

## **Imitation of the Blessed Virgin**

21<sup>st</sup> November 1872

My dear Daughters

The feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin that we celebrate today has been chosen in many religious Orders for the renewal of vows; the life of the Blessed Virgin in the temple being in a very special way the model of the religious life.

Without doubt the whole life of the Blessed Virgin is a perfect model for religious, but most particularly this time when she was separated from the world and from her family in the house of God. First of all let us look at the generosity, the gift of self, the perfection with which she begins today this life of the virgins in the temple. How she leaves everything that is dear to her, her family, her most legitimate affections, the consolations of her home in order to live only for God.

Let us consider the first aspect of this presentation: that is the aspect of separation, sacrifice, offering and immolation. Later on we shall see another Presentation when the Blessed Virgin offers Our Lord Jesus Christ in the temple, He who willed to be presented by his mother as a victim, and as pledge of our redemption. But today she is offering herself as victim, as spouse, as servant, detached from everything, detached from herself, detached from pleasures, detached from all which is as it were inherent in

our nature, from its self-seeking, from its own happiness, from its comforts, from its amusements. She is detached from everything that for us constitutes a desire all our life, because these things are as it were attached to us. I am speaking of the habitual and legitimate satisfactions of our nature.

This sacrifice of the world and of herself was without doubt, easier for the Blessed Virgin than for us because after all she was immaculate. She did not have any vain thoughts, any inordinate affections. She was not held back in any way by concupiscence, by the inclination to evil and she was exempt from all the miseries that we always carry with us .

Nevertheless, we can imitate her, because great graces are given to us to establish us in this light, in this purity, in this uprightness with God. And without any pretension of reaching the degree she reached, we ought at least to try to detach ourselves more and more from vanity, from attachment to the goods of this world. We need to work at destroying the roots of the capital sins and all the passions of our soul.

When a great impetus of love carries us towards God and we wish to give ourselves to Him, let us ask Our Lord to give us this uprightness, this purity that he likes to find in our relations with Him. Let us ask the Blessed Virgin, that following her example, we may avoid what is imperfect and find God in all things. This will be really true for us only

in the beatific life, when the bonds have been broken, the veils removed. Ah! Then we will see all things in God!

Adam, in the splendour of his original justice, saw God in all things. Each creature seemed to him a ray of the divinity. The Blessed Virgin also has these two prerogatives. Some doctors have taught that she enjoyed this from the first instant of her conception; others, only after the Incarnation. Whatever it be, she has enjoyed a knowledge of God more perfect, more luminous than any saint.

What Saint Catherine of Sienna could do when, at the age of six, she saw Our Lord for the first time; what Saint Joseph of Cupertino could do, being all his life plunged into the things of eternity; what the Blessed Imelda could do; what all the saints could do who advanced without ceasing from light to light, from ecstasy to ecstasy, from enlightenment to enlightenment: all these great graces with which the saints have been favoured were certainly granted to the Blessed Virgin and were indeed her starting point. *With its foundations on the holy mountains*<sup>1</sup>. Her foundations lie at the summit of the highest mountain; her foundations surpass the highest summits of the virtues of the saints. Because she received more grace than all other creatures put together, she began where the greatest saints finished.

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 87: 1

This is more admirable than imitable, although we could imitate in some way these magnificent prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin, by that spiritual viewpoint which detaches itself from the earth so as to go to God, that seeks in everything where God has left his imprint. Our mind and our imagination are occupied with so many things that are not of God, whereas we could turn the faculties of our soul towards this unique object! In a certain degree we can imitate the Blessed Virgin and begin to see God here below through the eyes of faith, of prayer, but above all see all things in God.

When we have stopped to consider with what rapidity the waters of a river flow towards the ocean, have we not felt that if we let ourselves go, we too would be carried away by the current? Ah! If the spring flows towards stream, the stream flows towards the river, the river towards the sea, in the same way everything that is created is moving towards God. We are going towards God, we are going towards eternity and we will find everything again in God!

There we will find once more the persons with whom we are living now on earth. We will see them in heaven like shining stars, differing in brightness, it is true. We will see them as spouses of Our Lord, as his glorified and sanctified temples, having put aside the clothing of their imperfections, their stains, their blemishes, their faults, their incomprehension. Like a poor girl who, stripping off her poor, peasant clothing, puts on a magnificent dress. And

thus as new creatures, transformed, illumined, we will see God and find all in Him for all eternity.

When we speak of the life of the Blessed Virgin in the temple, we could go on forever. St. Ambrose, enumerating for us all the virtues of the Blessed Virgin, warmly encourages us to practise them. It is a very good thing to imagine Mary in circumstances similar to those in which we find ourselves each day. Indeed, which one of us does not love to imagine her in Assumption clothing, walking before us so as to be our model in all the details of our life, offering us a combination of modesty, sweetness, goodness, silence, regularity, prayer, union with God and the example of all the virtues?

The feasts of the Church, above all those of the Blessed Virgin, have this characteristic: they are full of teachings and of consolations. Because Mary is our Mother, our Mediatrix, our help, she is ready to guide us to everything which God wants of us. It is said in the Office that the Blessed Virgin leads the virgins to her Son (Ps. 44:15). She presents them to Him and says to Him: "She wishes to belong to You, and chooses You before everything; she has chosen your immaculate bed". The immaculate bed of Our Lord, my Daughters, is the Cross. It is there that the covenant is consummated between the spouses.

So, it is not enough to consider the virtues of our Mother. We also need to recommend ourselves to her with

the greatest ardour, the greatest confidence, knowing well that she can do everything being the Queen of heaven and of earth and, as St. Bernard has called her the “the all-powerful suppliant”. We know also that there is nothing wanting to her power or her goodness. In everything then, let us have great confidence and continual prayer.

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