

**PRAYING THE PSALMS IN UNION WITH
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

20th January 1882

My dear Daughters,

It seems to me that when I spoke to you about the psalms which I learned from Dom. Chamard, I did not insist enough on the practical application that we can draw from it for ourselves.

I do not think I told you that Our Lord Jesus Christ is the praise of His Father: a very deep thought that we ought to remember in all our prayers and when we say Office. Our Lord is His Father's Praise to such an extent that no human praise has ever been agreeable to the Blessed Trinity except in view of and believing in, Jesus Christ Mediator and Redeemer. It follows that every creature who has prayed in a way that has pleased God, has prayed through Jesus Christ. That is why, Sisters, in praying the psalms, using the words that so many Saints have used, we must always find Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice how Holy Church always prays through Our Lord and with Our Lord. All her prayers end with *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*. However, as you know, too, that the Holy Spirit forms prayer in souls. It is precisely to form union with Our Lord that the Holy Spirit acts in us. But it is Our Blessed Lord who gave a human mouth to prayer. He it is who truly adores and truly makes reparation: He it is who offers to God praise above all praises, thanksgiving above all thanksgivings.

It follows that of all devotions, Holy Mass is the greatest. The reason for this is because, in it, Our Lord Himself comes down upon the Altar, to adore, to make reparation, to thank and to ask. Thus, in one single Mass, God receives more honour and praise, more reparation and glory than He would if the whole human race came together in one place to offer God all it could without Our Lord. For a soul who gives attention to this, it is an infinite joy to give all that can be given to Him. In this offering, *Laudamus Te, benedicimus Te, gratias agimus Tibi*, have their full meaning and produce their full effect.

Holy Scriptures, the word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was spoken by Our Blessed Lord's own lips, especially the Psalms that He recited on the Cross. This human language of Holy Scripture must be our own means of praise. It is a good thing for us, when we say Office, to keep in mind that Our Lord is there, between us and God the Father, putting these words on our lips. If by a special grace, you saw Our Lord beside you putting His prayer on your lips, to give it its full value and to make it agreeable to the Father, you would experience a great devotion. It is not necessary to see this, but it is a reality.

The Psalms, I told you, express all Our Lord's feelings. You may say: "But could Our Lord feel repentance?" I answer: "Don't you know that repentance can come to the soul only from Our Lord?" The first repentant soul was St. Peter. But now, who put into St. Peter's heart such a loving sorrow, such a persistent sorrow for his sin? It was the look Our Lord gave him. When Jesus looked at him Peter remembered all He had said to him and he went out and wept bitterly (Mt. 26:5.75). At that moment his soul received the spirit of penance that the words of the *Miserere* so well express, and which filled his whole life.

So the virtue of penance comes to us from Our Lord. He has it, not for His own sins - He had none - but for ours. He is the outstanding penitent, He who is very innocent. He, the first among all men, took on Himself all our sins. He wept for them through His infant cries in the Crib. He made reparation for them and expiated them on the Cross.

We may perhaps be struck by the sweet consoling side of the mystery of the Epiphany, seeing the Kings from the East prostrate at the feet of the Holy Child and offering Him mysterious gifts. This may prevent your thinking enough of the second mystery whose anniversary is celebrated by the Holy Church today: the Divine Lamb going down into the waters of the Jordan to expiate our sins, taking on Himself the weight of all our sins. For me, I own, this is a subject of great devotion on this feast. To think that the waters of the Jordan represent the flood of all the sins committed from the beginning of the world, and that in His extreme love Our Lord by going down into the flood of sin, deigned to become the universal sinner. Think what this terrifying weight of all the sins of the world must have been for Our Lord who was purity and innocence itself. He took all on Himself without exception, without reserve. He took all on Himself to humble Himself for it all before His Father's face. You see then that the impression of penance is one that Our Lord felt.

If you want to pray well, through Him, to say your Office well, you must receive and make your own His various sentiments. At one time, the psalms express a prayer, at another, praise, thanksgiving or a cry of repentance. When we recite them, we should do so with Our Lord, who will put His words on our lips, if we want Him to.

I say, "if we want Him to", because anyone who mechanically without any soul or meaning fails to give God what He expects from prayer, public or private. In so far as one is more closely united with Our Lord, taking from Him the prayer we offer up to God, so is our prayer more perfect, more pleasing to Him, more capable of obtaining His graces: that is what you have to be attentive to. This was the reason why Dom. Chamard told me that the psalms express our Lord's sentiments, whether in Himself or in His members. I think I have never explained this thought to you, and that is why I do so today.

Whenever you pray, make it your habit to pray through Our Lord, in union with Our Lord. Above all, take the habit of having recourse to Him, of counting on Him always. St. John says: "We have learned to recognize the love God has for us (St. John 4: 5, 16). And the Saint's words are great words. To believe in God's charity towards us, to have perfect confidence in His love, in His kindness is one of the greatest means of becoming holy.

I think I have told you that St. Thomas Aquinas begins the prayer that asks for all that is necessary for salvation, his great universal prayer, by the words: "O Jesus, you who love me so much". These words have always struck me very much. This is the reason why we ask for all these things: because we believe in God's love for us. And without this conviction it is impossible to advance in the spiritual life. This love is visible in all the mysteries: visible in the Incarnation, visible in the Redemption, visible in the august Sacrament of the Altar, which St. Thomas is addressing.

Why do we close our hearts with a kind of doubt and distrust? We ask ourselves: "Does Our Lord love me? He loved us who were sinners; He loves us with a love that we do not always reciprocate.

His love will never fail us, because He is holy, perfect, persevering; it is on account of His own perfections that He loves us, because He loves what He has made and what He has redeemed. And for us, He has a special love for us because He has chosen us to be His brides.

Yet, few souls are inclined to begin all their prayers with these words: "O Jesus, you who love me so!" but that is the strength and the support of all St. Thomas proposes to do for God. Thus He asks God to let him feel the thorns of Our Lord's crown. He asks this not in a vague, general way, merely to ask for what is in his imagination, like people who are ready to ask for what they are not ready to bear. When the least thing comes to them that is just what they did not want. And if they ask for thorns, at least they want to choose them, but are not ready to accept all Our Lord's thorns, thorns of suffering, of sacrifice, thorns of mockery, of contempt, thorns of being forsaken by God, thorns of men's ingratitude.

Well, St. Thomas asks without hesitation for all these thorns, and he asks for them because he is ready to bear them. he would never have become a Saint if he had not been willing to bear all the thorns that God willed him to feel. And where does he find the strength for that? "O Jesus, you who love me so". That is his strength: trust in the Lord's love, or in St. John's words: "We have learnt to recognize the love God has for us" (St. John 4: 5, 16). Others may believe what they like; but as for us we believe in God's love for us.

We, Sisters, try to make this thought of praying in union with Our Lord more intimate, more habitual. When we recite the psalms, let us unite ourselves with His divine lips and at the same time ask the Holy Spirit to give us those unspeakable sentiments that give prayer all its power.