

TO FORM ONESELF TO UNION WITH OUR LORD
AND TO HIS DIVINE LIKENESS

III Sunday in Lent, February 29, 1880

In today's Gospel, my dear Sisters, there is a passage I urge you to meditate on, or rather, which I would like to meditate with you from the point of view of union with Jesus Christ: "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters," (Lk. 11:23) Our Lord said. One could give this passage a number of interpretations with regard to human life, but I would like to consider it from another point of

view, which we have often meditated on together and to which one must always go back.

We are, as you well know, incorporated in Jesus Christ by baptism; we are one body with him. Jesus Christ is the Head, we are the members. The Church is the mystical body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, body which continues to grow and develop on earth and which will have its completion and plenitude in heaven. Each one of us is part of this mystical body, she is one of its members. One understands, at once, that he who does not obey Christ, his Head, and does not allow himself to be formed according to His plan, goes against Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ came down on earth to do a definite work; he gave his Blood to ransom all men in their unhappy and sinful humanity. All the souls who were willing have profited from this redemption, for, according to St. Augustine, the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is more than sufficient to buy back all mankind. But there are a certain number who do not want this salvation which he brings. Christ, therefore, redeems the elect. Who are the elect? They are those who wish to be members of the mystical body of Christ; who wish to work with him; who wish to place themselves under his influence, in such a way as to resemble him and live by him.

If one pictures a man buried in a swamp where death awaits him, and if, by an impossible supposition, the feet of this man were to attach themselves to the swamp, take root, spread out branches; he would eventually become an inferior creature which would subsist on the earth and attach itself to it. One would find this frightful. Nevertheless it is precisely what a man does, who, instead of just placing his feet on this earth, receives all the influences of the earth, allows all earthly inclinations and tendencies to rise in him, and allows the lower life to develop in him and to come forth

from him. How many men live thus!

As for us, dear Sisters, are there not remains of worldly tendencies in us, something more than just placing our feet on earth? Are we like the bird on a branch? What matters to the bird should the branch break, does it not have wings? How many among us who still have something of this world - all that is of pride, all that is inferior which we share with the animals! For, when one studies the animal, one sees that they have resentment, anger, jealousy, and a number of other inferior traits which are common to us. Well, my dear Sisters, in order to live incorporated in Christ, in order to depend on him, one must detach oneself, leave all that is worldly, receive nothing of its influences. We must, above all, place ourselves under the influence of the Father, listen ceaselessly to his Word, be continually turned towards him, seeking always to resemble him.

Each one of us should be something of Christ. But what? It is a question one must often ask oneself. "In eternity I must be a part of the mystical body of Christ, but what has Christ given me for that? What does he ask of me? Am I fit to be the hand, the feet, the heart of the Church?"

You know that it is often said that the religious are destined to be placed in the heart of Christ by adoration, prayer, love and lofty sentiments. In a word, "is there something in me which can, more or less, resemble this faultless model, so that he may, one day, recognize me as forming part of his mystical body?"

The religious must seek an intimate union with Our Lord. She must fill her heart, her will, her actions with the Gospel and the spirit of Him who came to bring it to her. She should see Christ in his mysteries, seek those which she can best reproduce in her life according to the attractions God gives her. There are souls who have a great devotion to the Passion of Our Lord; others to the

Holy Infancy, the Hidden Life; still others, the way of persecution our Lord had. A number wish to follow him in his Public Life, during which he sought nothing but the glory of his Father and his Will. Everywhere he brought salvation, announcing ways to go to God. He lived in such poverty that he had not even where to lay his head. He trained his twelve Apostles, the seventy-two disciples and the pious and devoted women, whom he, likewise, taught and formed. Why did Mary Magdalen stay at his feet, listening to his words if it is not that he was revealing to her the mysteries of his kingdom? It is what he does with us, dear Sisters: first, by what we hear, by what is taught to us, and, also, by what he tells us deep down in our hearts.

God has destined each one of us to resemble Christ in a very special manner. How we must, therefore, strive to resemble him and fear to waste one's time in useless things, in vain things, in the little worthless occupations of this life! We do not know how much time is given us to accomplish this great work. It is important, therefore, not to waste a minute. One must make the best use of prayer, work, the occupations of our religious life, silence, the divine Office, and all that, in one way or another, enters into the plan drawn up for us by Christ.

We have seen Sisters die young, but having nevertheless, reached a visible resemblance to Christ. One among them very dear to our memory - Sr. Marie Catherine of the Precious Blood - reached this resemblance by her patience, her sweetness, her charity. You know very well that her one great preoccupation during her last illness was to acquire to the highest degree the love she would have attained had she lived a long life. "All my prayer," she used to say, "is to ask Our Lord to give me all the

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degrees of love I am capable of." And, clinging to Our Lord by love, she reproduced in herself his divine resemblance; for it is in imitating him by love that one attains to resemblance. I no longer remember which saint said: "To look at Jesus Christ is already to have him as a model; to imitate him is to do all one can so that his divine resemblance be imprinted in us." To look at him with the eyes of the soul, to love with him, is to sanctify oneself with him and be transformed into him.

What do I wish to tell you by this, dear Sisters? Let us make use with great fidelity of what remains of Lent in order not to waste time, so that nature may not take the better of us. If temptation comes do not heed it, do not worry over it, do not preoccupy yourself with it nor with yourselves; but live with Christ, with whom we should work and love so that when he comes to reward us, he will find us incorporated to him by baptism, in holy communion and also, in the fervor of a life in complete imitation of his.