

On the Spirit of the Assumption

14th December 1873

My dear daughters,

I have often explained to you that there are many aspects of the spirituality of the Assumption. Today, I would like to return to three or four of these and discuss them more fully.

Monsignor Gay defined our spirit very clearly when he said that as Religious of the Assumption we should be closely united and attached to the life of the Blessed Virgin, which was none other than the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Following her example, we should also rise above earthly things, freeing ourselves from them by the "Lift up your hearts!" We should try to remain always in this disposition.

Whenever things do not go too well, when we are in difficulty or suffering, let us try to rise higher by faith and love. This is what the Assumption means for us. It draws us above all these sufferings and difficulties, all the sorrows of life, maintaining us in a state of faith, of hope, and of the love of Our Lord.

But another aspect of our life is the spirit of zeal and fervor for the coming of the reign of Our Lord on earth. This spirit of ardor and even of militancy that characterizes the Fathers of the Assumption they have formulated in their

Constitutions with this word, "May your Kingdom come!"¹. For us, this spirit of zeal must show itself by our loving work for Our Lord, by a sense of devotedness since we are consecrated to the service of others, and by a filial love of the Church, which means that all that touches it, that interests it, all that concerns it, is the object of our thoughts, our desires, our prayers. In short, it is the incentive of a continual and constant preoccupation.

This is what we have always tried to develop in you and you must work to increase it daily. It includes the desire for the Christian life in oneself and in others, the desire for perfection in oneself and in others, in a word, the desire for all that can most glorify Our Lord Jesus Christ and increase His reign in souls.

This leads to a third aspect of our life which perhaps, occupied us the most at the beginning of the foundation when we were so few in number. We desired that the life of Jesus Christ should be reproduced in ourselves. Certainly the imitation of the life of Our Lord is necessary to enable us to go above nature, to work for the salvation of souls and the extension of the Kingdom. However, as Religious of the Assumption we must form ourselves very particularly according to our divine Model. There are many places in the Rule which recommend this and suggest that the best means of preserving the spirit of our Congregation, is to apply ourselves constantly to never saying or doing anything that could not have been said or done by Our Lord or His

¹ Adveniat Regnum Tuum

Holy Mother.

There is a way of being, of acting, of thinking that was characteristic of Our Lord when He was on earth. One should often picture how He would have behaved with regard to such matters as health and illness, life and death, friends and enemies, parents and neighbours, in a word in regard to all creatures and everything and everyone you can imagine so as to conform to His example, to live it more perfectly and in a way that is truly evangelical.

It is true that all Christians should try to imitate Our Lord since in order to enter heaven we must resemble this divine Model because the heavenly Father has predestined for glory, those in whom He finds the traits of His Son. In order to preserve the spirit of faith, simplicity and love of Our Lord which is the distinctive mark of our Congregation, we have a special duty to study Our Lord and to imitate Him and to continue His life in us as far as is possible in this world today. We must imitate His zeal, His actions, His thoughts, all the conduct of His life so that when we do some good work, our intention is to continue the good works of Our Lord and to do nothing that His Sacred Humanity would not have done during His mortal life.

Take, for example, the recitation of the Divine Office. It is certain that Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin often recited the psalms that we say, since the Church puts on our lips these words, "Lord, I offer you this prayer in union with the Divine intention which You had when You Yourself chanted the praises of God on earth." Is there any better

intention for the Office than following that of Jesus Christ? We can thus unite ourselves to Him in all our actions, because Jesus lives in us by grace and by the Eucharist It is He Who gives meaning to our prayer and our works

As the holy body and soul of Our Lord was completely dependent on the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, because there was not a human person in Christ, but only the one Divine person, so we can place ourselves by grace and love, in a state of dependence on Our Lord through our fidelity to the movements of His Spirit who lives in us as in a temple. Under His divine action we can perform works of zeal and virtue which are the more perfect as we remain under the influence of our Divine Head We are members of His living body which is the Church of Jesus Christ on earth and which, transformed and transfigured, will be united to Him in eternity.

In order to arrive at union with Our Lord, we must first strive to follow Him in dependence and humiliation This is something I want to emphasize. Everyone desires to begin with union, but that is like builders who decide to build a house, starting from the roof. To reach union, it is absolutely necessary to begin by imitation. You must be penetrated with the Gospel, the thoughts of Our Lord, His words and actions and by the wish to reproduce them as far as possible in your everyday life

To want to reach union without passing through the stage of imitation is sheer illusion You might begin with an

act of union, but if you do not study the Gospel carefully to see how Our Lord practiced humility, obedience, poverty and simplicity, to examine what He lived at Bethlehem, during his hidden life and in His public life, you would risk passing over the means for dwelling in union By an act of love, you might achieve it for a moment which would be good, but you could not stay there without the sustenance that is needed, namely the thoughts and habits of the imitation of Christ, drawn from meditation on the life and works of Our Lord in the Gospel

Speaking like this about union should help you to understand better the spirit that marks our Congregation and our own particular way of tending to perfection

By showing you these three points of view, I hope to have outlined the effort a Religious of the Assumption should make, a constant to rise above the things of this earth in order to maintain oneself in the spirit of zeal and love found in the Church Finally, the effort to follow Jesus, seeking the rule and model for our thoughts, words and actions in the Gospel Thus we will become more closely united with Our Lord and will allow Him to reign in us

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