

L00178

Private Notes

Sept, 1841

I can easily occupy myself in recalling what God has done for me ever since my childhood; for all that, the effort it takes for me to leave it aside in order to act, distracts me. How I love the attractions of God but suffer on account of human weaknesses. Bringing me back to the sweet graces that I received from him at my 1st Communion, when hearing Mass, in my confessions and communions, during the very time when I was not very religious, (if I have to say all this, that this time spent before God, if I did not think it necessary, the need I feel for a long retreat) then later on at my Confirmation, these feelings were renewed in my soul; I could occupy myself for a long time, sweetly, but I am afraid to remember these feelings which do not effect any practical change in me and do not prevent either my desires to please nor my negligence in carrying out my religious duties, nor all my faults, graces having been forgotten almost as soon as they were received. It is because of this that, during my prayer I direct my thoughts towards action even though it is a work that I cannot always perform, while these feelings of separation from the things of earth are there in me without any difficulty as soon as I do not prevent them. What seems to me to be suspect is that in this love of sweetness, I have no feelings of fear or prevention produced by the holiness of God, I am not worried by the opposition of my works to his purity and I am scarcely anxious; it is a gentle abandonment and so confident that it seems to be almost assured.

And so, at my 1st Communion which I made alone and without the normal preparations, I felt so deeply, as I have never before been able to do, a silent separation from everything connected with me, so as to enter alone into the immensity of the One whom I possessed for the first time. These things do not return and I do not understand how I had so much joy as I had so worshipped my mother that, in my childish way, I thought she could not die and that later on her death left me unable to understand that there was anything in which I could take an interest. At the moment when I received Jesus Christ for the first time it was as if everything that I had ever seen on this earth, my mother included, seemed to be a passing shadow, an apparition out of which I came and in very truth I had more links with these unknown priests who were around me in this church, which I never attended, than with my family and everything which was normally around me, my eyes closed on everything that I had seen up to now in order to open to the one who alone was dear to me. And this binding force of possession, so narrow in childhood that attaches you even to places, was no longer, according to this feeling, more than a connection which had to come to an end for everything which had not been able to attach itself to me. Lost in my God, my soul forgot everything else, without even feeling any regret, as if there had never been any, and certainly, in this fleeting impression, I neither saw or heard anything, I did not feel the presence of anything except that of God whose power seemed to suspend and absorb all my powers.

The further I go, the more I am amazed at this feeling which at the time left so few traces, and which has so completely come to pass.

If to day I see anyone whose face reminds me of my childhood, family, position, dwelling place, I see that everything has changed, I no longer have any mother than the Church for which I then had so little love, and the only links which seemed to have any reality for me are those which I forged in her womb.

I am all the more astonished that during this time I hardly ever prayed, that I seemed already to have lost my faith, become an unbeliever, at this moment, for the first time, I withdrew from the mind of my mother through whom I saw everything and whose very word was an object of faith, and that far from being upset by this, the only impression I was left with was one of great

consolation. As for the rest, I went back to my daily life without the fear of feeling I was left outside. I believed that this should have been the effect of the moment of my Communion in which one is more in God than in oneself; moreover I hardly think that this impression of mutual giving between God and the soul. ever left me in any Communions I received in this life because I never approached the sacraments of .Reconciliation or Communion without very deep feelings and this was always the same during the time of thanksgiving. God was everything to me and all that was not of him was foreign to my soul.

Now, if I give in to this feeling, it seems to me that, having stripped myself of all around me, I have continual possession of these feelings which I had at the time of my Communion. God has really become everything for me, I have nothing apart from him. May I spend my prayer time or my times of retreat in this pleasure? Are they enough? It seems to me that I could spend eternity in this way but I have work to do for God, I have to purify my soul in his presence.

I do not belong entirely to him, I am not worthy of it. Is it a good thing or a bad thing to bring these things to my attention instead of basking in this presence which arouses love, which detaches and which, perhaps, will strengthen the soul to perform works of which I fear I do not occupy myself with sufficiently in this pleasure.

When I am freed from talking to others. from exhorting them, from supporting them, I am naturally filled with joy because of it.

Being in retreat, with a few books, to pray, to write down what I feel, is so much natural pleasure.

Monthly retreat Feast of St. Januarius, 24th September, 1841. I recognised, in what I said, with the help I had and then before God, that what is holding me up is an extreme love for my intellectual being, for my own personal perfection. To stop looking at myself, knowing myself, analysing myself, ignoring my natural impulses is something which I find deeply repugnant. And so my frankness is not always, though quite often, contrary to the simplicity God asks of me. I understood that I have been like a “Warnicht” intellectual, contemplating myself and willingly absorbing myself in this contemplation. What a disgrace! And so I waste time in scrutinising myself, talking or writing about myself, having myself talked about, etc. I have to put an end to all this, throwing it into the depths of this being, forgotten, despised, so as only willingly to look at Jesus Christ.

The resolutions of my 1st retreat will help me.

As a special practice for this month I will refrain from talking, do lowly jobs, do nothing which does not depend on Jesus Christ, not for developing my strength, not to speak of myself at all, nor write about it unless I do so before God. So as to force myself to have a serious mind, as will be shown to me by God, of the necessity of this frame of mind. The little flippancies, mockeries withdraw me from the spirit of God . I must only talk seriously, respectfully, and very little about what in me has to do with the service of God, with my directors, Superiors, letters, etc.
