

7 April 1878

PERFECT LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST, HUMILITY

Continuing our talks on the spirit of the Assumption, we are now ready to speak about the love of Our Lord. Our words must be ardent and filled with light in order to speak on this subject since His love is the whole purpose of our life and the basis of everything that we have said up until now. Why would we wish to know Him if we did not already love Him and desire a deeper understanding that will enable us to love Him more and more? Why would we want to relate all human knowledge to the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ and His Church if not because we consider all things as nothing in comparison with the knowledge of Our Lord? Our faith enlightened by love gives us the certitude of finding God and the One He has sent us everywhere, provided we seek Him with all the strength of our souls. And why serve, and serve perfectly if not because we love? I want to stress the effect that the love of Jesus Christ has on the soul and the virtues that He desires to produce in us.

I will begin by humility, the basis of any spiritual life. Perhaps you will say that I have been slow to mention this virtue. In spite of the fact that knowledge of God and of self is the basis of humility and that the service of God should be an act of humility, I cannot do otherwise than to see the simple, sincere and joyful humility of a true daughter of the Assumption in reference to love.

After saying that evil in the world is the result of self-love pushed to the point of contempt of God, St. Augustine writes that the characteristic of the inhabitants of the heavenly city is the love of God pushed to the point of self-contempt. Who has greater reason to be a citizen of the heavenly city than as religious of the Assumption?

In spirit, soul, heart and will we must strive to imitate the Blessed Virgin taken up to heaven by a humility that has no equal on earth. The most perfect of creatures, Mary is also the most humble. God has looked on the lowliness of His servant and for that very reason has exalted her.

Above all things, humility must be sincere for it is love pushed to self-contempt and love should not be deceived. With whom would we be true if we were not true with Him who sees the depth of our hearts, who knows if everything there is for Him or if we have held something back for our own honor or glory? You know that love is jealous. Scripture tells us "Love is as strong as death, jealousy is as hard as hell." (Cant. 8:6). In what other way

can we respond to the love of Our Lord, who for His part has shown His love by immeasurable humility?

Let us consider the self-abasement of the Son of God, keeping in mind the fact that He is God. He descended into a stable and became the lowliest of men, even though He could have been the greatest of all. What self-humiliation for a God! But that was not enough. You have seen Him at His birth, in His childhood, during His public life, in His words and actions and at the moment of His death. Nothing more humble could be conceived of by the human soul. In order to draw us to Himself, He did not hesitate to show us that He loves us to the point of self-contempt.

Our Lord descended into depths that no human can equal. To respond to this we must sincerely, generously and lovingly allow Our Lord to take possession of our souls and to reign there as Master. We must ask Him for this true and sincere humility which is the only solid foundation of perfection.

It is true that this doctrine is to be applied not only to us but to all Christians and religious. All spiritual life has sincere humility as its basis. But there can be a nuance in the motivation and in the form that it takes.

Knowledge of divine things, adoration, love, these are the motives your humility should possess in joy and liberty. Filled with divine light and love you must not desire to hold on to the miseries of your pride and self-love. You are daughters of the Assumption. Humility should not cast you down but the love of Jesus should lift you up above yourselves. You should love the abasement and humiliations which Our Lord embraced to save us and to glorify His Father. You should love them and enter into them in a spirit of adoration. Before God, how can you allow creatures to take the worship due to Him? These should be our motivations to become humble. Therein we shall find the joy and liberty which will keep our hearts open to God. He will see that we want all honor, praise and blessing for Him and nothing for ourselves or for any other creature.

I would say there is another nuance to the humility that comes from the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. When we wish to please someone we try to discover the way of acting, the virtue, the quality or talent that will be most pleasing to Him. In the world when we want to please, we dress up in beautiful, well-made clothes.

As for you who wish to please Our Lord, what would make Him happiest? What is this garment in which Our Lord would find our soul so beautiful and pleasing in His eyes and most worthy of His love?

