

**PURITY OF HEART AND HATRED OF SIN:  
FRUIT OF DEVOTION TO THE PRECIOUS BLOOD**

3<sup>rd</sup> July 1881

My dear Daughters,

Just at the moment of the feast of Our Lord's Precious Blood, a thorn stained by that Precious Blood, is exposed for our veneration in the Chapel.<sup>1</sup> You know that all the pain and all the anguish that Our Lord suffered in His Passion and all the blood He shed, were the price He paid for our souls; and since He valued them so highly, I urge you today to value them yourselves more and more.

Is it perhaps unnecessary to say this to religious? They might be expected to have great and constant care to keep their souls white and spotless, to make them beautiful, by the practice of all the virtues. However, even nuns can grow slack, and for that reason they need above all, as a foundation for the life of perfection, a sorrow of the least blemish or stain on the soul. St. Teresa laid great store by these sentiments, and she said she would not think much of a soul who would willingly accept even an imperfection that was voluntary. The horror of sin in oneself and in others gives nobility to a character, and we must see sin as the most frightful monster and hold it in the greatest horror.

That does not prevent us from loving the sinner. As St. Augustine says, there are two aspects to consider in a sinner, there is, first, the

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<sup>1</sup> St. Louis, King Of France, had given the Republic of Venice five thorns taken from Our Lord's crown, the Patriarch of Venice gave one of these thorns to Father Picard at the last National Pilgrimage. And as the Assumptionist's Chapel had been closed by the Government, we were granted the honour of having charge of this wonderful relic and it was exposed for veneration in our chapel.

creature God has made and that we must love as God loves him or her; then the deformity that sin produces, and that we must hate as God does. And St. Augustine goes on to say that if the sinner returns to God by contrition and confession, he ceases to be a sinner, and he becomes once more God's beloved creature. We have to cultivate both these sentiments, so that while we have compassion and charity towards the sinner we see sin as the most horrible and ghastly monster.

Perhaps some of you are thinking: "I certainly have these dispositions." But they are not always as well developed as one thinks, Sisters. Being in touch with souls as I am, I realize that when I consider things in their broad outline I do feel these sentiments. But there are times when one sees not only the offence against God but also the creature's point of view, and then one does not feel the horror one ought to, of faults and stains. And I am not speaking only of mortal sin but of venial sin, too, and it is even more especially towards venial sin that we should have this attitude. Of all the things we care about and try to do and take trouble for, the first, the one to which we attach to the greatest importance, should be to avoid anything that could offend God. St. Ignatius gives us an example. He said: 'If God offered me my choice between two alternatives, either to die now and go straight to everlasting happiness, or to stay on this earth indefinitely amid trials and in the uncertainty of my salvation, I would choose the second alternative if it gave me that possibility of rendering a special service to His Divine Majesty.'

There you see a man so full of horror of sin, so enamoured of purity of soul that for the sake of this service of God and souls he would have chosen not only to put off the enjoyment of infinite happiness but even to live on in the uncertainty of ever enjoying at all. But

note well. This uncertainty did not exist for St. Ignatius any more than St. Francis de Sales when he said: “My God, if I am destined not to love you for all eternity, at least make me love you as much as I possibly can in this life.” These holy souls were undoubtedly in the state of perfection. They loved God perfectly. By zeal for God’s service, and by creaturely submission to the Creator, and horror for sin, they shared God’s own sentiments and they were sure to prefer Him to all things and to love Him more than themselves. Those are the dispositions of the saints. But we, Sisters, who are not saints, must at least have our hearts full of horror for all sins, I repeat, for all sin. There are some sins for which I naturally feel greater horror because they are more low and vile. For instance, everyone has a horror of stealing and lying. But have we the same horror for a temptation of the devil that would weaken our esteem for our vocation? We are Religious. We have made Vows. It follows that when we dally with something that lessens the fervour of our esteem for our vocation we are on the road to sin. Likewise, when you see a child who is otherwise likable, a tendency to pride or vanity, does that inspire you with enough horror? And do you try hard enough to correct her?

