal one. As a consequence, the more a soul wishes to advance in perfection, the more it ought to get rid of itself, and in the order of the affections which is the most active of our sentiments, it ought to tend to the end of loving to give more than to receive. This is what one sees in generous souls, in the Saints - a great love of God united to a great love of neighbor and, in this love, a generosity that inclines them to love to give rather than to receive even from God.

Towards the neighbor, how vividly they feel the nothingness of all things present! What they love in their neighbor is the souls, and what they love in these souls is this beginning of good that is in every baptized soul. They love it in order to develop it and desire nothing so much as to see these souls rich with the graces of our Lord, full of His love. If something earthly tended to slip in this affection, they would detach themselves from it immediately, because this something earthly, would be an obstacle at the moment of death which is the true life, the eternal life which unites us forever to our Lord.

Let us pray earnestly at the feet of the Blessed Sacrament to obtain this love of God which is so ardent, so generous that urges us to give ourselves entirely to God and to our neighbor.

We are all beginners, Sisters. We need to grow in the love of God, to develop ourselves in love of God but God Himself comes to enkindle love in our hearts. That is why the Church places the feast of the Blessed Sacrament after Pentecost because it is the time wherein the hearts of the faithful are so kindled by the flames of the Holy

Spirit that they can understand better the mystery of the love of a God towards His creatures.

Consider our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, my dear Daughters - how does He treat Himself? He counts Himself as nothing, He abandons Himself, He annihilates Himself, He surrenders Himself, He puts Himself at the mercy of all, He is silent, He hides Himself. For Him, it is the most complete annihilation, but for you, it is the most complete of all the gifts, the greatest mark of His divine love.

June 6, 1875

TO WORK CONSTANTLY AT ONE'S PERFECTION

My dear Daughters,

We have just celebrated the great feasts of the love of our Lord for men - the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, the feast of the Sacred Heart. We must keep the disposition of giving more to God after these feasts that recall to us all that He has given us.

A religious contracts a great obligation when she gives herself to God. Having embraced freely a state of perfection, she must work without ceasing at her perfection and must always tend thereto without ever stopping this work through discouragement, coming from the thought that she is not capable, that she is not worthy of God. We must, on the contrary, make an effort to render to God by the desire for perfection, by the unceasing aspiration towards this good that is agreeable to Him, that which God has given us by this love and with which He has filled us with His best gifts.

Undoubtedly, one works at one's perfection when one lives in obedience, according to one's

rules and with the desire to observe them better every day. But, everybody knows, each one of us can recall having felt at a certain time in one's soul aspirations still more ardent to be united to God, to serve Him very well, to sanctify all of one's actions to practice such or such a virtue more perfectly: a more perfect charity, a more perfect obedience, a more perfect patience, a more perfect humility.

It is necessary to revive these aspirations by the thought of the love that God shows us. We must ask ourselves: "Why do I not wish to be as perfect as possible, to practice all the virtues that present themselves to me, and thus to advance always, to excite myself to give to God everything that a soul who loves Him can give Him and to pass over all the obstacles? God is always ready to help me. He who comes to me, who dwells in the depth of my soul is strong enough to carry me through all the obstacles, through my temptations, my weaknesses and my miseries since He can do everything."

I have sometimes quoted to you the words of a priest who, being pursued in '93 by the emissaries of the Revolution, fled carrying the Blessed Sacrament. Having reached the shores of the Rhone, he hesitated for a moment then told himself: "He whom I carry carries the world. He is strong enough to carry me to the other side" and having thrown himself into the river, he suddenly found himself on the other side.

Well, there are moments like this in the spiritual life in which we have to tell ourselves: "He whom I carry within me carries the world, He can carry me well higher to the perfection that He demands of me, to such an effort that I believe impossible." Then the soul encouraging itself, hoping to love, giving all that it can give, finds more joy in sacrifice because it preserves better in itself the remembrance of the Sacred gift that it has received at the altar.

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This thought is the force that makes us tend to perfection and that attains it up to a certain degree before the end of this life and that God wishes to reward by eternal glory.

June 11, 1875

CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART

My dear Daughters,

I would like to speak to you this week of the preparation that ought to dispose us to the Act of Consecration to the Heart of our Lord (June 16, 1875).

This consecration is individual. The Pope has not wished that this be a solemn consecration of the universal Church. Because the Church comes from the Heart of Jesus, she belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ and, as a consequence, has no need of being consecrated to Him. (The solemn act of the consecration of the human race was reserved to the pontificate of Leo XIII). But each faithful, each member of the Church in particular, needs to consecrate himself to the Heart of Jesus. The thought of the Holy Father, then, was that in all the countries of the world, all the Christians, all those who still have some faith, some fidelity and fervor join together one day to pronounce this consecration into which the Pope has put the spirit and the thought that ought to animate us in this offering of ourselves to the Heart of Jesus.

We can admire in this act the unity of Holy Church and the affirmation of its strength. We see that all individual energies unite to make but one after the Holy Father has spoken. This is one of the most beautiful sides of Catholic unity - each one can be sure that each act proposed by the Pope, although left to individual liberty, will be

accomplished with fervor by each faithful. We are²¹ going to see on the 16th of June the millions of Christians, separated by place and by circumstance, unite themselves in one same thought and in one same prayer in reciting the act of consecration to the Heart of Jesus.

You will see, Sisters, that, in saying this act, one of the things affirmed therein and without which a true consecration is not possible, is the unity of faith, perfect submission to the Vicar of Christ, a sentiment which, thanks be to God, is very profoundly impressed in the hearts of all the religious of the Assumption but which ought to be expressed by every faithful who wishes to have true devotion to the Heart of our Lord.

The Pope also tells us that we will find in this devotion consolation, hope, and support. We certainly have great need to find consolation in the times in which we live. It is impossible to see the sorrows of the Church, the dangers of the present situation; the threats of war and of revolutions, the persecutions that exert themselves all around us in countries where, at other times piety and the religious life flourished without obstacle - it is impossible, I say, to see all these things without experiencing much sorrow, without feeling great fear on account of the evils that the future seems to reserve for us.

As Pius IX has said, the Church has her promises, cannot perish, but the poor souls!... how many there are exposed to be lost! The souls of the little children brought up in Switzerland, for example, in Germany, in the Protestant countries in which one seeks to remove God and faith from education, what are they not going to suffer? In Italy, all the members of the priesthood are obliged to carry fire-arms, the Church has no priests, and in this way at the hour of death some souls will be deprived of the help of a priest and will not receive absolution and Holy

Communion, to strengthen and assist them.

That is the work of the wicked. The Holy Father invites us therefore, to go and seek our consolation in the Heart of Him who has redeemed souls by His Blood and who has so loved the world, because these are the very words of the revelation: "Behold the Heart that has so loved men!" He loves each of these souls who are in danger, and if all turn toward Him and ask God, in the name of this sigh of love, to have pity on them, to remove the present evils and the dangers that are to be feared in the future, it seems that one can hope to obtain everything by this very unanimous, very zealous, very fervent act, a renewal in the world and a renewal also in souls.

You understand, Sisters, that if this thus proposed to all the members of the Church, even to the most tepid and to the most imperfect, how much more should the spouses of Jesus Christ purify their hearts in order to make a very perfect consecration of themselves. As one of our Sisters said with reason the other day, contrition in souls is in proportion to the fervor of love. What contrition ought we not excite in us to make this act with great fervor of heart, with a very pure heart that penetrates the skies!

Each of us certainly has habitual imperfection and you know that all the Holy Fathers, that all the masters of the spiritual life are unanimous in saying that there is nothing that ought to draw our attention more than these habitual imperfections, than these habitual venial sins, and it is just a matter of examining our conscience to discover the faults into which one falls easily.

How necessary it is to deplore these bad inclinations, to detest them, to detach oneself from them in order to attach oneself to our Lord Jesus Christ, to work to purify oneself of them so as to render oneself ardent and fervent!

We are making a novena that does not impose 10 prayers on us, but which we can render very efficacious.

scious by the dispositions of our soul. We can, by ¹³ recollection, by the spirit of prayer, by patience in difficulties and in the little troubles, by habitual interior mortification, by the sacrifice of everything that concerns us, give much more to God than the simple faithful and merit that this act, penetrating the heavens, reaches the Heart of our Lord, obtains the graces which the Church and souls need, and whatever the Holy Father desires.

That is why, my dear Daughters, I believed I had an obligation to speak to you about that. You still have several days to dispose yourselves for it. Turn all your thoughts in that direction. Try to make your gain a plenary indulgence, and prepare your hearts to make to God a consecration, a gift as ardent, as fervent as you are capable of making.

June 27, 1875

SANCTIFY ONE'S SUFFERINGS

My dear Daughters,

Today I am going to talk to you about something that does not concern all of you just now, but that you will all experience sooner or later. It is well to think about it beforehand so as to be prepared to meet it with the right dispositions that will help to sanctify you when the time comes. I mean the time of sickness. One may be ailing and in bad health and for a time unable for some of one's external activities, or one may even have to give them all up. Our great duty towards the Congregation then, when others are working for us, is to strive to become holy so as to serve our Sisters in the sight of God while they serve us in the sight of men.

