

ON FRATERNAL CORRECTION

11. 1. 74.

My dear Daughters,

This point of the Rule on fraternal correction which you have just heard gives me a good occasion to speak to you on the subject.

I recommend to you first and foremost not to stop at what this practice costs and not to hesitate about having recourse to these admonishments when you believe it necessary for the good of the Rule and the Constitutions.

Secondly, I would like to draw your attention to a point of the Rule of St. Augustine which you have perhaps overlooked until now. St. Augustine says a propos of these admonishments (I will take the exact text of the Rule): "If after a first warning the guilty one does not correct herself, before revealing her fault to the Sisters by whom she shall be convinced in case she denies her fault, the Superior should be told, so that if this Sister can be more secretly corrected, the others ignore her faults".

The reason why I insist on this point is that many persons, even in the devout life, do the exact opposite. Thus a Sister sees a defect, ordinarily she is bothered by the trouble and the inconvenience it causes her personally; she is inclined to point out to other Sisters the little difficulty or the trouble this defect gives her,

Instead of thinking charitably of the means by which this fault could be corrected.

This is why St. Augustine says that the Superior should first be told, because if the Sister may perhaps be secretly corrected, it is better that others ignore her fault. For to reveal the defects or faults of a Sister to a Superior does not have any ill effects. Having the responsibility of correction, the Superior needs to know the people she is in charge of, and consequently it is well, it is charity, to warn her of their defects.

What we must then avoid absolutely is to reveal the defects of Sisters at recreation, in conversations, in our work. If we were always very faithful to this Rule, there would be more charity in Communities, more discretion and something more religious.

For example at the Economat, the defects can often be seen in a more obvious manner, because there are many persons concerned, or because the Econome being more often disturbed than others, she has more occasions to manifest her own defects. Well, supposing the Econome upon seeing the defects of the more or less difficult persons who come readily to talk at the economat, tells herself as an asides: "Such a person is difficult!", this is very bad: similarly, were she to show, even to her assistant, what she has been able to

notice in the conduct of others; or if the Sisters were to tell others in conversation the defects they have surprised the Econome in.

Now, all that, Sisters, is distant from the charity that sees no defects unless to remedy them! We must honestly admit, we are a composite of defects and imperfections; but we cannot have relations with others without encountering these defects and imperfections. But see how charity is total indeed in this rule of fraternal correction which demand that, if you see a defect in a Sister, you first ask the Superior's permission toward her of this defect, in order that this Sister can be corrected privately and others ignore her fault.

I spoke to you just now of the Economat. It is the same thing at the kitchen: the Sister-cook usually has defects in full view of others and in turn sees clearly the defects of the Sisters who come to the kitchen to get the plates and who get impatient when all is not ready on time. Or what have you? it is always like that in employments involving many people who come and go. If she zealously asks the Superior's permission to war the Sisters concerned of the fault she has noticed in them, she corrects the defect and at the same time has exercised discretion.

When we follow the dictates of nature, we will not act thus; it is loath to admonish; it says: "How can I say that to my Sisters?...Who am I, I who have so many imperfections myself, to dare think I have the right to warn others?" But it has no aversion to say to another Sister at recreation: "How Sister X is impatient, how hard to get along with this!" Perhaps she would not use such harsh terms, but in more gentle terms she will manage to make herself understood, to drive home the point.

It is this error precisely, Sisters, that we must avoid, for there is no profit gained in revealing other people's defects to those who have neither the duty nor the job of correcting them; but on the contrary we need this type of courage which makes us reveal the faults only to the person who can correct them, that is to say, to the person concerned or to her Superior.

As to admonitions made directly to the person, our Rule demands that prudence and discretion be practised, and hence wants us to first ask the Superior's permission. And this for two reasons: first, because there are some people - let us not have any illusions - who would poster other with their private admonitions, would ceaselessly irritate them and would make themselves most unwelcome. This is quite natural. Secondly, their admonitions might involve into

other imperfections. Thus, one Sister might warn another of a defect, and the latter starts to say: "But I have this difficulty..." and unconsciously this might turn into conversations, into irregular intimacies. That is why it is important that a prudent person judge whether it is an inopportune zeal which inspires us to make admonitions and whether we are guided by an enlightened zeal, two things which are indispensable for our admonitions to be useful.

On the contrary, warning the Superior does not have the slightest inconvenience. Let us suppose that you tire her, you trouble her with complaints having no foundation; after all, that is her job, she is there for that. Let us suppose on the other hand, that these admonitions are not charitable enough; she can take them or leave them, and do what she judges best in the sight of God; whereas the private warning from Sister might engender trouble, antipathies, the thought that we are unkind, and finally and up in irregularities which I have just mentioned.

Never has there been the slightest inconvenience to public admonitions dealing with purely external things. To say for example: "I warn Sr...of not having closed her window on time" has no unpleasant repercussion. It is the same with couples: all that cannot possibly cause any harm to the mind of the others, and maintains the spirit of obedience,

of fidelity to the foundation. It is the same for the other point: thus, when we notice that silence is broken, we can make the warning. That is good, it preserves regularity. We must in fact have great zeal for the perfection of our Sisters, in order that they may be saints one day; at the same time we must have great zeal for the observance of our Rule so as to leave behind us a perfectly regular and fervent Congregation.

But in order that admonitions attain this good; we must always make them in a great spirit of love; for of all our Rules this is perhaps the one which must especially be governed by charity. Charity, as you know, includes two things: love of God and love of neighbor. Or, when we admonish our neighbor in all charity, we show love for God by our zeal for His glory, and we also show our love for our neighbor by our zeal for his perfection and by our respect for his reputation.

Be careful then my dear Daughters, when you notice your neighbor's defects never to look at them with eyes which criticize and blame. God, who sees the heart, cannot possibly bless the glance which -shall we say it? -looks with a superior air preferring self interiorly to others, in such a manner that we say may to ourselves: "how can one do such a thing? Oh! I never would have acted thus!..." This brings us straight to the pharisees and the publican. When we encoun-

ter some difficult, we think: "As for me, I would not have done that...how intolerable it is..., how troublesome!..." And you can well understand not possibly please the care of the good Lord, who hears and sees what takes place in the depth of our heart.