It is humility and not only humility but also humiliation, which is the garment that attracts Our Lord. He converses with the simple soul and His dwelling place is within her. "The prayer of the one who humbles himself pierces the heavens."¹ Christ Himself teaches us how to be pleasing in His eyes. "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart."²

Here is another characteristic of love. If you open your heart, if you free it from self-love, from the desire for esteem, praise and success you are saying to Our Lord, "Lord, all praise, all glory, all success is Yours. My self-love must disappear and the love I have for You must grow to the point of self-contempt." At the same time you add: "There is only one thing I desire, only one joy that I seek – intimacy with You, Your presence in my soul. I desire a more ardent love, the 'more excellent' gifts. The teachings of Holy Scripture, of the saints and of the Church show me that what pleases You the most and attracts You is humility and the love of humiliations."

Not only must you prepare yourself to accept a lowly place, but also to see in any humiliation which may present itself, an act that is infinitely pleasing to Our Lord. It attracts Him to you and leads Him to dwell in your souls with the fullness of His love, to treat you as His spouse and as the object of His tender affection, to grant you special graces.

Certainly what I have said here has important implications, yet there is nothing sad or distressing about it. One often thinks that humility is a sad virtue. In all that I have said is there anything sad? Is it saddening to follow Our Lord, to offer Him your heart, to take the means to find Him and to make your relationship with Him more tender and intimate? Would it be sad to pay this price for peace of soul? There is certainly a personal gain in this, but it is also precious in the eyes of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that this is the way a Religious of the Assumption should consider humility.

I have often heard it said that humility is not one of the outstanding virtues of the Assumption. I cannot accept this and would be very sorry if it were so. I feel that on the contrary, humility must be the fundamental virtue of the Assumption on condition however, that it be considered from the point of view of love, confidence and the fullness of faith. All this shows us the treasures it contains, the positive things it brings to us and the simplicity and peace that it establishes in the soul.

¹ Si. 35, 21

² Mt. 11, 29.

Our humility then, must not be one of words, discourses or appearance. Rather we should give our hearts entirely to Jesus Christ and receive Him who grants us His humiliations as a proof of His love. We in turn, respond by contempt of ourselves and by adoration. This is what God asks of us.

I could also have spoken to you of the love of Our Lord from the point of view of the divine friendship to which this good Master calls us. This friendship is a great joy and consolation in life and is a relationship that Our Lord desires for all of us without exception.

Jesus chose a friend on Calvary, a sinful woman, Jesus granted her His divine friendship because she loved much. If there remains some stain, some imperfection or sin, do not be discouraged. There were probably traces of her past in Mary Magdalene also, but her ardent love covered all of them. She was honored with such a friendship by the divine Master that until the end of time, she will be considered in the Church as the faithful and loving friend of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

I could have told you that you are the spouses of Jesus Christ and that an intimate union between the bride and the Bridegroom follows this friendship. I would enjoy speaking to you of the goodness, the grandeur and the love of the Savior and about the perfect gifts with which He rewards the love we show Him. You will never realize this sufficiently.

Those of you who are in close contact with persons in the world have noticed that the less they serve Jesus Christ, the unhappier they are. It is not an exterior unhappiness because wealth, amusements and pleasures hide their feelings of emptiness, their unhappiness, the lack of peace in their hearts. One could even say that the brighter this wealth shines, the more it hides secret crosses. These remain unseen but they are a weight of sadness in the depth of the soul.

The more you give yourselves to Our Lord, the more sincerely you are humble, the more you open your heart in love, then the more Our Lord Himself will become the promised hundredfold, the joy which no other joy equals, the peace, the light that the world does not know, the hope that is gauged of future and eternal happiness.

I could explain all this, show you how much Our Lord is worthy of being loved. Yet I am sure you know this. That is why I do not speak of all that Our Lord is, but rather of what you should be to show Him true Love. I began by humility. Next time I will speak of the union of our soul with Him and of abandonment into His hands.