But short of being quite ill many people suffer from poor health and are always ailing in one way or

another. In this case the right thing to do is to be very real in our approach to God, very simple and direct with Him, handing one's whole self over to His will, taking this painful state from His hand in a spirit of trust and faith. As St. Gregory tells us: "Before God calls us to Himself and opens the door of eternity to us, He knocks gently and warns us by illness that we are nearing our end."

So we must get ready; and it would not do to say: "I cannot work any longer or do anything use I am no good to anyone or for anything... I would rather be gone..." For nuns, indeed, it is not very hard to go away to God. What is harder to accommodate all our desires and acts, all our feelings and affections to God's good pleasure: to follow our Lord very closely, to have His thoughts in our heart, so as to be able to say truly like St. Paul: "I live now not I, but Christ lives in me!" (Gal. 2:20), and to let Him live in us in our state of ill-health.

The masters of the spiritual life all say that God sends us this state to make us live more supernaturally. However it always surprises me that St. Bernard is said to have preferred unhealthy places for his monasteries because fever and constant suffering helped to make the monks holy and reminded them of eternity. Our case is different. Though we do not seek it, we often have poor health. For example, we may be unable to sleep at night, that we get up tired in the morning and find it hard to keep going, and we feel weak and wretched and so on.

How far do we offer all this our Lord so as to make it count for our purgatory, by atoning for imperfections of our life and purifying our soul? And how far do we take advantage of our state of suffering to creep close to our Crucified Lord and to become one with Him? Almost all women have poor health to bear at one time or another; and one of the things we must then cultivate is good humor.

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Yes! good humour is more necessary when one is ill than when one is well, first because nature drags us in the opposite direction, and then because the good folk who look after us need our good humour to lighten the work and trouble we give them.

Some of you did not hear what Father Picard told us about the Pope. Three or four years ago the Pope's life was in danger, he suffered severe pain, his legs were swollen, and even at night he needed nursing. Four servants slept, taking turns, near him to be ready to go to him as soon as he called. One of them told Father Picard that the Pope never had anything but kind and pleasant words for them and joked about his "good doctors" as he called them. One of them, his good doctor Carlo" who told Father Picard about it, was on duty one night when the Pope was in great pain and called him. He could find nothing to soothe the patient who for a whole hour bore the pain without a murmur and all the time with a smile on his face, and this at a time when his sufferings was acute and his life in danger. The words and works of the present Holy Father are brilliant and outstanding: but yet perhaps this incident is more worthy of note than any of them. Let us try to imitate Him, and when we are suffering, express nothing but patience and gentleness, and say sweet and gracious things, and like Pius IX show good humour by words of faith and kindness. Any Nun who makes a point of doing this will not only give good example, but be of real use to the Congregation and win great merit in God's sight. That is why I wanted to say all this. Because though not everyone has to bear constant suffering, it is a thing that will come into the life of most of us, and we all need to think about it and prepare for it and get ready to bear it with a Christian spirit.

August 1, 1975

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TO ATTACH ONESELF ONLY TO JESUS CHRIST

My dear daughters,

I did not dwell long enough the other day on this thought that the means, the strength, the soul of detachment is the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the attachment to His divine Person.

On becoming a religious, Sisters, we must clearly understand that it is necessary to orient our whole life heavenwards; and then, throughout the years, apply oneself continuously to eliminating all the ties attaching us to the earthy, gradually removing or at least diminishing every anxiety that comes from this world.

As we kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, we should say: "It is only for you, O my God, that I am here. You are my life! My thoughts, my fatigue, my affections are all yours, and since I cannot remain at your feet, my life must somehow be a continuous prayer. Prayer must be the soul of my life; my thoughts, my work must be part of this fullness with which I want to belong to you!" Thus must we, at the feet of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, set aside all earthly preoccupations from our soul, all our difficulties, all our attractions.

I wonder whether those of you who have read the life of St. Catherine of Genoa have noticed that the first lesson Our Lord gave her was this one: "You must not say whether something pleases or displeases you: if it displeases you, you must work at it long enough to render yourself indifferent or to even get to embrace it willingly; if, on the contrary, it pleases you, you must distance yourself from it so that I alone please you. Neither must you say 'I love this, I do not

love that! I alone must claim all your affection."

This is the great formula of detachment: Jesus Christ, the only object of the affections! This requires effort, work. Our Lord gives this lesson to Catherine, a soul already far advanced in His ways. When she feels repugnances, she must try to overcome them; when she feels attractions, she must resist them, keep away from the desired object, from that which she loves. And all this so as to unite herself to God alone, even at moments when God deprives her of His felt presence.

Sisters, the human has this tremendous power - it "does not hide itself" as St. Augustine remarks. The material presents itself forcefully, seeping in through all the senses, whereas the supernatural enter our inmost self only by faith. This is why a religious has to live more and more by faith, she must let supernatural realities penetrate her very being so that they sustain her above the visible, above the sensible. She must detach herself from the earthly if she wants to attain a life of prayer.

But it is not merely solitude nor isolation of creatures that will lead us to this - it is the soul detached from things of this life and attached in faithfulness to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

August 8, 1875

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PRAYER THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD

My dear daughters,

It is true that nuns know everything that one need know to attain salvation, yet it is just as true that they are not always attentive to the practical application of this knowledge. The "Instructions" at the Chapter are precisely to remind you of things you know full well, but which because of human frailty you fail to constantly remember.

What I want to bring out today is this thought: whatever fault or difficulty or failure you may be conscious of in you, in Our Lord you can find relief and all the help you need. As you all know, the Lord wills to be, besides our Savior and Redeemer, our "Way". He chose to be this as well as our last end.

In Him we find all that is good and in Him we can do all that is good. Everything is granted to His prayer, and our prayers become all-powerful when, like our Mother the Church, we pray "per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum".

Ponder at meditation sometimes on the magnitude of the honor and homage and praise offered by Christ to the most holy and adorable Trinity while He was on earth... complete homage and thanksgiving, infinite adoration and reparation, and such almighty prayer! Powerful enough to obtain everything. His power was equal to His Father's and the homage rendered to the Blessed Trinity was adequate. So it was in His mortal life, so it is now. In the Blessed Sacrament, He is still a victim of perfect homage, praise, adoration, and love for His Father; and this we all participate in since we receive Him in the Eucharist and it is through Him that we pray.

It is a pity that we do not believe enough in the power of this prayer "through Christ Our Lord", nor in the value of every moment we spend praying thus, nor in giving thanks through thanksgiving: that great "Thank You" that as Bossuet says is enough to obtain all of God's gifts. Gift and thanksgiving being equal in value, this makes the thanksgiving what theologians call "adequate". The same goes for our prayers begging God's forgiveness for our sins and the sins of the world through the prayer of Christ Jesus and His Agony: we offer adequate satisfaction for all the rights of God.

Finally, we are sure of obtaining all we ask through Christ Our Lord. That was what He meant when He said: "Whatever you ask my Father in my Name He will grant it to you." (Jn.14:13) "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them." (Mt.18, 20). "Until now you have not asked anything in My Name; make them, and they will be granted to bring you joy in full measure." (Jn.16:24) "If you have faith, though it be but as a grain of mustard seed, you have only to say to this mountain 'move to this place, to that' and it will move; nothing will be impossible to you." (Mt.17:19)

To this add what St. Augustine says: that if we do not obtain what we ask for, God will give us something better. For instance, we may pray for an invalid to be cured, and God judges it better to give him eternal happiness instead. We did not get what we asked for, but we got something better, something more excellent: a grace of salvation, of conversion, of repentance, of a shortening of purgatory, of some gift we are not conscious of but which is immensely greater than what we asked for.

When we ask for temporal things, we do not always get them. You ask with faith that God will remove some obstacles, like a mountain, and

perhaps a mountain of imperfections or infidelity or worry will be cast into the sea. In the whole history of the Church there is only one mountain removed by the prayers of a saint; and even this was partially for a spiritual reason since it was to make place for a Church. But how often there are marvelous graces granted: conversion, the spread of the faith, the welfare and salvation of souls.

However, let us feel free to ask what we like, and with fervor! Ask for this or that or any other thing. Our Lord Himself gives us the example in the Gospel. "A man goes and wakes up his neighbor at night to ask for some bread. This is a very material thing. He knocks and knocks and begs for the loan of three loaves. His friend is in bed, the children are asleep, and all the answer he gets is: "Leave me alone!" But in the end, worn out by his importunity, the friend gets up and gives the man what he asks for. So you see how we may ask for temporal goods: for fine weather, for rain, for a good harvest, or for peace; peace is a most excellent thing and the Church asks for it everyday. This prayer does not prevent wars from breaking out but it brings us better gifts, such as graces of spiritual renewal and conversions due to the sufferings of war.

It is impossible to know all the designs of Providence, but we do know with certainty that our prayers "through Jesus Christ Our Lord" will not only be acceptable as adoration, reparation and thanksgiving, but that they will most certainly also bring us most excellent gifts for our souls.

You know all this but it is well to ponder on sometimes, so as to go with more fidelity and love to the Sacred Heart and pray to get more grace and love and an increasing detachment from the things of this world.