If on the contrary we say: "I have seen this defect, but what could I do to correct it?" it is remarkable how this thought of amending a fault for the good of the neighbor immediately makes all care, all worry cease. The procedure is humbler and more charitable, while the noting of the defects and perfections of the neighbor which only result in a secret pride lead to impatience and to lack of fraternal aid, two things which are not good.

Let us be zealous then, my dear Daughters, for fraternal correction. Preserve charity in humility, demands perfection not only of yourself but all your Sisters, so that God may render you all true saints in His service.

I have often told you that we can be true saints in the service of God, although we may still keep certain defects and imperfection. There are Saints who retained something disagreeable in their relations with others. This must be a big consolation for us. Some were annoying, others quick-tempered, others slow, people makes critical remarks of the Saints, during their lifetime.

This St. Francis de Sales. This gentle and accomplished Saint, used to spend it seems one hour for all he did; and that doubtlessly because since he was naturally quick, he wanted to preserve his soul in peace and in patience. Others had a fiery temper, hot-headed, and manifested it in their action. Thus we see St. Bernard on his deathbed, begging pardon of his body for all-treating it. That must have been an immoderation, an imperfection, which could be noticed in his conduct and in his relations with others.

As you see however, these exterior imperfections are no obstacle to sanctity. Among the persons with whom we live, there are some who can be very pleasing to God, closely united to Our Lord and yet retain some exterior imperfections. Let us ask God that inspite of certain things which are like wrinkles on the skin, they may live in the intimate depths of their souls in union with Our Lord Jesus Christ, and that full of self-contempt, they may attain virtue and holiness.

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CONFIDENCE IN GOD

June 7th 1874

Whenever I visit our houses, I feel that what we need most is the conviction that all our apostolic works are God's work. It is He who is working, and we are merely working with Him. This thought should fill us with immense confidence. It is striking how God takes a hand when we trust Him, when we seek His glory, His honour doing everything as perfectly as possible for then He takes care of the rest. He may not send more than is necessary, but He will see that we lack nothing either materially or spiritually.

We should, therefore, stimulate ourselves to an ever greater union with God, acting only under the touch of His grace. Whatever may be our work and wherever we may be He casts away all care.

This word care recalls to my mind a word of St. Paul "Whoever has authority must work Hard". (Rm. 12/8). Work hard, yes, she must work hard in her specific occupation in the school or community. But there are two ways of working: some work peacefully others feverishly. And yet God's work is best done in tranquility and calm. Let us work, keeping our Master in sight. We are workers in His vineyard, He is the gardener. It is for us to do what we can and what He wants, He will do the rest.

This thought seems commonplace, and yet it is very necessary. If we banished all temporal anxiety, careful only to serve God in great liberty of spirit, placing all our trust in Him, we would pray better. Knowing our need for His help and protection, we would be united with Him counting on His Providence for everything. And our dealings with one another would grow in amiability, for the little irritations, the little

setbacks, the little worries would be replaced by an immense confidence in Him for whom and with whom we are working. A confidence such as this would likewise eliminate many negative remarks we let fall here^{and the} and that do not get us anywhere.

From these few reminders let us draw motives for thanksgiving. Our Lord is always so good, so ready to assist us! He wishes to establish us in an atmosphere of peace that would keep us united with Him. Our difficulties, our agitations do not come from God, but from our own imperfections. We must bear them with patience while trying to rid ourselves of them by union and dependence on God. Then the peace He announced to men will be ours: "Peace be to you. I leave you my peace, I give you my peace." (St. Jn. 14/27)
"Peace to men with whom He is pleased." (Lk. 2/14)

LOVE FOR GOD'S WILL

9. 8. 74.

My dear Daughters,

I shall be leaving soon and several of you will be going away too. So I want to give you a word to be a help and support. This thought is elementary in the Religious life and even in the Christian life, but it can lead to perfection. It is, that the only thing to seek after is God's Will. To will only God's will, to have it always in view, to follow it, simplifies everything.

The spirit of the Assumption is a spirit of simplicity, and nothing is so simple as the love for God's Will. St. Francis de Sales wrote to his nuns that they should see God's Will in everything and do it. There is nothing in this saying that cannot be applied to all nuns of any congregation and all mysticism can be linked with it.

There is an axiom of St. Ignatius that I hope will be fully and carefully explained to you during the Retreat. "It is necessary that we should make ourselves indifferent to all created things". This does not mean that creatures can ever be a matter of indifference to us: they please or displease us and we necessarily feel your difficulties or your sufferings. No. But the Will of God, the desire to carry out His least wish, will have taken such a hold on your soul that you will no longer look at anything but God's Will

For example, people generally like good health better than sickness, though a few, very few, prefer to be ill. And even when one prefers suffering, one likes certain conditions of time, place, persons,

surroundings. What matters always is, that rising above what pleases us, we hold only to what pleases God, and to His will.

Indifference to creatures throws us as if naturally into surrender to God, and that is the most perfect act of love. This love for God, which is the aim and essential duty of every Christian, and more of every Religious, is also the starting point and final aim of surrender.

Obviously we always have our preferences. One thing is to your liking, and another is not. But you do things that do not please you because they please God and because you love Him. In acting thus you have the highest motive, love so that in everything you do whether you pray, read or write, when you eat, or go to the parlour, or come away again, you can always say to God, "Lord, I am doing your Will". In this way, we always adore the divine Will which disposes all things for our good, and gives us such and such a talent or employment, or surroundings. No two people ever have the same gifts or are led by the same way.

In all these things we should certainly know what our preference would be if God gave us our choice. But by His great mercy He has not done so, and He does not do so. Besides, it is madness to look at others and to compare oneself to someone and say: "If, like Sister so and so, I was helped and had the occupations and talent and consolations that she has..." Yes, that is sheer madness, because God's choice for us is best. He knows what is good for us better than we do and He loves us much more than we love ourselves, not

in the bad sense of self-love, but with the love of a Father who arranges everything for our greater good.

