

The Love of Our Lord

9th February 1873

My dear Daughters,

Something urges me to leave aside all that might be said about what has just been read¹ and to talk to you about our chief desire, the aim of all our efforts, even of our vocation. I mean, the love of God alone, the one thing necessary.

This thought strikes me more forcibly every time one of our Sisters leaves us for heaven². The one and only thing we need to acquire in this life is a great love of God: a love so pure, so true, that it will unite us with God and that we may be counted worthy to receive the bridal crown. I always recommend St. Ignatius's prayer : "Take Lord and receive my liberty... all that I am... Give me thy love and thy grace. That is enough for me..." Truly, Sisters, all we want, is grace and love, and that is enough. Our great work, the aim of all our efforts, the motive of all our actions, must be this life of love.

Ponder on this and see if your life is truly a life of love, and if you use the ordinary work and sufferings of every day to grow in this love. St. Paul says: "in eating, in drinking, in all that you do, do everything for God's glory".

¹ On humility

² Sr. Louis Agnès, Marie Boucher

Do you make use of everything to increase your love? Are you always attentive to Our Lord.? Is He the centre of your thoughts? When you wake at night does your heart turn to Him? Often ask yourself these questions.

I know quite well, Sisters, that we all want to love God. It is a thing no one objects to. On the contrary, we desire it keenly. But something comes between God and us, and that is, self-love. We love ourselves. If our love is to be pure and tender we must accept suffering, we must be ready to die to self. What best enables us to love God is, once again, humility. And where is humility to be found? In humiliation. God uses all kinds of sufferings to strip us of self, sufferings that vary with different characters. One person shrinks most from physical pain. Another can bear that more easily but has great fear of mental suffering, of responsibility, of opposition, of dryness in prayer, of the trials of the interior life. Our Lord in his love chooses what is best for each one, takes everything from her and grants her a share in his sacrifice.

When a sister has served God for many years, when she has love Him alone, and with pure love: if she was called when she was young and gave him the springtime of her life and love, you think her lucky and the thought of her makes you happy. If another, called later in life, answered the call generously, and after some years, maybe of less earnest pursuit of perfection, was one day carried forward by a strong wave of fervour, and from that time on strove to acquire humility, to get rid of self-love and self-will and of

attachment to her own judgment, with only one desire, to see God served, loved and glorified: if she herself has served, loved and glorified Him, you may be happy about her eternal destiny. Such souls leave this world for heaven.

And what about ourselves, Sisters? Whether old or young we have not yet acquired pure love. But that is a work that can be done at any age. We have to try and make headway every day: to rid ourselves of all worldliness, of all selfishness, of the inclinations of our fallen nature, and to let the holy Spirit teach us. He is the true master of the science of the Religious Life. Holy Church attributes creation to the Father, redemption to the Son and sanctification to the Holy Spirit who is the mutual love of the Father and the Son. He is the teacher of souls who are making progress, He teaches us to love Our Lord. And when at prayer Our Lord speaks to us, the Holy Spirit inspires our answers.

You remember the wonderful colloquy between Our Lord and a nun at the feet of her crucifix, that M. Deplace told us about. Our Lord says : "I left my Father's side for your sake. Leave the world for me". And she answers: "Lord, I left the world and all I loved for you."... And so on, Our Lord enumerating all the things He did for love of her, and she telling Him all she tried to do for Him. When at prayer we have secret colloquies with Our Lord, our answers are inspired by the Holy Spirit who unites us with Christ Our Lord, who sanctifies us and teaches us to love God and to abandon ourselves into His hands. Prayer is the school where He teaches pure and tender love by drawing

souls to Himself and opening their eyes to the beauty of Jesus.

At bottom, it is this beauty of Our Lord which attracted all of us, though doubtless in different ways. In his actions, in his teaching, in his divine person, in his infinitely adorable love, Jesus is all beautiful. Bossuet says: "He is beautiful from eternity, born of the Father before all ages, and He is beautiful when, in time, He is born of his virgin mother and lies on straw in a manger. And what beauty in the simplicity of his words when He teaches us the most sublime truths and makes us understand them by the light He pours into our minds. And then, how beautiful He is, when, broken and blood-stained, He has become a worm and no man to save us!

If you can fathom something of a beauty so truly divine it is by the action of the Holy Spirit. How many people in the world can pass a crib or a crucifix unmoved. Never be like that. Imprint on your heart more deeply every day this beauty ever ancient and ever new, known too late, loved too little, the very beauty that will be our heaven for all eternity.

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