



**HATRED OF SIN AS ONE OF THE**  
**CONDITIONS OF FERVOR**

20. 2. 76.

My dear Daughters,

Today I would like to speak to you about a very commonplace truth, which although commonplace is none the less an essential of the Spiritual life and is present in all degrees of perfection. This truth is hatred of sin.

Certainly in a soul seeking God this detestation of evil is very deeply implanted, but all the same there are few who do not fall more or less frequently into some habitual Venial sin. This leads one to think that a strong, courageous and persevering hatred of sin is to some extent lacking. The perfection of fidelity demands that after bigger sins have been banished we should look for the possible remains of the seven Capital sins and their roots. We should examine ourselves regarding all those small filaments common to all, and left in the soul by our bad inclinations. When we have discovered them we must root them out one by one through love of God.

The love of God must be the incentive leading us on to this work, and the more this love is ardent and faithful so much the more will we live in the presence of Him who is infinitely holy and pure, and avoid anything displeasing to Him.

Holy Communion provides us with another incentive. We receive Our Lord frequently; we draw near to Him who is all Holiness and Purity; He comes to us and

abides in us, He who holds in abhorrence all the blemishes left by habitual sin. In spite of this we still retain traces of laziness, envy, petty jealousies, and of pride; the latter bringing in its train little devious ways, self-justification and excuses.

Our work in Religion is to keep so close to Our Lord that the soul is able during prayer to approach God without hindrance. Well, the things that intrude themselves between God and the soul rather in the manner of a dividing wall, are the remains of sin, our imperfect dispositions, - (and here I am speaking more of the present than the past) - of all that is here and now has any connection with sin or that is the result of sin. We must detest all this and free ourselves from it unceasingly, making this work the object of a loving and generous zeal; a zeal leading us to endure and welcome every kind of struggle in order that the work of purification may be accomplished. Having heard this hatred of sin thus portrayed, and moved by a great love of God, I do not think that anyone will say that she has no need of renewing herself in it.

It is said that St. Teresa only thought herself such a sinner because she lived habitually in the presence of the Blessed Trinity. It was this intimacy, fostered by prayer which increased the light of God within her and made her conscious of her least imperfections.

Souls having a good opinion of themselves are

not usually very enlightened ones, and an eighteenth century Mystic has said that such souls resemble rooms with closed shutters. Dust may lie thick everywhere but as there is no light it cannot be perceived. But let just one ray of light filter through and the dust as if agitated plays in the beam. Open all the shutters, fill the room with light and you will see dust everywhere.

Well, our souls resemble those dusty and neglected rooms - but note well that I am speaking only of dust and not of uncleanness or of anything repugnant. We live quite happily in the midst of dust because we do not possess God's light, and we are unable to see how it is spoiling everything.

St. Teresa on the contrary was conscious of all her faults, which were certainly not serious because her Confessor did not think that she had ever lost her Baptismal innocence, and this awareness was due to the abundant light which she received as a most pure beam from Heaven and because she remained continually under its luminous ray.

She saw only too well that she was wanting in virtue, and that virtue was not solidly established in her. We ourselves do not see it because we are far from the holiness of a St. Teresa!

I leave all this to your meditation because although elementary we still need to renew ourselves with regard to it, as it is part of fervour.

All Religious observances and especially those hard to human nature are held dear by one eager to purify herself, to one who hates her imperfections, who is fervent in every detail and accepts observations and all else that may provide occasion for penance.

All these are precious because they help to cleanse the soul, and are in some way an anticipated Purgatory rendering the soul worthy to see God face to face immediately after leaving this world.

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## THE LAST SUPPER

26. 3. 76.

My dear Daughters,

As undoubtedly you meditate on the Last Supper whenever we keep or commemorate the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament, I will only make two suggestions that may be of help to you.

Let us then call to mind how at the Last Supper Jesus offered Himself for the first time sacramentally to His Father. On the following day He was going to offer Himself sacrificially on the Cross, but on Maundy Thursday His offering was under the form of a Sacrament, and this was the first Mass of all.

Notice however how the whole life of Jesus Christ resembled in a way the Sacrifice of the Mass. It was not, it is true, a sacrifice in the rigorous sense of the word, necessitating the immolation of the victim, but nevertheless it was a continual sacrifice of adoration, reparation, impetration and thanksgiving, and this, from the very first moment of the Incarnation.