Our return for such love is trust. If our heavenly Father gives us a bitter cup, we must take it willingly from His hand because we trust His adorable Will and His high wisdom, in comparison with which ours is but darkness; and we must remember that this wisdom has disposed all things for His glory, and for our sanctification in this world and our glory in the next. All our perfection consists in letting ourselves be led and in seeking in everything the fulfillment of God's Will.

I leave this thought, both to those who are preparing for their big Retreat, and to those who are leaving us for the Houses. To some it may seem hard. But it would be hard for an Angel and if anything could be hard for those heavenly spirits who enjoy the vision of God---to be sent to a soul that for years has turned away from Him, never obeys His Will, that is an enemy of God and always does evil. But the Angel is there by the Divine Will; he always sees God and loves this Divine Will that transforms everything, consoles for everything, defies everything, and which in all is turned to joy.

That is how things ought to be with us at the Assumption. We must have joy, so that we shall rise above created things and not have our hearts captive. And our care must be, if any roots grow downward to earth, to loosen them so that all our roots shall be in Heaven. In this way, we shall go forward, always looking at Him, full of confidence in such a loving Father, and, like well-born children with our eyes on His

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Fatherly hands, as Scripture says, ready to obey
His least sign.

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GET RID OF OUR SELF-LOVE TO PUT ON
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

4. 10. 74.

My dear Daughters,

In the more serious application, you must bring to prayer after your retreat, I wish to recommend to you the taking often as the subject of your meditation the care with which you must get rid of your own life so as to put on the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Properly speaking, that is the spirit of the Assumption.

A religious of the Assumption all her life has to try to seek how she can continue the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ and develop it in her. No great austerities are required of us for this. Our Lord led a common life among men; it is true that this life ended with atrocious sufferings, endured for us on the cross. Each one of us will probably have to suffer at the end of her life; we do not reach the hour of death without ordinarily having to endure sickness, anguish, sadness first. You have seen this in our dying Sisters. It is then that the mystery of the cross must be constantly before our eyes to inspire us with patience.

Therefore we must seek how we can imitate this life of thanksgiving, of prayer, of zeal, of evangelical spirit as revealed in the Gospel. But I will go to the point right away.

We cannot fill ourselves with the life of Our Lord, we cannot manifest it in our mortal flesh, as St. Paul puts it (II Cor. 4.11), unless we strip ourselves of our own life, of our own mind, that is to say: of all that is properly speaking our "me". Often we say: "I, I am made like this; I, I think thus; I believe that". This one is "I" in his character: another is "I" in his dislikes; it is this "I" under all its forms that we must disown and abandon, if we want to acquire the manners of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philosophers say that it is an impossibility to make two opposite forms dwell together in the same subject; thus an artist cannot fashion a human face which will be at the same time strong is the same for our soul; as long as our own form remains, that of Our Lord cannot transform us. Hence, a continuous persevering effort is necessary to strip us of our own manner of seeing, of thinking, of being, of willing, of acting, etc.; in order that we may put on the manner of seeing, of thinking, of being, of willing and of acting which Our Lord has taught us in His Gospel.

It is in this regard that I recommend so often to you, in general and in particular, to try to be Gospel-minded in the simplicity, the faith, and attention to Our Lord, in dependence on His spirit, in intelligence of this word often feared by nature: "If anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny him-

self"; this is however but the beginning of perfection, and Our Lord adds: "let him take up his cross daily " (Mt.16,24); for the cross is found in the religious life, as it is in the depths of all human lives, and the more we carry it with good grace, the more happy, calm and contented we are in this world; so that reason alone should make us accept it, make us place it joyfully on our shoulders, instead of dragging it slothfully and as if regretfully.

We sometimes look for crosses: austerities, to prove our love for Our Lord; but, believe me, it is a great cross to carry, the perfection of Our Lord; it is a heavy weight, a great work to apply ourselves to tend unceasingly towards a model so holy and so perfect as Our Lord. His is a very difficult form to take; in order to succeed, great efforts are necessary and these efforts are hard.

And yet this labour is required of all; it is a struggle which forms part of the choice we have to make in this world between the narrow way that leads to heaven and the wide one which leads to perdition. Every Christian is obliged to choose, and only those who pass by the narrow path will reach the Kingdom of heaven. But, for us, who something more than ordinary Christians, the effort must be greater, more generous sacrifice is demanded.

It is true, Sisters, that joy accompanies this sacrifice; for, in the measure in which we abandon ourselves we find Our Lord Jesus Christ, we relish the joy of being united to Him, we possess peace radiating from his grace and his unction into a good conscience. In the measure in which the first elements of the life of Jesus Christ are manifested in us, in the same proportion peace begins to establish itself in our soul.

You know that whenever Our Lord appeared to His disciples after the Resurrection, His first word was: "Peace be to you"! (Lk. 24.36). Thus from the first apparition of Jesus Christ into the soul He brings peace. If He sometimes brings trial, the cross, He also brings peace, and a peace that surpasses all joy, any human sentiment, according to the words of St. Paul. But this peace which surpasses all understanding, only Our Lord can give it, and this according to the depth in which the Cross is rooted in our soul.

In the measure in which a soul therefore makes the most sacrifices, in which she imprints in herself most the likeness of Our Lord Jesus Christ; in that measure she discovers a joy that the world ignores, an all-supernatural joy which depends on the presence of God in her, and which surpasses all the riches and all the joys of the earth. It is in this sense that Our Lord has promised to his disciples that they would receive

a hundred fold in the midst of persecutions (Mt. 19.29), this hundredfold is given to us by God's presence in us. It is certain that the martyrs in the darkness of their prisons were joyful and serene, for Jesus was being formed in them and dwelled with them. It is thus that they could resist unto blood in the confession of their faith with a force which was more than merely human.