In thus weighing the greater or lesser gravity of some sins we can go very far. Think of the capital sins, and ask yourself which of them seem to you the most horrible? Then say to yourself: “I am right to feel a horror of that, but why not for all of them? Why does the thought of a movement of pride, for instance, not give me the same repulsion as does other sins?” The answer is that I judge from the point of view of creatures, not of God. To God, infinite purity and holiness, to Christ our Lord, every sin is really horrible.

In the garden of Olives, even before cruel men had touched Our Lord with scourges and thorns and nails, His extreme anguish made

His blood flow till it trickled down to the ground. He was crushed by the horror of sin, of all the sins that were laid on Him, our sins, Sisters, as well as the sins of others. Perhaps we have not committed sins that cry to Heaven for vengeance, but we are sinners and our sins had to be washed in the Precious Blood that Jesus shed in the garden of Gethsemane. There He bore the shame, the pain, the agony that they deserved. Oh Sisters! May we never again make Him suffer! May we, each of us, who in the past committed sins that afflicted Him be so faithful in the future that no sin shall ever stain our souls and offend God. May our fidelity be such that nothing we do, great or small, may ever again offend Our Lord and make Him suffer. Let nothing shake the strength and generosity of soul that should attach us to Him, and when He has paid such a price to redeem us. May we always live in Faith, Hope, and Charity, in fidelity to the Rule, to our Vows and to all that Jesus asks of us by practising the virtues of our state. And now I come to the subject of the virtues.

You know that the chalice offered by the Angel to Our Lord in His agony was bitter as well as strengthening. Someone has said that while He drank it He saw passing before Him as in a procession all the souls who would be made Saints by His Blood. How many of us have brought forth the hundredfold that consoled Our Lord at the moment when He shed His blood for us? To be one of those consolers of Jesus, to give Him may drive far from us all evil and hold it in horror, then we must put our whole energy into determination to die rather than offend God and thirdly we must practise, and progress in the virtues that will make saints of us.

I began by speaking of the thorn from Our Lord's crown. Now I come back to it and add this: you have seen and venerated it. Have

you thought that besides causing Our Lord such cruel pain when it as driven into His Sacred Head, it also symbolizes the thorn that pierced His Heart during His whole life? Each of us too has his thorn. Sometimes it is in her heart, sometimes in her body, in which case we can see in it a thorn that comes from Our Lord and pierces her flesh. Well, Sisters, may devotion to the holy thorn produce in us the fruit of a noble generosity in bearing any thorn that God will send us. As whatsoever moment it comes let us accept it, and bear it lovingly for Our Lord and in union with His sufferings.

I also said that if we want our crosses and thorns to be of great value in God's sight, we must take the habit of bearing them between God and ourselves. There is a certain greatness being able to bear things that hurt as something precious, with God alone, in the secret of our heart.

That is not saying that you ought not to open your hearts to those who have spiritual authority over you, such as your confessor and your Superiors. We are Catholics, and we are not like Protestants, who believe in dealing with God directly without intermediaries, as if they expected Him to speak to them in the Burning Bush. That is not His way. He speaks to us by our Confessor and Superior; and when we need counsel for directing our life we must go to them with simplicity and tell them our need. This should be done in a few words, with humility and submission, with the one desire of being shown the way to home. By acting in this way we prove ourselves that we have one purpose, namely to carry our Cross well, and to use it for God's glory. All the long rigmaroles that might be added to let off steam are to no purpose. However, if nature for this kind of outlet in time of trouble or anguish, it is certainly better to turn to your Superior or your Confessor. But it shows weak virtues and poor generosity, and it proves that we have not the habit of offering

our troubles to God alone, as something precious that will unite us to Christ Crucified. Finally I add this. When something has upset you, do not speak on the spur of the moment. Wait for a few hours, or a day or two, till you are calmer; and then go and ask for whatever counsel you need.

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