

Retreat - January 1877

1st Day. My first impression is that I must go higher; keep myself near to God in Jesus Christ, bring everything there, take from there events, occupations and everything else; not let myself be troubled by what passes, not desire either human aid for spiritual things, nor things which happen to me, but go to God for all my needs and bring him into everything I have to do.

2nd Day. In going over the end (finality, purpose) of man in the words of the catechism, to know God, to love Him and to serve Him. I find that I have best understood how to serve. It is always to serve that has decided me; the Will of God has the first place in my feelings, it has been the first and the last reason for my vocation. I need to know and love Jesus Christ better. Prayer is the means. I should like love to become the principle of my life. When I was young Jesus took the first steps for a life of love in me; (now) feeling it less, I have to go and seek it.

On the use of created things. Yes I need to watch ceaselessly to make myself indifferent to created things, so that what pleases me should be solely what God wants from me for his service, so as to speak his language to all persons, to bring them his charity with devotedness and zeal. Then for myself take the means that best lead to God. As the principal means for me I see habitual mortification, regularity, prayer, self control. More than any of these I see that Jesus must be my means both for the interior and the exterior since that is what pleases Him.

Go to Jesus, bring everything back to Him. Keep myself in peace, remain silent, hold back my action and my speech, stop myself so as to listen to Him and act under Him. In everything and for everything count on Him, be good, zealous, expansive through Him.

After that I prepared and made my confession: I meditated on sin, on all my faults, my stupid excuses, my lack of delicacy towards Our Lord; the scandal that I give in not producing on various occasions the virtues of a religious. I want to renew myself, transform myself by prayer and dependence on the Spirit of God; keep my rule differently than I have done (up to this).

3rd Day. I meditated and prayed at length on know Jesus Christ. His holiness faced with my sinfulness, but above all his mercy and pity, his pardon to which I should trust myself; his desire to help my smallest efforts, to give me the will and the deed; his pleasure even at seeing me at his feet to receive from Him everything that I lack and so that his grace can flow in me.

Then on love Jesus Christ, understand that He loves me, that He has looked after me, called me, followed me; that everyone I love – mother, brother, uncle, Père d'Alzon – have received from Him that which I loved and that which they lacked from fallen nature. That it was He in them who looked after me, loved me, did good to me. And what I was happy to do for them, I can give Him, He accepts service and love. That I should love Him more than these others and He loves me more in asking this of me: Simon Peter do you love me more than these others? And that still by love He likes to see me at his feet so as to act on me.

4th Day. The Incarnation. The poverty of the house of Nazareth, compare my poverty, be dumbfounded, confused, make myself as poor as possible; change any of my ways of doing things that are not poor; in every circumstance place myself among the poor. Contemplated Jesus, Mary and Joseph in this poverty.

5th Day. The journey of the Blessed Virgin to Bethlehem. Mary leaves a situation of poverty for one of destitution. She brings Jesus into the world in a shelter for animals after being turned away everywhere else. Oh if I knew like her how to take always the place of a poor little servant - when travelling, in our houses, to carry (bring) Jesus in peace and in joy, in sufferings, contradictions, the unforeseen, in evil behaviour, if that is what I meet. Here I saw my pride, my demands, my impatience. I want to get away from them and assume the dispositions and humble place of a poor woman, of a servant. I saw a mark of love in that Our Lord has called me to serve others. I must serve everybody; serve Jesus in everybody. Open my heart to all; do some spiritual good to everybody with love, affection that they can feel, devotion, sacrifice of self.

6th Day. I meditated on the Flight into Egypt. Providence and its action; the abandon that we owe it. Perhaps many dangers lie in wait for us; day and night follow Providence like Mary holding on to our great treasure – union with Jesus. With her accept privations and sufferings, counting on Providence for the help we cannot do without or for a holy death. And in my past, in all the events of my life see how Providence has guided everything. Blame only myself that I have not done better. If Mary had said: if before the birth of Jesus I had only had some peace to recollect myself: the journey, the rejection of Bethlehem, this open cave, the coming and going of the shepherds are preventing me from praying. Then the departure for Egypt, the trouble of that flight... Like her I want to see the guidance of God in all eventualities and unite myself to Jesus in them.

Jesus at twelve years of age in the Temple. This is one of the great sorrows of Mary – she lost Jesus. She accepted the poverty, the fatigue of the journey, the inconvenience of being with a crowd of people, but to have lost Jesus! How she searches with St. Joseph, how she loves him! And in the Temple Our Lord opens the intelligence of the Doctors – may He open mine also to understand Him. *I must be in the house of my Father* (Lk. 2:49). The Office is for me one of the works of God, the service of souls the other.

Jesus at Nazareth until the age of 30, the silence of the Word, the humility (lit. annihilation) of the All-Powerful, work, obedience, prayer.

7th Day. Same subject. Our Lord at Nazareth gives to God all the glory that is due to him, and with him and by him the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. What a life of prayer, of adoration and of love! This is what is important. A holy life, the human soul adores, lives in the body as if it was not living there; offers it as a victim, satisfies it in nothing. Every action is one of homage to God. Jesus desires to work for the salvation of humanity, but above all else by the worship of his Father, the life that he leads in the tabernacle. What goodness also must have reigned at Nazareth: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, good for every creature of God, I have taken refuge at your feet like a little dog and asked you for the grace to understand and to imitate your goodness and your life of love and of worship of the most Holy Trinity.

Evangelic life. Jesus after his baptism and the desert comes to humanity with his love. But the first word he speaks according to two of the Evangelists is *Do penance, for the Kingdom of God is near*. (Mt. 3:2) Evangelical goodness does not lessen the force of this doctrine. He heals bodies; He is good, patient, but He asks for perfect things. The Sermon on the Mount permeates me with this spirit for myself and for others. The Kingdom of God is near –either Eternity and I am approaching close to that, or the kingdom of perfection and I must work at it for myself and for others. Where was the Blessed Virgin during the preaching of the Gospel? St. Joseph was certainly dead. Was she often alone at Nazareth, at other times with the holy women? Her submission, perfection, poverty.

The Last Supper. Once more this thought has struck me: in his great gift of love, Jesus asks for holiness. *If I do not wash your feet, you can have no part with me*. (Jn. 13:8) The one who is clean needs only that his feet be washed. Every word of the Discourse at the Last Supper is as much about holiness as about love. How divine that is! This bread, which is bread no longer, is a divine fire. I will prepare myself to receive it as a light that wants to penetrate everything in me. I adored Jesus in this gift of himself, rich in all holiness.

8th Day.

My retreat resolution is to adore in Our Lord his holiness and love; to try and put holiness into my life by fidelity and grace and a trust without limits in the love of Jesus for me; to pray as much as possible and for that to keep to the times the Rule gives us for Office and Prayer; to respond to the love with which our saviour has been pleased to love me first in loving Him and in loving others as He loves them.

May God be praised! I feel that he has been very merciful to me.