This presence of God in us is truly enough not always sensibly felt, because God wants the soul to purify itself by greater efforts, by a more arduous labor; then He hides himself, a necessary move so that this soul will not fall into self-complacency, into spiritual vanity, which is the greatest evil. God withdraws, removes His consolations, His lights, so that we may see ourselves miserable and imperfect; and so if we were wise, rather than be saddened by this, this sight would console us because we would feel, at least from this angle, absolutely in the truth, and we would begin to walk joyfully and peacefully, recognizing ourselves as pure nothingness and sincerely convince that of ourselves we can do nothing.

But let us return to what I was telling you at the beginning: get used to often telling yourself "I shall not make any progress unless I resemble Our Lord. The souvenir of "me", the thought revolving around "me" the gaze on the "me", the word which returns to the "me", all that I

must cut off, annihilate, that all in me may be directed to Our Lord and that all in me may be stamped in my inner and outer self". To the most young among you, I would say that this should be the object of your efforts and of your constant striving; that you must especially ask God for the grace not to waste the time of your life.

This time is precious, since it is given to us for the winning of eternity. Sometimes we hear: "Ah, how I would like to reach the end of my life"! To what purpose is this said? Is it to avoid some days of trouble and work? Why? what is that in the light of eternity! If it were to be united to God because we believe we have already attained the likeness of Our Lord Jesus Christ, this is quite presumptuous! Who can say to herself: "I am like Our Lord; I think like Him, I will like Him, "I have His way of seeing things, of being and of acting! Whoever speaks thus certainly still has self-love and pride.

On the contrary, since we know that the road we must take is still long, I do not say that we must ask for life, but that we must accept it with gratitude as a great gift of God. If we accept life thus, not desiring anything else but to be like Our Lord more and more, God who is in a manner of speaking obliged to fashion in us this divine likeness which will be perfected in sickness.

While if all we want is to get rid of the troubles of life, Our Lord might well satisfy this first desire, but without granting the second one; and thus we shall remain in an incomplete and unfinished likeness with our divine Model. Since it is on this earth that we must attain this likeness in us, let us work at it with courage, thinking that it is a question of acquiring an immortal fortune, and eternal good to possess, a permanent state to attain with a few pains in this world. This has been the mind of all the

SPIRIT OF FAITH

8. 11. 74.

My dear Daughters,

I leave the subject of admonitions for another time, and I continue what I was saying a fortnight ago on the Spirit of Faith.

The Spirit of Faith makes the things of eternity present to us here and now. In consequence it ought to give us courage to despise the things of this world for the life of God, and to lead a life that is above mere nature, and that starts from the thought of divine things, from the recollection of Our Lord's Redemption and Incarnation and His other mysteries: a life that consists in loving Him and imitating Him. This would make us look forward to the rewards of eternal life instead of trying to find our satisfaction in the things that pass away. And meantime, while we have to suffer here below, we should keep the eyes of our heart on the happiness that awaits us in eternity.

On this subject of the Spirit of Faith there is another thought that always strikes me forcibly and to which it is worth while to return often. It is expressed in the simple Catechism answer which says that God is a pure Spirit, that we cannot see Him nor hear Him nor touch Him nor feel Him. He is a Spirit, and as such He is altogether beyond the reach of our senses.

It seems to me that if this truth were implanted deeply enough in our mind and heart it would put an end to much anxiety and anguish. The reason for many of our worries is that we would like to see God in some way, to hear Him and above all to feel Him. That is the most constant quest of the human heart, a quest that is right and just and lawful, since God is the Supreme Good and He has promised to give Himself to us. Worry and anguish most of them come from our not feeling God as we should like to. Our self-confidence and other mistakes come from the fact that we want to feel, and that think we feel, things that is of their very nature are quite beyond the reach of our senses.

The more I ponder on this the clearer it seems to me that this very fact ought to convince us of our helplessness to see divine and eternal things here below; for if God had left us anything more in keeping with our senses so as to show us something of His Eternal nature, He would have surely done so.

There is an abyss, an infinite distance between God and us. When apparitions and visions are spoken of, the term "sub specie" is used to express the mode by which the soul has contact with the supernatural world. In order to appear on earth, angels and saints take a form, an image rather than a reality, because with our

moftal eyes we cannot see spirits or disembodied souls; we cannot see what is heavenly nor what is divine.

Now you see I am no longer speaking of God as He is in His own Divine Nature, to God Incarnate who has taken a body like ours. Now that He is in heaven His body is only made known to our senses under the appearance of a substance that no longer exists, of bread that does not exist, of wine whose substance has been changed, so that nothing but the shape, the color, the taste of the Sacred Species remains for our senses to recognize.

All this is contained in the elementary Catechism teaching, and yet these truths are a marvellous help to our life of prayer. When souls pass beyond the kind of knowledge that appeals to the senses they should not grieve. They have something better than those earlier graces of contact with God that are in the regions of the imaginations. God used those means to draw these souls closer to Himself; but they were means necessary for a time only and not yet the true interior communication of Himself.

Souls who are experiencing this change from the earlier means God used to draw them to more real and interior union must not regret it. They are getting closer to something more real, more interior, more spiritual: even to God

Himself. Though He remains invisible and incommunicable He is coming nearer, and is more intimately present in these souls.

We must often come back to this thought at prayer, and say to ourselves: "God dwells far beyond the reach of my reason, beyond all I can see and hear and touch. By nature He is quite apart, high above anything with which my nature can have contact. It is true, God has given Himself to me by an unfathomable gift, the gift of Revelation, but He Himself is beyond the reach of my senses both interior and exterior. All that I can see and feel and touch in this world are outward signs by which He has designed to make Himself known."

We see and feel and touch the outward signs of the Sacraments through which grace is given to us. In the Blessed Sacrament we see and feel and touch the Sacred Host. But how this mystery emphasizes our helplessness with regard to contact with divine things by our senses! We see and feel and touch wine where there is no longer any wine. So also we see and feel and touch bread where there is no longer bread. It comes to this: we see nothing but the appearances. We receive, and are fed by, a sign that covers, hides, holds Our Blessed Lord, that is the

nearest we can come to seeing God in this life. We see something that no longer exists. And under this something that no longer exists God is present. Our Lord is present. His living body, risen and heavenly, is present but we do not see Him. We only see the appearances that are left by God so that we may have something to see.