Do not worry about such questions as: "Are people pleased with me?" "Are they displeased?" "Have I succeeded?" "Have I made mistakes?" "Where shall I be next year?" Say rather: "as long as I pray, what does the rest matter? Does everything not depend on who holds all in His Hands? The temporal"

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as well as the Eternal? Is God not ready to listen to His Son, the perfect Mediator who binds me to God and makes me one with Him? He is Christ the Lord whom I receive into my heart and whom I adore here exposed on the altar. How God has indeed loved me to have given me His Son, and, as M. de Berulle says, since He has been given to me, He alone must by right be the object of my thoughts and the center of my attention. Every other thought is a waste of time and will fritter into nothing. But the thoughts I give to the Lord are immortal like Him; they will rise up with me to my honor and they will last forever. God has not asked much of me in this world - He has only asked that I live for Jesus, follow in His footsteps; give Him all and expect all from Him. A life of everlasting peace and joy will be the fruit of my sacrifice. When trials come, I have but to look at my Savior's Cross. Heaven is the destiny towards which everything moves, heaven with Our Lord, "peace and glory and joy with Him".

This is the way of peace for souls in this world, until they reach everlasting peace in heaven.

August 22, 1875

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A LIVING FAITH IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS
IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

My dear daughters,

As I told you last time, I try in these "Instructions" to remind you of things that you know but that you need to revive in your souls. Today I will treat of a subject on which we cannot recall too often because of our vocation to adoration and prayer. I will speak to you of the very lively, very ardent faith we must have in the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

A religious of the Assumption is essentially an adorer. Half of our life is spent at the feet of the Blessed Sacrament, the other half in making Our Lord known and loved so that He may be alive among His children. We must bring others to a love, a fidelity, a devotedness to Christ with which we must first be full of ourselves.

The first requisite to be a true adorer is a vivid faith that makes a soul always see Our Lord present beneath the sacramental species. St. Teresa laughs good-humoredly at those people who regret not having lived at the same time as Our Lord. But to have been close to Our Lord during His mortal life, to see Him, to touch His garments, to listen to Him speak, to see Him teach His Apostles, to contemplate His divine face, to look into His eyes, feel His goodness... Sister, that was a great grace, a great blessing, a great gift!

It is a fact that St. John, St. Peter, St. Martha, St. Magdalen, all those who lived in close intimacy with Our Lord have been highly favored. No one denies that one look from Jesus transformed Peter, that this glance acted profoundly upon poor Magdalen. Jesus would gaze at a sinner and this incomparable glance would change this sinner into an apostle.

It was a great grace indeed: yet, we have nothing to envy them. We have Our Lord in our midst

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in the Blessed Sacrament. St. Teresa continues: "If I had been in Judea at the time of Our Lord, I would not have been able to see Him closely, nor to approach Him so often. The crowd would have stood between Him and me, just as it did for poor Zaccheus who had to climb a tree so as to see Him go by because he was of low stature. Whereas in the Blessed Sacrament Our Lord is ever near, all we need is to make our soul attentive to His Presence^{and} specially sensitive to His Divine Person when we receive Him in Holy Communion. He then not only enters our material house as when He went to Magdalen's but He actually comes into our inner dwelling, into the depths of our soul where we can remain at His Feet, wash them with our tears, express our desires and obtain all His graces. Still more: when we do not have the joy of going to Communion sacramentally, we can through spiritual Communion approach Him constantly, speak to Him, be seen by Him, listen to the words He spoke to us on earth and that He has left us in the Gospel, and thus receive from Him all the graces we need."

That is why Teresa of Avila believed and said that she had Our Lord more than if she had lived near Him in His mortal life. We all know it. In fact, we are all like St. Louis to whom someone said that a great miracle had occurred in one of the great Churches of Paris as the Holy Face of Our Lord had appeared in the Host. And, when urged to go there, the king said: "I do not need to. I believe in the presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist and I would sooner diminish the merit of my faith were I to gaze at such a miracle!" We are all like him. Like St. Louis, we do not need to see a miracle in order to believe in the Real Presence, but we need to renew ourselves often in these dispositions so as to keep towards the Holy Eucharist two characteristics indispensable to our faith.

First: a very respectful bearing, attitude and behavior in the Chapel, an exterior respect that reveals the interior consciousness of the presence of God; and coupled with this respect we should always bear with us, confidence, a limitless trust, true childlike confidence.

I heard a priest say of someone he knew (a Religious of the Assumption) that ~~when~~^{with} he made a simple genuflection before the Blessed Sacrament, he noticed in her such faith, such filial confidence towards Our Lord that he was impressed by it. Why do we not all have this visible disposition in us? There are a thousand, ten thousand ways of preaching: who would believe that a simple genuflection made with faith, respect, love could be such a "sermon"?

All our actions are good, evil, or indifferent. If they are good, they bear fruit for eternal life, and even for this life since a holy and edifying life brings souls to Jesus Christ.

It seems to me that nothing will help us more than this thought: I can always be an apostle, even by a gesture, by a fold of my veil. I can always help, console, gladden others with God. St. Ignatius says: "The work of the Holy Spirit is to rejoice the soul, to enlarge it, to console it, to incline it towards Our Lord Jesus Christ." Why should we not always be "good spirits", why should our mission be to enlarge, to arouse souls, to awaken them the desire for sanctity? Why should we not all have this zeal? What great work equals this? What can we say that is of more value? What is the little happiness, the small satisfaction, the insignificant tale, that brings to us (if we seek ourselves) a similar being, a consolation equal to that of being always in peace and joy, of being like an angel of light, a saint like those who walked among men, another "Holy Spirit"? If people were attracted to the saints, loving to be near them, to listen to them, it is because their conduct, their words had something (hard to explain) that I would call the outpouring of the good spirit that draws to God, that consoles and gladdens. And nothing gives more happiness to good souls than to be brought close to God.

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Try it yourselves and you will surely experience it.

My dear daughters, act in such a manner that everyone may receive this gratefully from you. Then God will be pleased. All your words will be kind, all your actions will be holy. You will have found this true joy, this unalloyed love that should unite souls in the religious life.

ADVICE FOR THE END OF THE RETREAT

Dear Daughters,

You come to the end of the retreat during which you have heard the word of God preached in a truly admirable way. (Mgr. d'Hu^lst). You have sometimes had more sermons for a retreat but I do not think you have had any more enlightening, any more perfectly in harmony with the spirit of the Assumption. He linked constantly and specifically each virtue to Our Lord Jesus Christ as to the end, the means, the occupation of our souls, and therefore I do not believe, as I said, you ever had a retreat that should affect your souls better and render them more pleasing to God.

At the end of the retreat, you will take resolutions. Doubtlessly, each of you has already taken them and offered them to the Lord. However, I believe I have certain counsels to give you; certain observations to make as to the end of the retreat and on the resolutions to take.

Firstly: even if the fervor has been widespread, the retreat well-preached, and the good obtained very real, it is probable that some Sisters have not felt the consolations, love, fervor and amendment they expected to have. It may be that they do not feel that the Lord has taken over their lives totally, that they do not find themselves renewed, that their souls do not seem illumined as they hoped. Let them be reassured: the retreat merely initiates an action that must continue through their fidelity to allow grace to work in their souls.

Do not come out of the retreat to throw yourself completely into exterior occupations, to give yourself entirely to your work. And this I say for all: those who have received sensible graces as well as the others. The holidays are not yet over. Try to profit this time to entertain and develop the action of the retreat in your souls until the day of the re-opening of classes when; by force of circumstances, you will be

taken up by exterior occupations.

Try to retain in your heart the thoughts received of the things heard and pondered on. I purposely say: "the things you have heard and pondered on", and not "that have touched you"; for what depends on you is not to be moved, but to listen, to be recollected, to meditate so that your soul continues to be slowly penetrated by grace and having been thus transported onto an elevated plane, with high ideas on all that is most important: on prayer, poverty, chastity, obedience, fervor, union with Our Lord, you will try to remain in this supernatural milieu, you will breathe this atmosphere that will renew your heart and transform it.

All of you are intelligent: let this intelligence be occupied with the holy and real of which the preacher spoke so much. Let your heart be focused more and more on that which ought to be the fruit produced and become visible in your conduct. This is my advice to all: to those who felt very little interiorly, this is a must; for those who felt more, that they may not lose this fruit freely received by lack of vigilance and prayer in preserving it.

A second point that I cannot avoid speaking of regards your resolutions and does not seem to me of less importance.

The soul is normally touched when confronted by the end, face to face with what is greatest, most elevated. In this perspective, we tend to view life in its wider horizons and neglect to fix our attention on the more striking exterior failings we allow ourselves to fall into from time to time. Reflect on this aspect of your life, my dear Daughters, let each one examine the exterior fault that is hers. Both God and men expect this of you: that you correct what is not edifying exteriorly.

It would be vain to take the best resolutions, to make to God the most wonderful promises, to desire to identify your will to His, to have admirable thoughts of holiness and fervor, if you hold on to a habitual fault you fall into. Whether it is impatience, or very clear traces of self-love, self-seeking, or a certain egoism in your employment, an immortalized manner of

ing yourself in the Chapel. This seems like a detail; it is something external, but it is important because poor posture in the Chapel prevents people from seeing the respect, love and that a religious in prayer should manifest. Words, faults against poverty, over-anxiety for one's needs, etc. - these are exterior faults that must be eliminated.

Let each one of you, then, fix her attention on one of these: one only, not two or three at a time. One of these in her exterior conduct keeps her from being an edifying religious, a perfect one? I say "superior" because I notice that we entertain illusions in this area, with the best intentions in the world. A person may hold herself badly in the Chapel leaning on her elbows to pray better, hide her head in her hands to be recollected, and a hundred other reasons of this sort-- and, in the meantime, people are not edified and the Sister not attaining religious perfection.