It is for this same end that Our Lord has called us to belong to Him in Religion. Although the death of a Religious is the crowning point of her life wherein lies the real sacrifice and immolation of herself to God, nevertheless her whole life should also be one continual holocaust.

She should unite herself with the ends of Sacrifice and make her life a continual Mass by her spirit of adoration, submission and reparation, by

thanksgiving and praise, and by her prayer for the world and for the Church.

You will find that various spiritual writers dwell upon this thought; it is quite an ordinary one in the Spiritual and Religious Life and we should always bring it to our mind when we meditate on the Last Supper.

There is still another thought to which I would like to draw your attention. It is that at the Last Supper Our Lord gave Himself for the first time sacramentally to His Apostles, and so instituted the sacrament of His Body and Blood which was to become the food of all the faithful until the end of the world.

We ought to read Our Lord's discourse both before and after the Last Supper, pondering the words with which He surrounded the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, and telling ourselves that we ought to realise them in our lives with even more fervour than is required for all other words of the Gospel.

How deeply engraven in our minds are the last words and recommendations of a loved one! In the same way the Divine Sacrament given first to the Apostles and then to us, is surrounded with the last words and the last recommendations of Our Lord. We ought often to think of this, and let our minds become so penetrated that we end by acquiring the same dispositions and thoughts as those required of the apostles by Our Lord; dispositions of Faith, Purity,

and brotherly Love; of perfection and Charity.

These thoughts may perhaps be of use to you when going to Communion. Our whole life should be one continual act of thanksgiving for a gift so great. The Apostles only partially understood the immense gift they had received; with the exception of John they all subsequently left their Master and fled. The Holy Spirit had not yet come down upon them.

But we certainly ought to appreciate and understand the immensity of the gift we have received because the Holy Spirit has come to us and because we live always in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and under its influence. We ought to show how much we realize Our Lord's great love for us, by our fervour and our carefulness in carrying out His good pleasure.

May each Communion day of ours resemble the one we would have spent had we actually been present at the Last Supper. - The Sacrifice and the Victim are one and the same. "As often as you do this, you do it in commemoration of Me".

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DEVOTIONS: ORIENT THEM ALL TOWARDS  
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

July 8 1876

My dear Daughters:

For quite sometime, I have been wishing to speak to you about particular devotions. I should like to consider them from a point best-suited to you. I do not think one can seriously work one's perfection without having some well-established devotions. But I am wrong in speaking of particular devotions: it is rather on interior and particular occupations that I should speak.

In the lives of saints or of fervent religious souls, one thing stands out: it is that almost all these souls had a land mark, so to speak, some insight on God, on Our Lord, which occupied their mind and their heart, during their noviciate, for example, or during some well-determined epoch of their life.

The spirit of the Assumption certainly discourages falling into many details, restrictions, and the fear of having to picture a certain thing at such an hour, to be followed by another mental picture at another hour. But it is, nevertheless,

very much in the spirit of the Assumption to have Our Lord constantly present before the eyes of the soul, not in a hazy, general way, but in a very concrete, precise manner. It means considering one or other states of His life, listening to His Words, so that both imitation and practice may flow out from the soul's attention to this divine model.

I ask you very specially to consider as you pray in Our Lord's presence, what you have to do regarding this matter, how you can employ the days of the week on some well-determined devotions, orienting them all -I say it expressly- on Our Lord Jesus Christ. Because all of them must have Him for their goal. What, for instance, is the reason for your devotion to Our Lady? Because She is Our Lord's Mother, it is She who gives you Our Lord Jesus Christ, She it is who carries Him in her arms, She is the channel of grace, the Mediatrix between Our Lord Jesus Christ and you. Why again is your devotion to St. Joseph? Because He was the man chose by God to serve Him within the deep shadows of the Mystery of the Incarnation; because He lived with Jesus and Mary during all the years of the Holy Infancy; because it was He whom Jesus and Mary obeyed; because He was the Just privileged man to whom was entrusted the

Bread from Heaven, Our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom  
thereby was given the duty of keeping safe for  
us the treasures of grace.