That is the teaching of the Church. At the very moment when we pass from this material life to the other life, in the same room, on the same spot, at the same instant, we find God Present, with all He is, because He was there all the time. As long as the soul was clothed in flesh, incarnate in the senses to give them life, it could not perceive Him. But to give them life, it could not perceive Him. But as soon as it passes to the state of a pure spirit, at that very instant, on that spot, within itself, the soul finds God, because He was really there all the time.

Sisters, those are truths that it might seem unnecessary to remind you of. But it may well be that the spirit of prayer and contemplation depends more on them than on anything. On the one hand one does not suffer desolation from not feeling God's presence if one is convinced that He can be felt only in the next life. And on the other hand, since there is no moment when we should not be seeking God whom we do not see, we

have at least absolute certainty that He is in us and around us, in the most secret recesses of our being; that He holds us in His hand, that He possesses us, and knows and loves us, and that He wants to be known and loved by us.

Dear Daughters, you can see how these simple Catechism answers can help us to tend continually towards God by the Spirit of Faith that is our light! This tending towards God gives a special kind of firmness and strength to a soul who looks to Him for all her needs, and who never accepts doubts about Him, in spite of never seeing Him nor feeling Him nor touching Him.

Such souls may find disappointment in created things. They may suffer from seeing creatures causing each other pain, and from being unable to understand many things that happen. They may find that this world is the scene of much sadness and distress, but they do not stop at that. They know that this must be so with things that are visible and merely fleeting. So these souls do not let their peace be shaken. They do not doubt God, because they know full well that He is present and that He over-rules everything by His will and His Providence, and that He is infinitely holy and happy and divine.

Then, dear Daughters, why should we accept a sort of doubt, a lack of trust, an anxious out-

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look, that seems to sap our faith and to let sadness invade our souls? Sisters, this must not be. The more we feel chilled and saddened by what seems to us so adverse, by the apparent badness of things as they are, so much the more must take refuge in God alone, and seek our stability and comfort in Him towards whom we are tending and who is all-perfect, all-holy and divine.

Dear Daughters, weigh all this and you will find good reason for always rising from what is present to what is Eternal, from what you see to what cannot be seen. Unless I am mistaken, Sisters, that should be the constant effort of souls who want to lead a life of prayers and in that effort they will find their peace, their light and their strength.

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F•E•R•V•O•U•R

The religious is in perpetual meditation of this word of Our Lord: "I must be entirely at the service of My Father." Cardinal Saliege, speaking to religious said: "Your work bears directly on the service of God or the service of souls in the exercise of the apostolate. It is a divine work that you undertake all day long. All day long you are religious. See Our Lord walking always in the presence of His Father whom He contemplates face to face, in that adoration in which He sacrificed Himself incessantly: Father that Your Will Be Done".

See Our Lord offering incessantly from His Heart a hymn of thanksgiving to the goodness of His Father. The great religious of the Father is Christ!

Thus are you religious...Your purpose consists in this: that adoration may always rise up from your heart towards the Father, that thanksgiving for His goodness, His mercy may always rise up through Our Lord...Your reason for existence is that the prayer of faith, pure prayer, the Our Father, not only prayed but lived, rise through Jesus to the Father. You exist to make reparation."

What is fervor?

Fervor is that intensity of will with which one acts in order to put into execution this religious enterprise. Fervor is completely centered on the theological virtues which nourish it. Fervor is the "sacred flame" of the virtue of charity which must ever be kept burning and kindled anew. Fervor is not required once and for all; it is everyday and at

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every instant that we must "watch and pray". Fervor gives to the soul a fresh impulse which warms and purifies. In order to understand well exactly what fervor is, we must remember the words of Our Lord: "It is not those who say, Lord, Lord, who will enter into the Kingdom, but those who do the will of My Father".

The fervor of the love of God which we seek is to be found in the accomplishment of His will. It is habitual moral disposition to perform acts which are in conformity to the divine will and law, as the religious finds it expressed in his rule and in the will of his superiors. It is not to be found in the constantly fluctuating sentiments which are at the mercy of whims and moods.

Should we therefore despise all sentiments? No, for feelings can stimulate the will, on condition that we do not seek sensible pleasure as the sign or the expression of fervor. Fervor gives the will an impulse, a flame which gives new warmth and which purifies.

Fervor causes the soul to be inflamed with more ardent love, the will becomes intrepid, prayer becomes pure and contemplative, the soul becomes wholly detached and tends only towards God.

This transformation is a precious grace which the Church often urges to solicit, to ask for. It is, in fact the best response to the love of God. "May your mysteries, Lord Jesus, enkindle in us the ardor of your divine love, so that feeling the tenderness of your heart, we may learn to despise the goods of the earth and to love those of heaven." (Prayer - Feast of the Sacred Heart).

INTERIOR LIFE

The interior life is essential to every religious. Without the interior life, there can be no religious spirit; for the interior life is precisely the principle of the consecrated life which partakes of the joys, the worries, the consolations of the divine Spouse: the give and take of a life with another, without which perseverance in the religious, life would soon be compromised.

The religious would thus be a religious only externally, the essential would be lacking, and she would not carry with her the active presence of Christ. Her action would not be profound...How many times have we not seen enterprises start so brilliantly, make a lot of noise, and have spectacular results...then, be extinguished as straw on fire. Why? Because the religious in charge would have sought her own glory, her own satisfaction, her fame, at the expense of her religious obligations, at the expense of fidelity to the exigencies of the religious life. On the contrary, simple souls who pursue their religious life with great fervor, who draw from contemplation the strength of their gift of self, who practise the requisite asceticism in order to live religiously, make no noise, but the good that they accomplish is lasting and profound. In an appeal to souls consecrated to God, John XXIII said: "The superiority of the duties of cult and of the consecration to a life of prayer over all forms of apostolate..." This corresponds to a univer-

sally valid truth, therefore it is also true for religious devoted to a principally active life: for only the interior life is the foundation and soul of all apostolate...an irreplacable means which permits one to enter into intimacy with the Lord, to correspond more fully to the dignity of being daughters of God, spouses of the Holy Spirit."