Take the resolution to get rid of one of these imperfections every year. That is what I would like you to do. I believe it is important. Certain people make resolutions of an elevated kind while retaining these small faults that are the notes that the Gospel says appear like beams to their neighbor. Above all, correct yourself of these notes; you know better than I do what they are.

Now, after speaking of the impressions to keep at the end of a retreat and of the resolutions to take, I would like to give you an advice. You are gathered from various Houses. I want you to have a great desire to raise up the level of holiness in your own House, whether it be here or elsewhere. Let your love for God, for the Church, for our Congregation, encourage you to wish the greatest possible holiness for our Houses. Imagine what a consolation it is for our Lord Jesus Christ, the force and joy for the Church for our Assumption, to have in each of our Houses many holy souls!

Do everything you can then, to elevate the level of holiness in the Houses you belong to. Not by meddling with others if you are not in charge of them, but as far as you are concerned, through your fidelity and fervor: not getting into any of the bad habits but, by your fidelity, helping to correct them as soon as possible. If in the school, in the employments, among the coadjutrix Sisters, there is anything too natural, too human, too much of our poor nature tending towards what is inferior, try not to go with it. Upon arriving, tell your Superior that she can count on you, that you want to be a fervent religious and help as much as you can in her work for the perfection and the sanctification of the House and for the perfect observance of the Rule.

These are the three things I wanted to tell you, my dear Daughters. I still would like to recommend, on this last day, that you say a prayer of thanksgiving for all the graces received. Manifest your gratitude to God who has been so good to you. Show it also to him who has brought you the word of God, in rendering back to him by your prayers, the charity he has showed in preaching the retreat to you in spite of so much fatigue and disturbance.

Finally, my dear children, join to this gratitude towards those who have done you good, which is a great reason of living. Lily, a prayer to ask from God all that I have just told you. It is He alone who can grant it to you; it is He alone who can transform you, who can make you different from what you were last year. It is He alone who can help you to get rid of dissipation, or liveliness or what there is of too natural and too human in your conduct. God will grant you much if you ask for much.

Begin today a year of supplications. Our Lord has pledged Himself to listen to you - He has said Petite et accipietis; quaerite et invenietis. Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. (Lk. 11:9).

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Go to Him with confidence, He is there and He is never more generous in His gifts, never are His graces more ready to be diffused than when He is exposed on our altars, waiting for our prayers and asking for our Love.

Occupy in this way this last day of retreat, taking your resolutions and offering yourselves entirely to Jesus Christ in thanksgiving for all the benefits that you have received from Him.

October 17, 1875

REPARATION, ADORATION, THANKSGIVING

My dear Daughters,

Those among us who have been many years in religious life ought to examine ourselves and search our hearts to the depths to see whether we have made ourselves worthy, or at least whether we are striving to make ourselves worthy, of our double vocation of prayer and zeal.

It is a fact that God has called us to a life of prayer, to more continual worship of the Blessed Sacrament, to gratitude for and adoration of His infinite perfections, in order that we may compensate for what so many indifferent people, so many sinners fail to do. He has called us to work for the spread of His kingdom in souls, and so our business in life is to counteract everything that is against Him in the world. And alas! almost everything is against Him.

Without doubt there is in our day a greater love for our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. But at the same time there is hatred, infernal hatred towards Him, that is expressed by sacrileges. Two have been committed lately in the diocese of Nimes, and they were obviously intended as insults to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, because the Sacred Vessels were left to burn while the Hosts were taken away. That shows the hatred for our Lord and for religion which is the most outstanding characteristic of our day.

There was a time when indifference seemed the most characteristic evil of society, but now people are not indifferent. Obviously there are men who are carried away by love of pleasure or absorbed by business and who live in a sort of practical indifference. But as a general rule, people either love God or hate Him. At the root of revolt and hostility there is hatred of God and religion, and specially hatred of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His Church. We have it in our power to repair for scandals and sacrileges by adoration and by giving ourselves to prayer. If our Lord's reign is rejected by the world, we can, we ought, to establish it without reserve in our souls.

That is done by prayer and adoration. But let me tell you, Sisters, that it is also done by obedience. You see, obedience immolates us wholly, not only before God but before creatures, creatures as weak and imperfect as ourselves. They represent God merely because they have been chosen for that purpose. Obedience is clearly the very best reparation for the spirit of revolt that urges men to hate God and His Church and to rise in revolt against authority.

As regards prayer, you may say that many good Christians in the world pray a lot. But the fact remains that the people who do not pray are more numerous. Statistics show that in this great city of Paris barely 5% of the population perform their Easter duty. Perhaps a few more go to Sunday Mass pray a little and are not altogether without religion. But one may ask, how many are they? Without doubt half the people of Paris have no respect for God, and practise no religion. Not only do they live like heathens but the people who do practise religion imitate them. How much reparation we have to make my dear daughters! We can do so, as I was saying, by more continuous, more insistent, more fervent prayer. But make no mistake about it. The only way to live up to this beautiful vocation of ours is to throw ourselves heart and soul into it, by giving ourselves wholly to our Lord, and if it were possible,

giving more than oneself, giving oneself once for
 self and ten times for the people who do not give
 selves, because the number of religious com-
 to the number of wicked people who refuse to
 God must be one to ten. And to make up for
 refusal to love is our privilege. Alas! far
 loving God as they should, many of them hate
 The others remain tepid, careless, indiffer-
 They live for this world alone, and not at all
 the supernatural nor for eternity nor for the
 wonderful divine gift that God brought into this

This is the only aspect of our life that I
 to speak about today. We must examine if we
 living up to it. This is the work that awaits
 who enter. They must realise that God has
 them to make atonement, to adore, to es-
 ish in their hearts the reign of God whose
 are so often denied, and to pay Him by
 tant reparation and worship the homage that
 do not offer with the generosity that they
 ld.

Because, Sisters, when all is said and done,
 are we here? Why were we not born into a
 ly where God was ignored? Why, after we were
 sed, were we so fortunate as to have our
 head signed with the Sign of the Cross? Or
 other cases, how did it happen that when we
 older God came in our heart bringing a
 that our parents had not thought of teaching
 As a holy writer expressed it, why did God
 the secret spot in the depth of our soul,
 soul He has made for Himself, and make us
 He that He wanted us to love Him alone and
 all things? Ought not this choice of God,
 loving kindness, this mercy, be enough to
 us give ourselves wholly and with eagerness,
 to repay by worship, adoration, prayer and
 undivided love the goodness of Him who
 loved us so?

To this adoration and gratitude we ought to

add atonement, reparation, to compensate for all that wicked men fail to offer to God. It follows that our gift of self should be very ardent, very continuous, very complete. We must keep nothing for self. If we take pleasure in anything that is not according to God's good pleasure it must be sacrificed. If we are tempted to keep our freedom in anything, instead of offering it to God, let us sacrifice it heartily so that nothing will be refused that could be given.

This applies to every age and degree: to novices so that they may make progress in the gift of self; to postulants so that they may begin their noviceship seriously; to older nuns so that they may strive to make some progress each day in God's holy love, so that their gift of self may grow in generosity and that anything that remains not yet entirely given in spite of their good-will may be given now at last. Because my belief is that, throughout their life long they have wished to give all, although they may not yet have achieved the total gift of self that they have always desired.

November 7, 1875

TO UNCEASINGLY MAKE ACTS OF LOVE OF GOD

My dear Daughters,

Last time, I talked to you about the love, the piety which we should feel upon entering the chapel, in presence of our Lord. Today I will tell you that the religious life animates itself entirely by acts of love of God. Above all things we should be occupied in making frequent acts of love of God.

It is important for this, to put one's heart in the disposition of doing all through love of God, from the early morning - I say, through the day of God, whether one considers our Lord in His

Humility, or God in His Trinity, following the devotion in which one finds oneself - in such a way that all that one does, all that one suffers, all that one encounters, all, in one word, and without exception, should be done with this ardour of heart which relates all to the glory of God, and which looks for nothing but the accomplishment of God's will in occupations, in contradictions.

This is a habit to take. To acquire it, pause often in the middle of your actions and say: "My God, here I am to do your will: grant that I may do your will; it is all that I ask; it is all that I desire in this world." Thus you detach yourself from the rest, and this is an act of love of God;

Have you noticed the invitatory of the Office that is especially fitting religious souls; *Jubilemus Deo adjutori nostro*? You will tell me that often we have troubles, and therefore, we cannot be jubilant; but this jubilation which is spoken of in the invitatory is precisely that which the angels do unceasingly before God. It consists in promptitude in obedience, in joy in serving God, in belonging to Him, in doing something for Him, and in showing Him one's love in each pain, in each difficulty, in each contradiction that one meets in this life. It is a supernatural joy of God which blooms, as a consequence, of natural sufferings, since it is, then, that we can taste more the happiness of giving much to God.

After having told our Lord: "as long as I do your will, O my God, what I do is not important," stir up within you great sentiments of love: "My God, how I love you in all that you will, in all that you permit! In all that comes to me, I know your love is found! How good you are to occupy yourself with me! How good you are to be my Father!" It is in this way that we can animate each of our actions by feeling love of God, gratitude towards God, the presence of God, and approach this love so great, which does not cease to inflame the angels.

