

## **On Detachment**

29th September 1872

My dear Daughters,

The thing that what can best help us to practice freedom of heart as regards assignments, is esteem for God. Let us pray to establish this disposition in the depths of our hearts.

It seems surprising that we should have to be recommended to esteem God. We are Christians, Religious. We have faith, since we were brought up as Christians. We ought to understand that God is the creature's only good, and, to speak correctly, we ought to esteem God alone. And yet, are we not influenced by what I might call the vain joys and vain sorrows of life here on earth? Now every joy is vain, every sorrow is vain, that is not caused by belonging a little more or a little less, to God.

I do not know if you are like me; but I catch myself sometimes feeling joy for a temporal thing, whose aim belongs to time and has no relation to God and eternity. At other times, on the other hand, we let ourselves be cast down and discouraged and made anxious by things that have nothing to do with God, and that are merely human and natural. But we ought to find joy only in God, joy that being Religious we belong more completely to God. We ought to feel glad about everything that brings us nearer to God, and sad only for what draws us or others away from

Him; that is to say, sin and the loss of grace. I understand that lay-brother who said to his Superior: "There is only one misfortune: mortal sin". We ought to be indifferent about everything else, as St. Ignatius says: indifferent as to riches or poverty, health or sickness, honour or contempt, success or failure.

But understand this: when the Saints speak of indifference, they do not mean guilty indifference. St. Bernard said that the greatest misfortune of the nations was that they were without affection and St. Paul had said it before him. They do not mean indifference to one's salvation and perfection. We are not even asked to be indifferent to creatures, but to love them in God and for God. We are to place God and what pleases Him above all things, and not be like ivy that dies with the tree to which it is attached.

Sisters, separation from our loved ones would be a cruel sorrow were it without hope of meeting again. If death takes those we love, we can always think that after a time we shall be reunited with them for all eternity, and that now they are praying for us and obtaining great graces for us, and that they are united with us in Christ Our Lord. This is a consolation. God often gives us consolations; but when He does not, we must think how Our Lord chose to live here below without consolation. He chose to leave His Blessed Mother, and He suffered much without any relief. Let us make his feelings ours, and look for our happiness in

seeking God, in running to Him by faith, hope and love, in clinging only to Him.

One who diligently sets herself to win the esteem of God, or better, the esteem of God alone, will no longer be glad or sorrowful for things of little worth. She is blessed with many joys: the joys of the Sacraments, of Grace, the joy of Prayer, painful at times but which she nevertheless enjoys, the joy of being brides of Christ, of belonging to Him, of loving Him. She knows sorrows as well: sorrow for sin, for infidelity, for wasted graces and for having offended God.

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