If the religious life is a life consecrated to Christ as to the One Spouse, a spouse who is poor, chaste, obedient, then the religious life is essentially and precisely an exclusive and wholly surrendered love.

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C•H•A•S•T•I•T•Y

Constitutions No. 66

1872 - p.41

I speak of this particular consecration of your being to God in order to make you reflect on the use you make of your faculties. How do you use your intelligence, your heart, your memory? Where do your feet, your hands, your thoughts, your words (which are so important) - where do these go? Where do you put your affections?

From the depths of a being which like a church has received not only a blessing but a particular consecration, should well up always a perfume of incense, that is, a perfume of prayer, homage to God in adoration, service by means of particular works, without for a moment being distracted from a continual preoccupation with God.

1874 - p. 290 (No. 69)

Now Easter day is the time to give oneself, to practice the Gospel, to live of that perfect chastity spoken of by the Rule when it says that after having given oneself so solemnly to God, there is no longer any action nor word nor an instant in our life over which He has no right; that He alone should fill the plenitude of our heart; of this chastity which consists in loving Our Lord alone, in following Him in this life, during this time of trial, putting all our affections in Him.

1874 - p.416

We can attain to the closest union with God through the imitation of Jesus Christ. through the

ceptance of what was in this world the condition of his Human life, through poverty, through humility, through renunciation, through sacrifice and suffering, by a life in which there is nothing that pleases nature nor the world, but in which everything is in conformity with the Gospel. It is thus that we can become capable of pleasing our heavenly Father.

1877- p. 209

The love of Our Lord is such that in holy indifference, we have however a choice, a preference, a desire; that of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ by humility and suffering; and inclination to choose that which in this world may make us appear more lowly, more humble, contradicted, more similar-in a word- to Our Lord in His Passion. See to what degree of union one must attain in order to be able to make such choice. It is Our Lord alone who can transform our natureal inclinations and preferences- nature puts so much opposition to this. Nature is so sensitive to all that might cause suffering, all that humiliates, that abases, to all that destroys something or dother in it. This inclination of nature is in opposition to the intimacy of the soul with God; that is why at prayer, after having decided on your subject for prayer, try to penetrate into that inner sanctuary in which Our Lord will be able to communicate His Inclinations.

1877 - p. 298

Each one of us can say: "Next to me there were so many souls more worthy than I. Our Lord has chosen inspite of this or that defect, inspite of whatever

resistances I may have put up, inspite of all obstacles He came to seek me with a gaze of mercy." It is thru the mercy of God that you have been chosen that Our Lord has redeemed you. It was the effusion of His blood that established in you religious purity and which develops this in you day by day.

1880 - p. 22

This word can be applied to a virgin consecrated to God: "Sors et corona, premium." Her part here below is to belong to Jesus Christ, her heritage is the life of Jesus Christ, perhaps not necessarily the last sacrifice of Calvary;; but her part here below must be to follow Jesus Christ. He has chosen her so that she may resemble Him in her thoughts, in her habits, in her behaviour in her life finally, so that she may be marked with a character by which she can be recognized as one on whom the choice of Jesus Christ has fallen, and one whom He has appropriated for Himself. In other words, the part, the heritage, the consolation, the treasure of a virgin consecrated to God, must be Jesus Christ. She must not attach herself to, nor seek any other consolation, any other treasure; Jesus Christ must be the part she has chosen and towards whom she always turns. It is a great thing to be a virgin and consecrated to God. In the world we can find many souls who preserve their crown of virginity but the consecration added to this virginity preserves it as something holy, something precious to be kept unto eternity so that God Himself may be its recompense and crown.

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Ceremonial:

May the holiness of their bodies and the purity of their souls always glorify You. May they fear you out of love, serve you out of love. Be their glory, their joy, their will, their consolation in sadness, their abundance in poverty, their counsel in doubt. Make them find all things in You whom they wish to love above all.

1880 - p. 187

The first thing necessary therefore to acquire purity of heart is to purify it through humility, through detachment from self and from all created things. You understand that the heart is not pure when one loves with God something that God has not ordained us to love. God has not told us to love ourselves. On the contrary he has expressly told us to despise ourselves to renounce our own wishes: "If someone loves his life he will lose it; he who hates it will save it etc. Self hate, the sacrifice of self is the characteristic mark of all the Saints. In order to attain to purity of heart, we must remove from it all that is in it which is not for God.

Serve the Lord with a pure and generous heart; for the heart is not pure if it be not generous; and in order that a heart be generous, it must respond to every will of God, to every inclination of grace, to every consideration of perfection. I said, every view of perfection; for we must first see what it is that God asks of us before we take to its wholehearted accomplishment. Let us not be astonished should we fail to see what He asks; but when we do see it, do it, we

must give God all that He asks. If God asks for greater mortification, greater humility, greater charity we must strive to give it to Him. If God asks that we be more patient with our neighbor, if he asks us to bear something or other with greater patience; if He should ask for greater prayerfulness, recollection, or one or another effort at virtue, we must not refuse it to Him. The generous heart is one that always gives God all that He asks, one which sacrifices itself generously, which does not refuse Him anything.

To purity, generosity, I would add fidelity. It is one of the qualities attributed to the Blessed Virgin, for the Church proclaims her "Virgo fidelis". Fidelity is the firm will to give God all that He asks for, which makes the Virgin faithful. God expects of His spouse fidelity in all things, fidelity in little things, fidelity in big things, fidelity in that tender, constant love which she must have for Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why have I for an instant separated the heart from the will? It is because there are to be found in the heart of a virgin, treasures of affection, tenderness, fidelity.