Finally, my dear Daughters, there is the love of

God who inclines to do good to creatures. All that we do for creatures, one has to bring back to the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ that these creatures have. Likewise, you are as mistresses in relation with children who are naughty, intolerable, difficult; nevertheless, these children are all created to the image of God.

Certainly, when Jesus Christ came to earth, mankind was composed of creatures, much more different, guilty; and since they have crucified our Lord with a subtlety of cruelty, of derision and of scorn, Him who came to enlighten them and to save them. Nothing of all that we see resembles that which our Lord found on earth; His love, though, was not discouraged.

In imitation of Him, then, we ought to try to put in our hearts a sentiment of supernatural love to do for God all that we do for creatures; in such a way all act of zeal, of charity, of goodness, all service rendered in our employment, should be animated by the love of Jesus Christ which we want to serve and find in everything. We find it in the very imperfect likeness, one has to acknowledge, of creatures who, through their imperfections, resemble us more, alas! than they resemble Him; but finally Jesus contents Himself with this resemblance; so faint that it is, and in His goodness, He takes as done to Himself all that we do to the least of His brethren.

I show you these different means of making acts of love of God. Look for others, if you wish, to animate through these all the actions of the day; because it is the love of God which should be the unceasing aspiration and so to say, the respiration of religious souls. St. Francis of Sales recommended to his religious, who did not understand Latin to make acts of love of God between the verses of the Office. This recommendation has been a great teaching for me, and I tell myself that if at the Office between the verses, during this time which is certainly not long, the saints

And
uch in the day, after each word,
after each action, can we take acts of love of God!

If we follow the doctrine of St. Francis of
Sales, how we would find the means of finding in all
the time for this dominant occupation of our souls,
occupation which will dominate all the others! Often
one is concerned: about one's health, one's employ-
ment, one's worries, one's difficulties, but what
is all that, I ask you, beside the honor, the hap-
piness which one can call too great, to spend one's
life in the love of God! Think how many acts of
love can lift your heart towards God in one day!

St. Francis of Sales, as told you, recommends
the performing of acts of love between the verses
of the Office. About this, I do not give you a rule;
because these religious did not understand Latin,
and St. Francis of Sales adds that those who under-
stand what they can say apply their intention, to
purish themselves and to occupy themselves with the
love of our Lord; but how many other things there
are that we do not understand! In general, the ways
of Providence are for us Greek and Latin. The events,
the sicknesses, the contradictions, the difficulties,
the Hebrew for us; we do not understand them. Well,
before each of these things, let us make an act of
love of God with longing, with confidence, with a
filial sentiment; then we will always know enough,
and we will always understand enough.

Here, my Sisters, is a very important subject.
Each of you find in prayer what she can do to
copy herself as continually as possible with the
love of the good God, of the Blessed Virgin, accord-
ing to her own vocation let her try to see how she
can insert this love in her acts. May she awake
and go to sleep in this sentiment. Whether she
works, or she recreates herself, or she rests, may
she do all for this sovereign love for which she
has given her life and for which she has entered
the religion.

I cannot recommend too much to you, my dear
Sisters, to do all that you can, to put these

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counsels as faithfully into practice, as you seem to understand them.

November 14, 1875

TO LOVE, TO IMITATE MARY OUR MOTHER

My dear Daughters,

I have spoken to you the last time of the acts of the heart which you can make throughout the day to occupy yourselves of the love of the good God, to develop it in your souls, and to live in this love. Today, I want to propose to you a practice which appears to me to be one of the most powerful means to form in oneself this habitual love, this fervent love, this perfect love which ought to be the soul of the religious life: it is to give oneself to the most Blessed Virgin in order to enter into the dispositions which she had towards her divine Son.

The past century had a devotion which has not been approved by the Church in its entire scope, because it was formulated in a manner, too stiff and too peculiar. At the bottom of this devotion, there is, nevertheless, a thought which could aid you and which I want to explain to you. It is this which one finds in the authors of the time, under the name of "slaves of the most Blessed Virgin" and which consisted in giving oneself to the Blessed Virgin as (which is true and approved by the Church) her children and to go to her as to a Mother whose sentiments ought to pass into the heart of her children.

This devotion consisted, as it consists today, in offering one's heart to the Blessed Virgin, in confiding it to her, so that, through her goodness which is very great, through her power which is immense, through the continual care which she takes of us, through her example, she may form in us the

sentiments which we ought to have for our Lord Jesus Christ. And this puts in one the examination of which Mary was for our Lord during her whole life.

And when you are in dryness, when you do not know how to make acts of love of God, how to occupy yourselves with our Lord, if you enter into this marvel of holy love which is the Blessed Virgin, you will always find there what you lack. If you take now the sentiments of the utmost desires which the Blessed Virgin had for our Lord, even before He descended into her chaste womb, you will have the fervor, the desire, the call, the expectation which are not in a soul which does not feel in herself the presence of our Lord.

If it seems to us that our Lord is far, why do we not enter into the sentiments which the Blessed Virgin had in the temple, when, with the holy prophets and all the patriarchs, she called with all her heart, all her desires, on the only Son of God who would incarnate Himself in the womb of a very pure virgin (and she was not aware that it was she)? There is the picture of the desire of a soul in privation.

Again, if you think of the moment where, after the Incarnation, Mary carried our Lord in her womb, see her profound humility, her ardent love; then look at our Lord Jesus Christ in the womb of the most Blessed Virgin, confined for us, poor for us, abased, humbled, enslaved, because it is He who is enslaved for us, who gave Himself and delivered Himself so entirely to the most Blessed Virgin without whom He could not make any movement.

Soon Advent will be here, let us adore Jesus there, in Mary; let us try to enter into the sentiments which Mary had for Him, sentiments of faith, of adoration, of love, of perfect abandonment, of imitation, of recollection. There is nothing which you cannot find in this treasure.

When you have a difficulty in recollecting

yourselves, go there; ask Mary your Mother to whom you belong as Christians, as baptised creatures, as Religious and as Religious of the Assumption, ask her to make you share in some of these dispositions which have so much glorified the divine Saviour, which have so pleased Him that He did not shrink back from the womb of this incomparable Virgin. It was in Mary that He found, without doubt, the most love and fidelity. He was pleased to call her His Mother, in making her cooperate in the salvation of the human race and deposited in her all the treasures of heaven.

If you continue thus in following the life of the Blessed Virgin, look at her when our Lord was just a child, and when she carried Him in her arms. What did she do to serve Him, to love Him, and to give Him the smallest services of life? I recommend this above all to lay Sisters, she washed the clothes of the Infant Jesus, prepared also His food, swept the house for Him, rendered Him, in one word, all the services which you render to creatures, to children who are the images of Jesus Christ.

She could not, it is true, bestow the truth in a soul, full of truth; but she was a Mother and always careful for Him. You, my Sisters, who have to teach, have to give the truth to the souls of the children. Remember, then, the services which Mary gave the Infant Jesus; fill yourselves with the sentiments of Jesus for Mary, because here, the order is reverse: it is you who give and the children who receive; whereas it was Mary who received and Jesus who gave. But all that you do to form Jesus in the hearts of the children, Jesus will hold as done to Himself.

I cannot continue, because I would be endless in speaking of the life of the Blessed Virgin; but what I do not do, you will do, at meditation; you will understand her joys, you will understand her sorrows. Mary knew that this divine Saviour would be, for her, the cause of

the most cruel sorrows; she knew that she had to see Him on the Cross, and that she would share with Him this sorrowful martyrdom. If He was a pledge, a gift, a joy, He was also a sacrifice, a living host which the most Blessed Virgin unceasingly offered to God to appease His justice and to obtain pardon.

Before the birth of our Lord, Mary carried Jesus at the time of the Visitation, she crossed the mountains of Judea with much pain in the state that she was in, in spite of her youth, the dangers, the difficulties of travelling at that time.

Much later, she goes farther still; she crosses the desert, goes to Egypt carrying the child Jesus in her arms, without accommodations, without knowing how she will live; if you consider the time that she spent in the midst of an idolatrous people, you will see her giving Him all the homage which this people did not give Him; she suffered in the desert, but with Jesus, it did not matter where she went. It is true that Joseph was with her. You too, my Sisters, wherever you will go, you will find a counsel, a support, a director, a Superior: and besides, let nothing disturb you, you will have Jesus Christ.

When our Lord grew, Mary lived with Him in Nazareth where Jesus certainly received the most perfect of honors which He could receive on earth. He was surrounded by these perfect creatures, Mary and Joseph, and received more love, obedience, respect, recollected adoration than He would receive in the most fervent monasteries, even more than He received from the Apostles, the greatest Saints and the entire Church.

If you consider the public life of our Lord, you will see that Mary suffered much, that she had many privations, on the part of her divine Son. He is concerned with His Father's business. She can hardly approach Him and when she sees Him, He is occupied with the service of His Father, as He had told her at the age of twelve. Find out what was the zeal of the Blessed

Virgin, what was her fidelity, what was her heroic spirit. Always imitate her so as to give you this strong and generous love which cannot, of course, equal hers but which imitates it since she are her daughters. Think how Mary cooperated in the heart and by her prayers to the teachings of the Lord during His public life; she saw how this beloved Son drew farther away from her in order to go into the midst of the wicked; she saw Him insulted, blasphemed; she saw all the things that would make up the painful scenes of Calvary materialized. She saw all that and you can imagine what Mary was with regard with Jesus, what reparations, what submissions, what prayers, what desires she offered to God for the conversion of the world, so that the word of Jesus would bear fruit! With what the Blessed Virgin tried to repeat these divine words to make them penetrate in souls.

