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X. DEVOTION TO THE SAINTS, LOVE OF THE DIVINE OFFICE

In speaking to you about the love which we must have for the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church, I forgot several things to which I would like to return today.

The Mystical Body of Christ is not just the Church on earth. This part of the Church should certainly receive our deepest and most active affection and devotion since it is where we work to extend the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. It is also from the Church that we receive the sacraments and the truth. But we must not exclude from our devotion and our love the members of the Church triumphant as this is the part of the Church which is the most beautiful, the most noble and the best able to glorify God. Nor should we exclude the members who are in Purgatory for whom we should have a compassionate charity.

I would like to speak first of the triumphant Church, because devotion to the saints which is one of the characteristics of the spirit of the Assumption – is not just devotion to three or four saints who are particularly well known and honored in the time in which we live, but devotion to all the saints. You will notice among those who enter, that very few know any saints other than St. Joseph, St. Louis Gonzague and St. Teresa, on account of her writings. In all not more than five. This is not the Assumption spirit and it would be sad if our pupils were to grow up not knowing the saints who are around the throne of Jesus Christ.

I think that we should encourage devotion above all to the saints of the Gospel. It was among them that Our Lord lived; they took care of Him during His earthly life, they prepared and announced His Kingdom.

With St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist should have a great place in a soul that is fervent and attached to the Church. This saint, canonized by the very words of Our Lord, is a model for us of the three great types of virtue: penance, innocence and martyrdom.

Right after them, I would mention the Apostles. Because of our great attachment to the Church, it is fitting that we have great devotion to the Apostles. Formerly, it would not have been necessary to speak of this for it was a popular devotion. People were always talking about St. Peter, St.

Paul, St. John, etc. Unfortunately, this devotion is disappearing a little more each day.

There are still other saints who were in Our Lord's company, who had the honor of being called His friends, who are included in the Gospel accounts and for whom we should have great devotion. I have already spoken to you about them on another occasion, so I do not wish to linger on this subject, I will simply point out saints to whom we should have particular devotion, at least in their principal characteristics.

First of all, the Martyrs, in founding the Church with their blood, they have added riches to the treasure of Jesus Christ in which we share every day. The most prominent are: St. Lawrence, St. Stephen, all those whom the Church names in the Canon of the Mass or in the Litanies. We should honor and know them more intimately.

Next, I consider that we should have great devotion for all those who have spread the Gospel throughout the world and who have made our faith more understandable. There are the doctors who taught the truth, the founders of religious orders who received from God special graces for the religious life. We should learn, in invoking each saint, the particular virtue in which he excelled. Each founder of a religious order is, moreover, the prototype of the virtue which characterizes his order. Discover this and you will find a solid basis for your devotion. St. Benedict, St. Francis, St. Teresa and St. Ignatius received graces so that religious might learn from them the virtues necessary to their way of life. I am pointing this out to you so that you can see how universal should be our devotion to the saints. We must love all of them and never separate Our Lord from those who are part of His glory in heaven.

The holy Evangelists, the Apostles and the Martyrs are admirable models whom we can never know or imitate too closely. The same can be said of the saints of the Old Testament. From one saint, says a Father of the Church, we can receive the grace of faith, from another, patience; from another, purity. (This was the grace of the first Joseph and it was from him that the second received his name.) If you have great devotion to the saints, you will find wonderful teachings everywhere.

Here I would add that we should not forget all the pure and holy persons, pleasing in the sight of God, who are still suffering and being purified in order to receive the crown of glory. They await the help and comfort of our charity.

It is easier for you to know the saints, to have a greater and more enlightened devotion to them because you recite the Office and are constantly reading their lives. Have devotion to the saints whom the Church gives as patrons for each of the year. She intends that you ask many graces through their intercession. There are only a certain number of saints on the calendar. These are the prototypes and models who were chosen to receive the devotion of the nations and to help people in a special way.

You can thus see that love for the Church should inspire love for the Divine Office. You know that devotion to the Office is one of the characteristics of the Assumption. What then is the Divine Office? It is the prayer composed by the Church, the very language of the Church. This prayer was recited by almost all the saints who have preceded us into the heavenly city and by a large number who are expiating their sins in Purgatory. In the Office we have the same voice, the same prayer as our Holy Father the Pope, the bishops, priests, the great religious orders and a certain number of fervent souls. At one time we could have said, "as all fervent souls", because this was the principal devotion of the people.

In former times, Christian families even dated events according to least days. "Such and such will take place on the Assumption... Our child was born on the feast of St. Andrew... We will set out on our trip on the feast of St. Margaret..." Our ancestors spoke in this way because they knew all the saints of the calendar and prayed to them.

Another reason why we should be attached to the Divine Office is that it gives us a language in which we can speak to God for those who do not pray. We are delegated by the Church to speak to God and so to bring down on the earth an abundance of graces.