Why should not all these treasures belong to God? why should such tenderness, such delicate sentiments not be given to God?

1880 - p. 216

You are spouses of Jesus Christ, you are therefore called upon to be 'a help similar to Him'. It is in this way that God has foreseen your destiny. When

God gave man woman, He wished to give man a help similar to Himself; and when Jesus Christ consents to raise a human creature to the dignity of a spouse, it is also so that she may aid Him in His mission, so that she may be a help similar to him.

1881 - p. 98

Try to imagine Our Lord in His external aspects; that adorable modesty in adorable goodness, resplendent purity which He exhaled, which was His grace, His beauty, His charm all together, and which drew souls to Him. Then consider yourself, and tell yourself: "This flesh that I bear must rise, this body must rise; I must therefore clothe it with that incomparable purity which is in modesty, in peace, in meekness, in the perfect order established in man."

1881 - p. 290

We must divest ourselves of every desire to possess, leave aside every attachment, all affection for things of this life. We do not always seek to have ties with temporal things, but spiritual ties, consolations, affections, lights may bind us. There are certain attachments, desires that persists in the heart. When Our Lord comes, He wishes that all these things be given to Him, and He wishes more for us than any other reason than to find in us such persons as live only for Him. Your occupations, your employments, your lessons, are not the substance of your life: the important task is that you love Jesus Christ, that you live only for Him. For us, his spouses, He wishes a compassion for His sorrows, He wishes us to be taken up entirely with Him, that we have no other wish than

to follow Him, to adore Him, to love Him; that our work be done in obedience to His will, for zeal in His service, lending Him our members, our feet, our hands, our mouths, to serve Him.

Entire chapters: 1882 - p. 43, p. 63, p. 73.

1882 - p. 228

The souls attains to that preferential love which makes it follow and choose Jesus Christ up to the Cross. The crucified body of Jesus Christ becomes its treasure; she holds it tightly between her arms. The object of her tender care is the body whipped by the soldiers, the face covered with spittle, the disdain and humiliations suffered; all her treasure is there; and the soul, raising itself beyond all these evils says to God: "I have no choice of my own: Your Will Be Done".

1882 - p. 314

Chastity is, in a sense, easy; but if one wills to take all the consequences of chastity and enter into that spirit of mortification, of separation from creatures, of union with Jesus Christ, take the spirit of the Gospel and no longer to accept any other, this virtue is great and demands much work. If one is really a pure virgin, consecrated to one Spouse, Jesus Christ, if Jesus Christ lives in us to such an extent that all that we are, all that we do- whether we eat, drink, etc. is for Him, then, this virtue is built on love, and inflames the whole of life to purify it.

1885 - p. 293

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Your heart should be entirely divested, it must give itself unsparingly and wholly, and say: "My God, if there be something in me which is still a thorn to You, I renounce it with all my heart."

1887 - p. 321 No. 68

Certainly the most delicate purity, that which is most careful in everything about self, that which most carefully avoids every form of self-seeking, natural satisfaction, that which keeps the soul away and keeps the souls of others away from every shadow of imperfection, danger or even inclinations of too natural a pleasure where perfect purity always suffers; this purity, befits the daughters of the Assumption, daughters of the Blessed Virgin and consecrated to the glorious mystery which elevated her to the highest heavens.

1880 - p. 151

For us religious more is desirable, more is implied. One day God called us to Himself to be consecrated to Him, and we can say: "I have the good for fortune of belonging to God, of being of a virgin; I am consecrated to God, I have chosen Him, I have left all for Him". We must see now what obligations follow from this.

1872 - p. 26 No. 69

It is by and for Our Lord that we should live; it is towards Him that all our efforts should go, that we should direct all our affections, all the tenderness of our heart.

1872 - p. 100

One thing alone is necessary for us in this world, it is to arrive at a great love of God, a love so pure so true that it unites the soul to God and renders it worthy of being crowned as spouse. Suscipe Domine; this alone is in fact necessary. To live of the love of God should be the work of our life, the object of our efforts and the motive of all our actions (whole chapter)

1874 - p. 350

We should be joyful so that, raising ourselves above created things, we may not let our hearts be attached to them and that we may be careful- when such attachments begin to take root in our hearts- to detach ourselves from what is earthly and to allow what is of heaven alone to take root in us. Thus we will walk forward, always looking on God, full of confidence in this loving our eyes fixed on His Fatherly hands, as Scripture puts it, in order to obey the least of his wishes.

1874 - p. 463

To attach oneself to Jesus Christ alone. -When one is before the Blessed Sacrament, we must tell Our Lord: "It is for you alone, O my God, that I am here; you are the all of my life; my thoughts, my fatigue, my affections are all for you; and even if I cannot always be at your feet, my life should be in a sense a continual prayer; prayer should be the soul of my life may each of my thoughts, my occupations refer themselves to the plenitude with which I want to belong to You; may each of my thoughts and occupations spring from this desire". It is thus that at the feet of the Blessed Sacrament,

we must push aside, eliminate, all things which pre-occupy our soul from an earthly viewpoint, all those things which could present difficulties, all those in which we find a to natural attraction.

1874 - p. 508

To offer one's heart to the Blessed Virgin, to entrust it to her, so that, in her very great goodness, through her immense power, through the continual care with which she looks over us, by her example, she may form in us the sentiments which we should have towards Our Lord. And this is the place to consider what Mary was, for Our Lord all throughout his life.

1876 - p. 123

We do not have enough confidence in the Blessed Virgin. If we invoked her always in all temptations, in the trials, the difficulties we endure, if we went to her as to a Mother, if we hurled ourselves into her arms with trust and love, we would not be so often broken in spirit, crushed, because we would always have as our support her motherly heart, and the most pure, the most holy, the most perfect, the most powerful motherly heart that ever existed.