It is believed, and this is a general opinion, that St. Marthe went near her to receive this admirable faith which was so great, so triumphant; this Virgin that one cannot find in the Gospel a response of faith similar to her after that of Peter. Both have similarly confessed the divinity of Jesus Christ in saying: "Credidi, quia tu es Christus Filius Dei vivi qui in hunc mundum venisti." In that time, this was heroic. The apostles did not say that much before the Resurrection!

One also believes that when the penitent Magdalene was converted, she was received by the very pure and very holy Virgin Mary and that she received from her much graces, much love, light and lessons. Besides you can see that they were with Mary on Calvary. These holy women taught the Queen of all Virgins, by this marvel of sensitivity, stronger than men, persevered, ready for everything. They were faithful until the end, not being able to give their life for the divine Master, they at least gave Him their love.

Follow Mary with them to Calvary, to the

chre, to the Resurrection, to the Ascension. Try to find out the sentiments that she felt for Jesus in these various mysteries and ask her to form them in you. May she make you understand what a faithful, zealous, generous love full of faith, of attention for the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, for His teaching, for His word, for His interests, for His glory, can make you do and can form in you. May she make you understand all that Jesus found in her of love and consolation, because our Lord had very great consolations and love in the heart of His mother.

One must not doubt that if the very pure and very tender heart of the Blessed Virgin was a cause of sorrow for our Lord on the way to Calvary, because it felt everything that made Him suffer, meanwhile, the perfection with which she served God and with which she united herself to Him was for Him a great consolation and great joy. Because there was no creature more perfect than Mary, she was the most precious fruit of the Blood of Jesus Christ and of His mission on earth. She is the perfection that angels as well as men admire. The Sacred Mother of men through the blood of our Lord, brings after Him a multitude of virgins. May it please God that all be like her, a perfect fruit, a blessed fruit, a fruit of election and consolation, that the Saviour can show to the angels asking them if in heaven, one finds more love than on earth.

That is very beautiful, my dear Daughters, but after all, you can attain it with the help of the Blessed Virgin. Offer yourselves then to Mary, loving her, giving yourselves to her, not through a holy servitude, but, as I told you, in the beginning, through the holy and true sentiments of a daughter towards her Mother than a slave to its master and carries her image and resemblance much more.

Draw near to Mary. She will teach you all human things, because she is a pure creature.

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turbed about it. I am going to give you a consoling thought which will encourage you: It is practically impossible to know where we stand in this regard. When we ask this question, we cannot really answer it in a definite way. And at times we are far from the mark.

There are certain things we should take up from time to time in our meditation in order to acquire this true spirit of prayer. This might be expressed in some of Our Lord's own words: One is, "without me you can do nothing", which is the real foundation of a life of prayer. The other: "Unless the branch remains attached to the vine, it produces nothing, and should be cut off and burnt (Jn.XV,5). This is another sure foundation for prayer.

I think you understand me, and I need not explain any further. Meditate these words as well as the other sayings of our Lord in the Gospel. They will make us understand that by our own nature, by our own strength, our own feelings, by this life which is our own we can do nothing. We can only wither, like a branch which apparently is green and full of life, but which, apart from the vine, will gradually wither and die, because it is cut off from life. Through our supernatural life, however, through union with Our Lord, through dependence on him, through the thoughts and sentiments we draw from him, we go towards him who is life and accomplish good and fruitful works.

Unless I am mistaken, this is the foundation of a life of prayer. What is, in fact, a life of prayer? It is a life where continually we strive heavenwards, where more and more we put aside that which is our own, and specially that self which is still so full of life in us: "I" am made like that. I feel this way. I do it that way", and so on. All this means nothing. But it is precisely this which has to be done away with. Even if these things were endlessly repeated and multiplied, would all simply mean going back to nature, and this does not lead us much anywhere. But not to

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take any account of self, to hold it in contempt because it is our corrupt self, and we should be busy about higher and greater things, to seek in Our Lord what he is: strength, light, love, too see his power, what he wants to give us, his feelings, his thoughts, his words, his guidance, his examples, his wisdom, and then through prayer try to make all this our own, this is what I call a life of prayer. That is why we should meditate Our Lord's words: "Without me you can do nothing. I am the vine and you are the branches".

For the moment, I only quote this, but I if you seek for yourselves in the Gospel, specially in Our Lord's discourse after the Last Supper, all he says about these matter, which are so fundamental for progress in the interior life, for the less you live your own life, the less you think about self, the more you treat self as a thing to be forgotten, put aside and held in contempt, so much the more Our Lord, in his divine wisdom, and kindness and beauty, in his light, his love, will be the habitual occupation of your mind.

Seek this earnestly during Advent. It certainly was Mary's state of mind during this time. She possessed in her inmost being Our Lord Jesus Christ, she lived with him in an admirable union of love, and at the same time in a humility above the humility of all creatures, though she was the most perfect of all. Think often that if we do not strive to become souls of prayer, that is to say, if we do not strive to put into our minds thoughts of faith, Our Lord's sentiments, instead of what is merely human, we shall not achieve our goal, as nature is so strong against us.

We came into this world with our own nature and for a certain length of time, to follow it seemed the most important thing in life. In a large measure, we thought much of ourselves, of what we were, of what we had, and felt, or

thought we were or had we easily believe ourselves better than others. We think we have great delicacy or loftiness of mind, or what not. We tell ourselves all sorts of things along these lines. All this is nothing. The important thing is to go beyond this, to think much of our Lord's holiness, greatness, the wonder of His life, and to think of all He want to give us.

The least degree of grace, the most minute particle of grace, coming into a soul, is worth infinitely more than the greatest marvels of nature. Lifting your heart to our Lord, receiving a single grace, such as you daily receive so abundantly, a single degree of progress in your life of prayer, is infinitely more precious than the greatest gift of heart or mind, than all kinds of perfection in the order of nature.

Sum up in your mind all the treasures of old, with all their greatness and loftiness according to nature. A single degree of grace, single particle of the supernatural gifts which God pours into a soul is infinitely more perfect. Think of a girl, for instance, not very gifted in mind or heart, such as we sometimes find among the children, who has very ordinary dispositions, not much courage, who, according to nature is rather mediocre, but who is faithful to grace, thinks little of herself, remains close to our Lord, is careful to be branch attached to the vine. She is richer, and of more value and importance, has more light, than more perfect creatures according to nature.

Thus for your own selves, progress consists in putting self aside, in being busy about God, in filling your soul with heavenly gifts. But you must remember that you will never know at what stage of progress you are.

I shall now say a few words for beginners in the spiritual life. A common illusion is the following: when God calls a soul, He does everything at first in her. He makes her desire to serve Him, attracts her and consoles her. Prayer

is easy, virtue is attractive. When we were in the world and felt the first attraction of grace, this was probably your story, as it was mine. But all this was our Lord's doing. He gave us great light, ardent desires to do what was right. But as we were beginners, we thought all this was our own treasure and possession.

A few years later, when God no longer gives us the milk of little children, when He lets us work by ourselves at the difficult task of perfection, we are disturbed and we think: "I who was so fervent, so ardent at prayer, I who had so much light, who was so far advanced, I who was so full of love and devotion, and who thought that all this was my own, what has happened to me?"

We were in fact inclined to think of these graces as our own, when in reality they were no such thing, but a merciful gift of God who was calling us. You had to be deprived of it so as to learn that it was not yours. Even if you were as far advanced as the prayer of quiet, the gift of tears, or if you had a lively consciousness of God's continual presence, none of these things were yours. It was simply a gift of God's infinite goodness, and in His infinite wisdom He could withdraw it without your losing the least merit in His sight. Perhaps He gave it to you because He knew you would not otherwise give yourself to Him and then He withdraws it, because He wants you to accept the sacrifice, to follow Him on His way to the Cross and fill your mind with the thoughts of the Gospel.

Do not be disturbed or frightened if prayer, having been easy, becomes difficult. Nothing is lost. Perhaps later in life you will again find the sweetness and consolation which once were yours. As St. Teresa says, at any rate, you will find them in heaven more abundantly, for all the consolations we are deprived of here below, will be given us eternally in heaven.

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Do not grieve then, if you do not find it easy
to pray, but there is reason to weep if, after a
time when you sincerely despised yourselves and
acknowledged your nothingness, you now have a great
love for yourselves and are busy about your own
interests. This is the only thing really to be re-
gretted, for contempt of self is the only founda-
tion of a life of prayer.

January 3, 1875

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND OF ONESELF,
THE FOUNDATION OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

My dear Daughters,

During this time of the Holy Childhood of our Lord, it is necessary to apply oneself in particular, to return once to the beginnings of one's religious life. To do so is an advice given by all the Saints.

Not too long ago, I saw a holy religious, the Provincial of his order, a man rather aged, who told me: "Mother, everything depends on the beginnings; if I knew only the a-b-c of religious life, I would be happy." At the beginning of this ecclesiastical year, as Our Lord shows Himself to us, and in a way, begins again His life among us, it is truly the time, it seems to me, to come back once more to the foundations of one's life.

