

**Live the Gospel and
attain heaven through suffering**

4th May 1873

My dear Daughters,

From the news that reached me this morning I realise that Sr. M. Aloysia, if she is not already dead, is in imminent danger. See how we have worries about such and such a Sister and God takes another whom we thought was safe for a long time and whom we had hoped to keep among us for many years.

Sr. M. Aloysia suddenly fell gravely ill. It is true that she was always somewhat fragile; but I am told that since she received the Sacraments she has fallen into a state of complete prostration, no longer able to speak and apparently not conscious. We do not know whether she can hear the words of encouragement which the Superior is speaking to her. But nevertheless we are not worried about her. All her life has been a preparation for death. She was a truly faithful person, and faithful in something which counts greatly in the eyes of God: she has suffered a lot and she loved her sufferings.

Those of you who knew her know that she was never free from pain. But despite her illnesses she was always happy, cheerful, always close to God. While she was taking the little remedies necessary for her health, she forced herself as much as she could to participate in all the community exercises, and she remained always in great peace. She offered all her sufferings for the souls in

purgatory, considering herself blessed that of all her family it was on her that this destiny had fallen. When someone has spent their whole life bearing suffering with joy, and God lays them on their death bed so as to call them very soon to himself, the preparation has already been done.

Do we also accept and endure our sufferings, great or small in the same spirit? Do we value them as a grace? Are we, like Sr. M. Aloysia before God, full of charity and goodwill, obedient and faithful to the Rule, submissive, humble, patient in all circumstances? Are we intent on reproducing the spirit of the Gospel in our lives?

As Daughters of the Assumption we are called to a very close union with the Divine Person of our Lord Jesus Christ in a spirit of faith and prayer and love for the Church. This spirit must be drawn from authentic sources. It is customary in all religious Orders, and also with us, to make a self-examination from time to time, at least once a month, as though we were about to appear before God. In this examination we should see how far we are striving to observe our Rule, how far we live by the Gospel spirit which is a supernatural spirit that bears with everything, that turns everything into charity, and that transforms the hard things of life into currency with which to buy the good things of eternal life.

We must be convinced that heaven is bought only with hardships and sufferings of this life. This is not a rule only for nuns, but some nuns are perhaps not convinced enough of this. Do you imagine that people in the world do not have to suffer to get to heaven? You may answer that

they have consolations and pleasures and satisfactions. It may be true. But sooner or later come trials, losses, great sufferings, and that is what buys heaven for them.

As Religious we need to convince ourselves more than other people of this truth. We have chosen a state of perfection, and since we aim at a higher place in heaven, nearer our Lord than people of the world, we must use our sufferings as steps to go upwards towards more perfect love and closer union with Him for eternity.

Through the pain we feel when God separates us from those to whom we are united, through the sorrow which breaks our hearts when God calls those we love to their reward - even in this heartache, may we realise that everything here below passes away and only eternity lasts. Virtues, like seeds of grace sown in our souls, will one day, provided we cultivate them, yield a harvest of glory for God.

So my dear Daughters, what really matters is to make our life holy. To long for death before producing the flowers and fruit of virtue would be unforgivable childishness in a Religious. No! we must learn rather to profit from the time that we still have. Cultivate the garden of your soul with care and love, so that when the Divine Gardener comes, He may find you full of merit and ripe for heaven.