1881 - p. 72

In regard to chastity, generosity consists in the detachment from all satisfactions, from every affection, from all that is pleasing to nature. It consists also in a virginal love for Our Lord, which keeps itself from all other loves, which does not seek to please creatures, which takes as its motto this word of St. Paul: "If sought to be pleasing to men I would not be a servant of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:10)

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consequently, does not wish to be esteemed, to be praised, to be loved, and which does not seek its support in any created thing. Finally, takes your Rule. It is an extremely reasonable generosity to be faithful to the least point of the Rule. One is asleep and one rises with the bell; one speaks, and remembering that it is time for silence, refrains from speaking uselessly; one finds it hard to do something, and she does it immediately; having some humiliation to bear, she seeks refuge in the rule of humility and charity. I ask of you this very real generosity, practical, solid, which attaches itself to the things which the Saints and the Popes have declared to be the best for religious souls.

1881 - p. 252

Jesus Christ must be found living in religious. In order that Jesus Christ live in us, he must live in our hearts, all the affection of our heart must be impressed with the image of Christ. He must live in our minds; all our thoughts should spring from and return to Him; He must live in all your actions; may all your actions be done for Him; in the same way must He live in your imagination, your memory, your intelligence, and in all the faculties of your soul. Thus will He be reproduced in us; we shall be other Jesus Christs. This is what we must set out to accomplish: to give Jesus devoted spouses, to the Church stones that are completely pure, completely holy, entirely ready to allow themselves to be fashioned as Jesus Christ wills it. With such thoughts, one is ready to go wherever one may be sent. If one must be chiselled, one is ready to be chiselled; if one must work, one works; if one must suffer, one

suffers. All this will go towards the hour and the glory of that Church to which we belong, and for which we religious of the Assumption must bear a very particular affection, an affection that I would even call very apostolic.

1881 - p. 254.

"Let them remember that the life of zeal is after all the life of the angels..." It is the activity of the angels in their relationship with children, which should be the model of our activity. (Chapter)

1882 - p. 48

Some conditions for conserving and perfecting in oneself chastity-- Chastity is a fragile virtue. All the saints affirm this, and St. Paul teaches us that we carry our treasure in a fragile vase. This explains all the precautions taken by Holy Church and with which our Rule safeguards this virtue.

We must believe, because the Saints have said so after Scriptures, that we carry a fragile treasure, that we must treat it with care, with respect, with precaution, without however losing sight of the aid of one's own experience and that of others in this regard.

The first condition and that which is most in accordance with the spirit of the Institute, is to live only of elevated thoughts, of the most elevated sentiments- it resides in that which is termed honor. We must clothe our soul, all that we are, all that we do, all that we think, with honor, straightforward-

ness, loyalty, horror for all that is degrading, vile, inferior.

Humility is the basis of this virtue and honor safeguards it. Humility does not exclude honor. Souls that are really humble are generous souls, elevated, loyal and straightforwardness. They wish to render God all the honor that is due Him, without reserving anything to themselves. They do not wish to do anything that will win them the esteem of creatures, because they wish to refer everything to God. They wish to follow Jesus Christ, even in humiliation and abasement. This is not merely to have a small measure of strength, some nobility, some grandeur. No, humility is a very great, noble, loyal, virtue; it belongs to elevated souls. One can despise oneself, accept to be so treated by others, not count honor that comes from men, and at the same time have that self-respect, that horror of all compromise, of all laxity, of all that is devious. St. Ignatius says that when the demon tempts a soul, he seeks above all to persuade it to keep secret what he has proposed to it, to keep this from those persons who are in charge of directing it, because once the demon has obtained this, he is sure of making the soul fall. We must avoid all sorts of devious ways, secretiveness, mysterious ways. Souls that are very open, very straightforward, transparent souls are already well-defended.

1882 - p. 118

To the confidence that we must have in the love of Our Lord, to the conviction that we have rights over His Heart, (as His spouses), must correspond this

other conviction that He too has rights over us and that we must at every moment walk before Him with this respect, this fidelity, this obedience, this love, this absence of all that is inferior and human, that we owe to such a Spouse. How do you expect Jesus Christ to consent to having a soul which He has chosen and consecrated, descent to natural affections and remain in lowly things. After all his heart is so innocent, so pure, jealous we might even say. How do you expect him to be honored in a spouse who is not constantly faithful to seek him above all, to imitate him in every thing and not to descend to the inclinations which might separate her in any way from him?

1882 - p. 147

We must renounce sensory satisfaction; it is no easy thing to have one's senses subject in this way, that neither eyes, nor taste, nor ears, nor tongue, do no other thing than to procure the glory of God and the service of souls. Thus, every useless word immediately suppressed, every curiosity checked, are little things apparently, but they contain a very great perfection. One may have this light on perfection spread throughout one's lifetime. There is not one among you listening to me who, if she reflects within herself, has not had such views and such lights as I have spoken of.

1882 - p. 198

That which is to be remarked about the Blessed Virgin is the generosity with which she made the gift of her whole self. And what was the principle of this generosity? It was the love of God. It is also in this love that we should find our strength.

1884 - p. 17 (Chapter)

1884 - p. 47

Let us strive to imitate the purity of the angels and their zeal as well. I would wish you to examine all your actions, to see if they be heavenly actions, actions posited for God alone, just like souls which already belong more to heaven than to earth would act, souls which already have in heaven half of their affections, or even more than half of their affections, for you love Jesus Christ who is risen, the Blessed Virgin, the angels, the Saints in such a way as no longer to be attached to whatever you can love on earth. May actions follow and be according to heavenly ways; that in all that you do, there be something of angelic purity, angelic perfection, angelic zeal, and also angelic obedience, so that Jesus Christ may find repose in you and find his joy in you, as he finds his joy in the celestial hierarchies. Seek to reflect in your works, in your actions from morning to evening, all the qualities of angels.

1884 - p. 251

Taking the life of the Blessed Virgin, I want you to reflect upon yourselves. See if you have indeed given all to God: your thoughts, your most intimate sentiments, the things which you hold to so naturally have you given them all? See whether you follow Our Lady in all the circumstances under which she gave all.

1886 - p. 384 (Chapter)

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