One of the basic foundations of a Christian life, and even more so of the religious life, is to know oneself and to know God. "Know yourself, and you know God," said a great Saint. Indeed, there are two important things that are good to think of often: to know oneself with one's misery, one's imperfections, one's weakness in this fallen nature of ours that our Lord came to redeem, a state which, if we consider it as such, should not discourage us, since it was in this state that our Lord found man when He came to save him.

If, then, we accept to be sinners, children of Adam, we will be able to draw from this, a sort of sad regret for having offended God; yes, but never any diminution of our hope, which would be a great evil; and to avoid it, one must pass from the experience of one's misery to the knowledge of this great gift that God gives us: this Savior, Spouse, Master, this God who comes to assume our nature to be in some way, incarnated in each one of us. In considering this gift through which the

goodness of God is made known to us, the graces that He pours out and that He has already poured on us, we can look at our weakness, our tendencies to evil, without a letdown in our soul.

A thing which has always struck me in the Holy Liturgy is that we never recite the "Confiteor" without introducing it by "Our help is in the name of the Lord." That is understood as soon as we are able to penetrate the depths of the wound of sin -- knowing we have offended God by our works, our actions, and by our omissions. It is necessary that beforehand, we put ourselves in the spirit that our help is in the name of the Lord, and that we finish by asking that His goodness and mercy give us pardon and forgiveness of our faults.

It is always between these two thoughts: the help that the Lord brings us, and His mercy which comes in forgiveness -- that we must place ourselves. Doesn't God say unceasingly in the Scriptures "Though your soul be black like ebony or red like scarlet dyed twice over, I will make it white like snow"? And besides: "He will relieve us of all our iniquities, He will take all of our sins and throw them into the sea", provided you ask pardon from the bottom of your heart and place yourself under the Blood of Jesus Christ and live in union with Him.

There, certainly, is the basis of a Christian life and of the religious life, adding one thing (this seems strange to say, for everyone believes he has contrition for his sins): the habitual contrition for one's faults, horror of all sin and blemishes. It is that, my Sisters, that one can never develop too much in oneself; it is one of the characteristic marks of the Saints. All have a deep horror of that which can offend God, displease Him, or stain the soul.

Perhaps you will say that there is a sentiment which leads to perfection. I grant you that; but each day this sentiment must become

more alive, more delicate, deeper, more general, and more intimate, to the peaks of perfection. It does not suffice to abstain from sin; there must always remain in us a horror of all sins committed, of those which can still reach us, and a fear; a detestation, a hatred which removes us from this sole and sovereign evil -- sin of any kind. But notice this: I did not say that we will not fall. Because of our fragility, our miserable state, we will fall; but this fall is only a weakness which can exist side by side with a contrite heart and an ever-growing perfection.

I am persuaded, my dear daughters, that I am only expressing the sentiments which are already yours; but it is good to come to the Child Jesus in the humility, the simplicity that He shows us in the crib, and see if the bases of perfection are perfectly solid in our souls, so as not to expose ourselves to building on straw. For to build on rock is to build on the truths which I have spoken about.

Let us renew ourselves on this subject. Let us examine the a-b-c of religious life--obedience, poverty, regularity--on all these things to which we are formed in the Noviciate. If we are still faithful to them, we have made great progress. The author of the "Imitation" was certainly a great saint. He said: "Please God that I could rebuild the structure of my religious life and make it regular, solid, and fervent!" We must propose this to ourselves at the beginning of this year, in view of these mysteries of the Holy Childhood of our Lord, in order to develop this new life that He wants to live in us. And let us apply ourselves with renewed vigor.

July 18, 1875

DETACHMENT FROM ALL THINGS

My dear daughters,

In my readings of Saint Therese these past days, I have noticed how much she insists on a great detachment from all creatures as being an essential point for the life of prayer, the interior life, the religious life. However, it would seem that religious--cloistered, enclosed, and separated from the world--would have less need of it than we who have necessary and frequent relations with the outside world.

Our own title: Religious of the Assumption, seems to give us a particular duty of detachment from the evil in the world. The word Assumption, my Sisters, indeed signifies that one has passed into new territory--a superior region; that one has in some way, passed beyond the limits of this life to share in the dialogue of heaven, following the word of St. Paul: "May your conversation be of heaven."

We must look at ourselves often to see what is the measure of detachment in our souls. There is no age where it is no longer necessary to examine ourselves on this point, for it is not easy to maintain this state of entire detachment by which one no longer holds on to anything, to any place, to any of the conditions of notre life.

I am starting by the inanimate objects: not to hold on to one employment or another, to this type of lesson or occupation or another. There is much to be done in order to be entirely detached as such, in order to have one's heart completely in heaven.

I said entirely; for, in speaking of detachment, my Sisters, I am not only speaking of detachment from what one does, but also from

what one would like to do. When a certain occupation is given to us, often it is not difficult to be ready to leave it, because one feels its pains and its worries. Then, this is no longer detachment; it is rather, a lack of detachment, which brings us to want something else, to think that we would be better in such and such an occupation. Detachment makes us ready either always to do the same thing or to change willingly when we are asked.

This is for material things. I am coming now to persons. The most tender charity must be in our heart. We must sincerely love each of the persons with whom we live. We are even allowed to love certain persons with a more tender affection, for the virtues that we see in them or for what they have done for us. An affection based on these motives is not contrary to detachment from creatures. But as soon as anxiety comes in, as soon as one runs after the presence of the loved ones, of the consolations that they give, as soon as one has the need to be loved, which is very different from loving; as soon as one needs that which gives attachment to creatures, to all that one can receive from the creature, one is no longer in the detachment that God asks of His spouses. Detachment is not contrary to charity; but it is opposed to all ties, to all the threads by which one remains attached on this earth and held back from God.

In speaking of that today, I would like that, from now until the retreat, each one of you truly live what she has to do in that respect, to be disposed to being a daughter of prayer, united to God in prayer, in meditation, in the recitation of the Prayer of the Church, in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Blessed Sacrament, my Sisters, is truly the perfect model of this impartiality which I am speaking about. There our Lord loves us very tenderly, He desires us, calls, waits for us. He is there, always ready to take what we

give Him, to return His honor and adoration to His Father. But He does not follow us everywhere; He does not come begging at each instant for consolations. He takes what we give Him, and at the same time, He is always giving.

October 24, 1875

LOVE FOR OUR LORD IN THE TABERNACLE

My dear daughters,

It is impossible not to return to the same topics in the recommendations I give you. Today, I would like to return to the deep respect, the great love we should have for the dwelling place of our Lord, Jesus Christ among us.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ living on our altars, dwelling in the tabernacle in our chapel, should be the Object of our thoughts, our whole heart; and if I can add, the dream of our soul, the deep attachment through which we belong to God. If there is complete self-giving, the consecration of one's person to God, there will also be, I think, for practically everyone, the gentle souvenir, the thought, the mark of the first moments which God has allowed to make us feel His love...

I believe that there are but a few people, above all in the religious life, who cannot remember those instances in their youth when the thought of our Lord in the tabernacle, loving and inviting them, has sufficed to fill their soul and somewhat make it overflow with love. Among you here present, many have certainly felt this joy of being called, being chosen by our Lord Jesus Christ, being loved by Him and in turn preferring Him to all, possessing Him often in their hearts through Holy Communion and then bringing Him through the streets of a city or the deserted part of the country-side, alone adoring the Creator of all things in the midst of a world which did not

... know what intimate treasure the young girl carried, which later became that of the Religious. I remind you of these thoughts, my dear daughters, because I think it is good to awaken these attitudes, to make them grow in our soul. We can never know too much how to return to these joys of betrothal which our Lord has made us experience once before. But we should not expect these joys to last for a lifetime; that is not natural: ordinarily, God calls a soul and draws it to Him through tenderness, consolations, little effusions of joys which are found in Him; but after all this, since He does not call except to carry His cross, the soul has to pass through trials and experience contradictions.

Do not think, my Sisters, that this is the share only of the Daughters of the Assumption; all pass through this. Yesterday, while speaking with a holy priest, I admit having been frightened for an instant deep within me, when I heard about the sufferings of a young Religious of an old Order (she had been our student) and who seemed to be passing through a very terrible trial, a very great loneliness, that I was almost afraid that she would succumb to it, and interiorly, I asked God to come and help her.

Yet, God had called her, even her, by a great love, by a desire to be generous, by a living feeling of who He is. But there are moments when God allows His poor creature to feel alone, to experience her utter weakness, so that she can then give herself more generously, without feeling what she receives from God. It is good that it is this way; for if we did not have these moments of difficulties, of sadness, where would our generosity and our love come in, and how would we move up the painful road which our Lord first walked for love of us?

Therefore, it is joy, it is attraction which come first; trials follow; and through these trials in which God sometimes still makes

Himself felt, a very dear souvenir of God's call, of the privilege He has given us by choosing us from among all others, should be kept. This grace usually comes from the tabernacle. Think back; there is certainly a church, a tabernacle before which you have felt touched the most; all this must now be carried over to our tabernacle, our altar, our chapel where God dwells by a very great love which no creature can equal. For, if someone proposes that we remain hidden behind such structures, be enclosed therein, and live thus, I do not say for a whole lifetime, but all time, until eternity, until the end of ages, I do not think there has ever been a man big enough to reduce himself to this state out of love for another, or even for all creatures put together.

