

**Offer Our Lord Jesus Christ  
gold, incense and myrrh**

8<sup>th</sup> January 1888

My dear Daughters,

You have heard the word of God this morning. I only want to say a word on the gifts of the Magi. We too must bring gifts to the Infant Jesus. Gold, that is our vow of poverty – and it is quite simple: we have renounced gold, we have left everything, we have made this sacrifice for Our Lord. But gold is also much more than that: it is an ardent love of God, charity.

Wherever it shines, gold makes things more beautiful. So when the ornaments of the church are highlighted with gold they are more beautiful. But what a difference there is between the gold of this world and this gold of charity which makes everything in the soul so beautiful! You know that if our charity is perfect at the moment of death, then God asks nothing more of the soul: its faults are wiped out, its weaknesses forgiven.

Charity is, before all else, an ardent, a perfect love of God. It is to love God for God's own sake. A perfect act of contrition is also a perfect act of love, because we detest sin not only because of the harm it causes us, but out of love of

God, because it displeases God, offends God. It is quite natural that a Religious should reach the point of making this perfect act of contrition. What else are we trying to do in Religious life except to reach this perfect charity by all possible means: by poverty, by obedience, by patience, by chastity? It is by means of all these virtues that we tend towards the perfect love of God. That is the whole desire of the soul, the work which we do in Religious life.

Because of this love of God we also arrive at perfect love of our neighbour. This is more difficult: because God is perfect, but our neighbour is not necessarily so... Nevertheless Saint John says: *How can anyone who does not love his brother whom he can see, love God whom he does not see*<sup>1</sup>? So, charity must be made up of perfect love of God and perfect love of neighbour.

The love with which we love our neighbour as ourselves and by which we wish for our neighbour all the goods which we wish for ourselves, must be a love made up of zeal and of tolerance. We must know how to bear with imperfections to the greatest degree possible, and at the same time have the greatest zeal possible for perfection. It is in this that real charity consists. We must have the desire to be really holy and help those around us as much as we can to reach it. So, to correct when one has that responsibility, to alert the Superiors of abuses which are going on – even when it costs us to do so – is to help

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<sup>1</sup> 1Jn. 4: 20

towards the beauty and perfection of souls, and that is charity.

But on the other hand we must know how to bear with imperfections. One sister is lively, we have to bear with her speed; another is slow, we have to bear with her slowness. This one is intelligent and goes more quickly than we do; our self love can be put out by this superiority. That is a very imperfect reaction which we need to correct. This other sister is not intelligent, she is awkward, her work is done badly. We are tempted to impatience with her. I am designedly taking things which are not displeasing to God and which can give us opportunities for patience. Let us not get impatient but look for remedies for what is wrong through zeal for the perfection of the house of God.

But note well, Sisters, that if we are permitted to work for the perfection of our sisters by correcting them, charity never allows us to judge or to question our neighbour. *Judge not and you will not be judged*<sup>2</sup>, says Jesus. You are going to say that there is a certain contradiction there. No, Sisters. You must alert your Superior, but only of faults which jump to your eyes. For example you are in the infirmary and there are people there who are talking. You can say: "We do not keep enough silence in the infirmary". Or you are in charge of the housework, it is your responsibility to see that it is done properly, and you can say: "Such and such a job has been

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<sup>2</sup> Mt. 7: 1

neglected". But that does not mean that you are judging the sisters.

But to say: "Such and such a sister is awkward, she is proud (which is not your business); she is impatient, she does not work well:" these judgments which pick on the faults of others should never be made. If a Superior or Novice Mistress thinks to herself: "There is a Sister who does not have enough energy, enough humility, who has too many whims;" that is her job and she has to do it, but it isn't yours.

Seek in the practice of charity towards your neighbour, to increase your own love of God. God will love you more if you practice goodness, patience and zeal towards others; zeal not only for the Sisters, but also for the children, and for all souls in general. And we must not judge the children badly, make their defects and faults known. That is contrary to charity. The education we give them should tend to correct their defects, to make them like our model, who is Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should pray much for the children and for all people, so as to obtain their conversion. Let us be upset when they distance themselves from God, rejoice when they approach Him: that is charity. We will not have real charity unless we desire the salvation and sanctification of souls.

I have spoken about gold; I will just add a little word about myrrh. You all know that it symbolises mortification. We should offer it to Our Lord, even on feast days and days of recreation. On all occasions we have to keep watch over ourselves, and mortify every impatient reaction, every imperfect word. These are the kind of occasions which can arise at this festal time when other austerities are not appropriate.

Incense symbolises prayer, adoration. This is what the soul offers to God when she adores and gives God praise at all times. Try not to lose the time that you could be giving to adoration. Pray even when you are working, in your comings and goings. May your soul continually offer to God this incense of prayer which will obtain for you the gold of charity.

You remember the prayer which Sister M. Marthe addressed to Saints Martha and Magdalene when she was dying: "You, who so loved Our Lord on earth, obtain for me that I may love Him perfectly, at least before I die." This wish, this desire, this prayer to love God perfectly before dying, I have heard expressed frequently by the Sisters that I myself have helped at this last moment. Sister M. Catherine (the first) also used to say: "My God, I see clearly that this illness is my last; grant that I may acquire now all the degrees of love that I might have obtained during a long life."

This is the perfection of love that the soul desires before leaving this world. Let us not wait for our last hour to obtain this grace; let us ask for it from today, and may God grant us before we leave this world below all the degrees of love and all the perfection of which our heart is capable.

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