Each saint receives gifts from God to shower on the earth and when you recite the Office you ask these graces for those who do not ask for themselves. You receive the dew that comes down from heaven. There are special graces attached to the memory of each saint and to the commemoration of each feast. There are graces for the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension and Pentecost. For the feasts of Our Lady there is charity at the Visitation, and the lifting up of our souls towards heaven at the Assumption.

The primary reason then for our love of the Office is that it is the language of the Church and it places us in contact with all the saints of heaven and earth. The second reason is that we are appointed as delegates before God to obtain the graces destined for each day in the feasts celebrated. The third reason is our own spiritual growth. In psalms,

lessons and words of the Office we find sufficient nourishment for our spiritual life to keep us away from a multitude of little devotions.

God preserve me from not wishing that all the devotions of the Church be respected and honored but one cannot practice all the little ones as well as all the rosaries and litanies that have been invented in our days simply because people have strayed from the universal devotion of the Office. They no longer know what are Matins, Lauds and Little Hours, while Vespers and Compline are little known. Since prayer is necessary and devotions are an essential need of the Christian life, devotions are composed that are detached from the Catholic tradition which nourished our fathers.

You find in the Office everything that can give your devotion the most ecclesial, solid, universal and traditional character and which summarizes all the praise given to God since the foundation of the Church and even from the time of the synagogues and the patriarchs.

Let us therefore renew ourselves in our love for the Divine Office in such a way that we live and are nourished by that it teaches. The older Religious orders did not have any other set time for prayer. They recited the psalms slowly with long pauses for meditation. It is probably for this reason that St. Augustine says in the Rule, 'Meditate in your heart that which your lips pronounce.' It is understandable that recited in such a way, Office took the place of other times set aside for prayer. However, it is good that we have other moments of prayer which are nourished by what we receive in the Office.

There is one last reason to which I will have to give more time than I can allow myself today. I think that one of the hallmarks of the Institute should be to try to praise God in all things. "Praise God" it seems to me should be our motto along with "Thy Kingdom come." I would be happy to take "The Kingdom come", for our active life and "Praise God", for our interior life. You can understand that if this is one of the hallmarks of the daughters of the Assumption, then we ought to have one foot in this heavenly city where God is eternally blessed, honored and glorified! This praise of God has many dimensions and it corresponds with our role as adorers.

To explain better "Praise God", I would add the following. If it is a question of doctrines, always prefer those in which God is most honored and appears greater and more lovable and you will not be misled. False doctrines almost always present God as terrifying. He is, but His mercy overrides His justice and His goodness is the basis of all His works. God is just in regard to us, but the essence of His being is self-communicating goodness. To give glory to God always believe in what gives God the

greatest glory and shows Him as the most lovable and loving in all your devotions, thoughts, and convictions. Only accept ideas which render God greater, more gentle, more trusting and more perfect. That is one of the ways to "Praise God". In your devotion, try to reserve a large place for praising, adoring and glorifying God.

The Our Father is divided into two parts. The first is for the honor of God and the second for the needs of humankind. Have great devotion to the first three intercessions. "Hallowed be Your name; May Your Kingdom come; May Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." Certainly these three things place us in the most perfect and desirable perspective for ourselves, but above all they refer directly to God.

Include in your devotions a great deal of what is expressed in the "Gloria", "We praise You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify You." I feel that this is an essential part of the devotion which befits a religious of the Assumption.

Lastly, in your relationships with people, make God loved and worshipped. If your central motivation is the glory of God then the good of souls is included. Be more sensitive to the honor of God than to success. It would be a great stumbling block if ever success became more important to you than true good, if ever a superior, or you yourself considered the material results more important than virtue and perfection, if through your contact with people, you sought human praise more than the glory of God. Above all, a superior should seek to extend the Kingdom of God and be more concerned with the honor, praise and glory of God than with success and human praise.

I have already spoken to you about disinterestedness and here I am on the same subject. The reason for this is that the elements of the spirit of the Assumption are intertwined and linked to one another in such a way that they form a single spirit which is that of the Church. As you have seen, I find our spirit in the Our Father, in the Gloria, in the Office, in the love of the Church and in the teaching of the Church. There is nothing unusual or singular about this. ON the contrary, it is everything that is most catholic.

This is why I have said that the Church is a tender and good Mother who gives her children everything they need. Things which are considered rare or extraordinary are only understood by a few and are reserved for those "heights" that very few attain, I do not think these are the best things. The best as those the Church offers to everyone: the Our Father, the Gloria, the Litanies and the lives of the saints. To every one she suggests the worship of God, the idea that God is all-good, all perfect, and all-loving.

This is what I want to recommend to you. I am not talking in superlatives and I insist on this point because sometimes when we seek unusual things and to attain the heights, we fall into what is less sure. Tauler, for example, is an author I have never read. There are people who find gems in his works. Others, on the contrary find doubtful teachings. This type of book is like mustard in a meat, it gives flavor but it does not nourish. I want you to seek to nourish your devotion with things that are perfectly sure and perfectly catholic. These things were sufficient for many saints and they are enough to make you holy without danger and without illusions.