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XI. JOYFUL DETACHMENT FROM EARTHLY THINGS

Today, I would like to speak to you briefly about one of the practical consequences of the spirit of the Assumption. Although virtues are the same everywhere, there is something in the way which they are practiced which depends on the spirit of a congregation.

The spirit of the Assumption tends towards a joyful detachment from earthly things and a going beyond trials and difficulties without complaining or wasting our time over them. All that we have spoken about so far leads to this, to the mystery of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, union with the Virgin ascending above the earth. She calls us to rise with her to a celestial life by placing our thoughts and affections in heaven. Then adoration, the first point I make when speaking of the nights of God, means that in adoring these sovereign rights we anticipate His will with perfect confidence in Him.

I also told you that from among the many doctrines, we should always choose those which most honor God, those which proclaim most clearly that God is good – goodness itself, infinite wisdom, that we should trust Him, expect all things from Him, that He is our Father, and there is never a moment when we cannot throw ourselves into His arms. Our thoughts should always be those which help us to love God more, not the vain thoughts of men.

Why should we not have a joyful detachment since everything points towards this? Since God is Our Father, let us trust Him and turn towards Him who is infinite goodness, whose mercy is even greater than His justice. This attitude goes well with adoration, for in adoration we accept everything joyfully and trustfully from the hand of God. We trust ourselves to God even before we know His will. When His will is known, we accept the will of Our Father without complaining, in a certain joyful detachment from all that is a merely human or earthly way of seeing things.

After adoration, I spoke of the spirit of St. Augustine. Following his example, we must love the truth, the Church, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, all humankind and we should desire to extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the hearts of all. Just think how unsuitable it is for a person who is striving to attain such high ideals to stop to complain about things of this world. We constantly encounter problems, difficulties and trials in this world. Let us not complain about the crosses and inconveniences with which we are faced.

This would be lost time that could have been used in striving for truth, love and the service of Our Lord.

It is only right however, and as God wills, that we seek a solution to problems and difficulties. God did not place us on the earth as possible creatures who say with the Moslems, "God has done this. Mohammed is His prophet." We are creatures endowed with intelligence and freedom and according to the dictates of virtue and the Church, we must overcome the difficulties which this earthly life and the demon place as obstacles to everything we do. I agree entirely with the doctrine of St. Ignatius who says, "In any difficulty, problem or sorrow seek the help of wisdom and prudence as if you count only on yourself and all the while counting only on God. For everything you do is a nothing, "Many people stop before the inconveniences, problems and difficulties they encounter. When asked, "What solution do you envisage?" They have no idea as they have not even sought one."

I think that in joyful detachment the spirit of the Assumption sets aside mourning, sighs and lamentations, as the prophet says and seeks instead what God wants us to do so as to make the best of things for His service and glory. A word from Scripture sums this up perfectly, "All things work together unto good for those who love God."¹ That is why we have no reason to lament. Everything, sisters, works together for good for those who love God. Let there be no misunderstanding, everything without exception – faults when we repent, difficulties we accept, sorrows when they make us grow in patience, shortcomings and ill-health, trials and temptations, difficulties in prayer and all the situations we meet, even our enemies and the devil himself. There are also lights and consolations when we have them and these must not be rejected for they are a gift from God. Everything turns to good for those who love God. If you see things in this light you will understand that we are able to overcome everything with joyful detachment, strength, confidence, freedom of spirit, simplicity and uprightness not wasting time in useless words and actions.

What can stop us if we approach everything saying, "This is the will of God. I accept it with all my heart, I desire it, I adore it" "All things work together for good for those who love God", says St. Paul and St. Augustine does not fear to add, "even sin". "I have not been created for this earth so I will try to rise above all my worries and difficulties, overcoming them the best I can with the means given me by the Rule, by obedience and even by natural wisdom." In this way we do not waste life's precious time in continuous lamentations.

¹ Rom. 8, 28

One of the greatest evils of our time is self-centeredness. Many people who have nothing really to say, are writing their autobiographies, noting everything they have said or done, and there is nothing particularly interesting in any of it. We must work towards the great goals which I pointed out to you. We must extend God's kingdom on earth. What a shame it would be, if in looking after our own personal interest, we lost sight of this great intention.

If we filled our thoughts, words and activities with a zealous desire, we would be free and ready to give ourselves joyfully to everything that concerns the service of our heavenly Father. As we liberate ourselves from useless words and actions, complaints, worries and worldly affairs, we make the kingdom of God present, we are concerned with better things and seek the word of faith which does good. We speak more often to God and of God. Everything is to be gained here, and if there is anything to be lost, it is a certain need to think about ourselves. Let us ask God to take this need away.

Before the Fall people saw all things in God and God in all things. But when their sight was troubled by sin, when their intelligence was darkened by ignorance, after concupiscence had become a driving force, they tended to prefer inferior things and egoism. How many people in this city of Paris spend all their time pursuing a material and self-interested life? I heard someone compare them to squirrels who turn round ceaselessly with an agility that is as tiring as it is useless. These people get up, dress, visit others, go for walks, return home for dinner and then go to a show or out of the evening. They create obligations for themselves, mere childish commitments. Life goes by in feverish agitation and they never have time for anything of value.

It is a life of complete uselessness. It is an inclination produced by the Fall, as it is not natural for an intelligent person to be content to turn around in a stupid circle. Nevertheless it is a fact that many people in this world experience only that! What is there for God in such lives? What actions are done for Him?

Our lives should be a protest against this, not only by keeping our pupils from evil, but by arming them against a futile life, one in which they would forget to raise all things to God who is their eternal destiny. Let us detach ourselves more and more from what still remains of this inclination of original sin. Let us leave lesser and inferior things under our feet so that we can continually raise our minds and hearts towards God, busy ourselves with God, seek God, see God, talk about God and love God. Lastly let us attain

Him by this holy and joyful detachment that we have always considered as one of the characteristics of the Assumption and a result of the different principles of which we have spoken in the preceding chapters.