There, we have what our Lord does for us! All the details of our chapel, its windows or doors, its stalls, even its walls ought to be dear to us more than any other place; They should fill our thoughts, our minds, in such a way that in moving around the house, in taking walks, if we catch a glimpse of these, our heart should immediately be uplifted, pass over everything, and go to the tabernacle where Jesus Christ dwells and gives His life for us.

I recommend, my dear daughters, that you work towards making these attitudes grow in you; for if you make these really present, very much alive in you, respect will follow, and love will fill your soul. Negligence, thoughtlessness, and distractions will be taken away; and this first preparation will make recollection easier for you, your prayer and encounters with God will be more authentic and deeper, and even while working, your heart will go very naturally towards our Lord, present in the holy Tabernacle.

December 5, 1875

JESUS CHRIST LIVING IN US -- THE THREE
CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS PRESENCE: HE IS
SILENT, A MYSTERY, INTANGIBLE

My dear daughters,

In speaking to you the other day, there was something I failed to exhaust as much as I desired. I want to return to it today; but as it is a bit difficult to speak on this, I ask you to give me your full attention and to help me with your prayers.

I think I already told you that one of the lines on which prayer is founded is this: "If the branch does not remain one with the vine, it does not bear fruit; and it is good for nothing but to be thrown into the fire." When one is fully aware and taken up by the need to live so united with our Lord, counting on Him alone, one needs to have faith. This is one of the things which should take up a great part of our time of prayer. We must often return to this unquestionable truth that Christ lives in us. Nothing can be clearer than that. You are all convinced of this, you all know that when we are in the state of grace, our Lord lives in us. He is present in a silent, mysterious, and intangible way. Note well these three qualities of His presence; in short, He dwells there.

You know well, my Sisters, that God's almighty power makes Him present everywhere. He is, then, in the very depths of our being, more intimately present to us than we are to ourselves; and this is one truth which helps tremendously in keeping oneself in God's presence.

You know, too, that by grace, our soul is the dwelling place of the holy Trinity; that with love, the spirit of Jesus Christ is given to us in a way that, if in holy Communion, we receive the Body, the Blood, the soul of Jesus Christ, his whole

divine Person, we also have in our daily life, the communication of His spirit, so holy, so life-giving, and so fruitful, which makes itself present to us. But what is this presence like? This is where the three words that I just mentioned to you come in.

He is present firstly, in a silent way. Pay close attention to this. Our Lord is there but silently so. If then, we excite ourselves interiorly, if we agitate ourselves, if we run our own life and all this noise within which we can produce just as cleverly as we produce exterior noise, we will not hear His voice. He is in us, He wants to speak to us, His Spirit wants to make Himself heard in ours; but we do not hear Him if we do not know how to be silent because His word is very gentle, hidden, very silent, very secretive and soft. Only those who live in silence and recollection can hear it.

I also said that our Lord is present in an intangible way, because you feel Him no more than you hear Him; and yet He is in you. Even at the moment of Holy Communion, when our Lord is fully present, you do not feel Him. When the priest puts the sacred host on your lips, you certainly feel that you receive something which is like a veil hiding the Body of Jesus Christ within its external appearance. You do not feel it, since you swallow the sacred species; but once our Lord is within you, you do not feel Him, because His presence is intangible.

Here I must tell you that we have to get used to not feeling these things of the soul in a sensible manner. I make use of a simple expression, do I not? It is because there are many things which are felt so sensibly in the soul: its desires, its fears, its anguish, its dislikes, all its particular actions, its sorrows, its joys; on the other hand, our Lord does not make Himself felt in this way; He is

intangible. In the first answer of the catechism, my Sisters, is found: "God is a pure spirit which goes beyond our senses." God who is present in us transcends our spirit. This is one of the truths which, above all, must be absorbed in faith and in prayer.

Where do joys and afflictions in prayer come from? Ordinarily, from the fact that one hardly feels that one possesses our Lord, or that one does not feel it at all. This attitude is something small, my dear daughters. In fact, I would say it is nothing; however, I cannot say that because God allows it, God who wants to make our spirit grow more and more on this attention to His divine presence, precisely through these.

The feeling that we possess Jesus Christ within us, which gives us the assurance that it is good to talk to Him, that we feel His presence there, is what I would call an experience of God, in the depths of our very person. It is God's mercy, which we should not consider as nothing, because it is a way in which our spirit can live in faith and understand what faith does in us. How true it is that a soul which, never in life, has been touched by God in this way, which has never felt interiorly that God is there, that God speaks to him, that God calls him, that God loves him, that God asks something from him, has great difficulty in entering into the spiritual life. You will all agree that there was a time in your life, some moments, at least, in your youth, when you have experienced God.

It is God's great love, my dear daughters, which makes Him come down thus to our level of being and existing, which is so imperfect, and to our feelings; for we must never forget that God is a pure spirit--~~He is~~ beyond our senses; ~~consequently~~ consequently, even if we will never feel Him by our human senses, we can nevertheless possess Him; that not feeling anything in Communion is receiving just as much as when feelings are very alive,

even to the point of tears; that our Lord's presence is not less fruitful, less enriching, or of less value to the soul when this presence is not felt as when it is sensibly felt.

There is a third thing I would like to draw your attention to. The presence of Jesus Christ in us is not only intangible and silent; it is also mysterious--a mystery.

Where is our Lord found? Where does He live? Where does He choose to dwell; even after holy Communion? He is in our whole being, because it is our entire person that receives Him. But is He in our will? Is He in our heart? Is He in our spirit? In a word, where is He? He is everywhere. He is present all at once in our whole existence, but in such a way that He depends on us for this presence to be either fruitful or almost useless. How is this possible?

I presume that before God, you enter deeply into yourself, that you are convinced that God is present in your will. The big secret for making our will one with our Lord's is to give it to Him completely, to agree freely to be fully dependent on Him, fully confident in Him, and to go through this in such a way that it be no longer your will which runs your life, which guides you, but that of our Lord Jesus Christ; that it be He who, living in your will and holding it absolutely open and flexible in His hands, leads it where He wishes.

It works the same way with your heart. You have the choice of having your heart live only through His or, even after receiving this infinite grace, of keeping your human heart in such a way that this same grace degrades and remains on the purely human level. Alas, this latter is what happens to most Christians! Three-fourths of the heart really receives our Lord; but it rarely occurs to them that their will should be entirely one with our Lord's, that their heart, their feelings, ought to be united with the heart and the feelings of our Lord.

Let your whole being work this way; take your memory, your intelligence, even your body should receive from our Lord, an imprint of purity, modesty, sweetness, goodness, all the characteristic perfections of our Lord; and you will see how prayer lived in faith brings about the real union of the soul with God. The greatest mystics, the most enlightened spiritual writers, Saint Teresa among others, say that the true joy of the soul, ecstasy, is to have but one will with God, to count entirely on him, in such a way that all, from our very first act, be completely as God would want it, with love and trust.

Notice, my Sisters, that rising above what is merely human does not depend on you, but rather, the act of having the final end of joy and ecstasy. You are all called to this perfection, which is very personal and profound, of uniting yourself intimately with our Lord, in a way that your whole person depends on Him, as I have just told you.

When you pray, when you recite the Prayer of the Church throughout the day, or when you pray it in particular, bring yourself to this attitude, gently and without disputes, sometimes in one form, at other times in another form. Likewise, for example, when you are at the Office, our Lord prayed the psalms that you are praying; put yourself under His action, united to His prayer, to Him, desiring to receive what He asks, and continuing in this way, His life. You will reach this union which will be the grace of prayer in whatever you do.

For this, there needs to be much pruning. You understand that all we call our very own in our life which contributes to our misery, our sins, our imperfections, are an obstacle to this silent and direct union, to this so supernatural something, so spiritual, so holy,

so perfect, so divine, which our Lord wants to teach us.

Occasionally, read the Gospel with this attitude. You will then understand why our Lord tells you: "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." We can do this through the grace of Jesus Christ. You will understand why He says that we must pray without ceasing; and so many other things which seem to be far beyond our human capacity and nature. You will understand that we must try not to let even the first impulses of anger appear, since, when someone strikes us on the right cheek, we are asked to offer the left; when someone wants us to walk a thousand miles with him, when someone asks for our coat, our Lord tells us to walk ten thousand miles and to give even our tunic.

Finally, our Lord brings the Christian (for all this applies not only to religious) to a condition where he gives up earthly things, his imperfections, his sins, in order to be open to grace, ready to receive the mark of the perfect gift through which our Lord dwells in us. Over and above the fact that we are temples of Jesus Christ, we are also dwelling places of the Holy Spirit --this spirit of holiness, this spirit of perfection which is the spirit of our Lord, Jesus Christ, which has been given to us through Confirmation and which dwells in us by grace.

Well, my Sisters, prayer consists in continually moving forward in faith. It consists in this emptying of what belongs solely to this life; and in renewing our life of grace, our Christian life, the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, a life which will, through death, break through in us one day, like a robe of glory. Grace is the beginning of glory; prayer is the beginning of heaven.

You are all destined to this, my Sisters. Live it as strongly as you can; put into it all your affections in such a way that, whenever you

have a few minutes, you will go back to the things which concern this great work of yours, things which concern also your great riches, as it is actually your great happiness. Accept this work, so that at the end of your life, this can be your real joy, your eternal happiness, as it will also be your true glory.