Recall all the other devotions which you  
practice: St. Peter, St. John, St. Mary Magdalen,  
all those you can think of. All have a bearing  
on Our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, honour the  
Saints, while at the same time selecting for  
such a day, or for such an hour, or during a whole  
month some mystery of Our Lord, or perhaps  
Our Lord Himself in one or other of the phases  
of His life in which He has revealed Himself to  
us. It might be the Holy Infancy, His hidden life  
of obedience at Nazareth, His public life,  
the sufferings of His Passion and death on the  
Cross; or again it might be His risen life and  
those forty days He spent on earth. And indeed,  
this is most admirable aspect in which He showed  
Himself to the world, or you might think of His  
life in Heaven after the Ascension. Then, there  
is His life in the Blessed Sacrament. What really  
matters is that you take the Saints to whom  
you are particularly attracted and group them  
according to their share in Our Lord's life, and  
this you can easily do. Then propose to spend  
your day accordingly, keeping in mind that particular  
aspect of Our Lord's life which you have  
chosen,

For instance, even if St. Francis of Assisi did not live during Our Lord's time, you can readily recall how he witnessed to Our Lord's life by his poverty, his preaching, his charity. Like the Son of God, he had not whereon to lay his head, and while having no earthly goods, shared the truth with others.

I should not like you to consecrate one day exclusively to one saint; but rather that Our Lord to whom everything is consecrated, be the object of your occupation and thoughts, and that you relate to Him those Saints of your devotion so that they may help you to love and imitate Him better.

Our Lord has not left us without guidance on this matter. You must have remarked in reading accounts of Our Lord's or Our Lady's apparitions that they ordinarily appear accompanied by some saints particularly honoured by the soul to whom they appear. It was thus with the espousals of St. Catherine of Siena, whom Our Lord received as His spouse surrounded by several Saints. In our readings of the lives of Saints, you will see that very often Our Lord appears accompanied by St. Peter or St. Paul, or by Angels, Martyrs, saints particularly dear to those saints, or in connection with the grace Our Lord wishes to bestow.

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It is thus you should pray, with Our Lord. ever before your eyes; not only at prayer, but also during the day, following Him in His mysteries, surrounded by the saints to whom you are specially devoted, and seek Him aided by their patronage. Above all, however, go to Him through Mary, who was so intimately connected with His mysteries: at the crib, at the adoration of the Magi, at the foot of the Cross and in Heaven close to Him, interceding for us. You will also find her at Pentecost, which was the beginning of the Church, and at the Ascension, where Our Lord teaches us to raise our minds and hearts to our heavenly home.

In a word, Our Lady shared all the mysteries of Jesus. If she did not actually accompany Him during His public life, she followed Him wherever possible, receiving His teachings, pondering them in her heart and making them bear fruit. You cannot think of Our Lord without finding Mary beside Him. Devotion to Mary is, therefore, a necessary devotion; it is a veneration all its own, higher than that paid to the saints, because she is the most perfect creature the only one who shared in all the mysteries and labours of the God-Man on earth.

Draw up for yourselves, therefore, dear daughters, some plan of devotion. Fr. Surin says

that an interior soul desirous of perfection, is one who has always in mind some point of perfection, some definite effort to which she applies herself constantly. This work has two different aspects: on the one hand, there is the continuous contemplation of Our Lord; on the other is the reform of self, the effort to conform oneself to the divine model, applying oneself to some particular virtue that would bring one closer to Our Lord. You will never become interior souls, fervent, with lofty ideals, concerned about your perfection, unless you have firmly fixed in your heart and will the desire to advance towards your goal by keeping Our Lord ever before you, and by a ceaseless working on yourselves.

When a person is hard-working, she is never idle, and the fruit of her work can be seen; this holdstrue also when we decide to follow Our Lord, to imitate Him. One must ever work with Him on some well determined point, without ever giving up. Otherwise it is like beating the air, often accomplishing nothing. You would be like those persons who are forever forgetting their work; or like those others who say: "I should like very much to sanctify myself... I should like to become perfect... I love Our Lord so much!" All these are idle words that never get anywhere. This was not what the Saints did; they

set about the work of their sanctification in a very positive and objective manner.

Take for instance St. Anthony of Padua, who is always presented with the Child Jesus in his arms. It was his devotion to the Holy Child that became the inspiration of his humility, his fervour, his piety, his hidden life. And it was his virtues that earned for him one day the apparition of the Child Jesus, who came and leaned on his book, while Our Lady with the heavenly court waited until her divine Son should come back to her.

You can easily picture the devotion of each particular Saint. What characterised St. Francis of Assisi for example, was his love for the Cross and for Jesus Crucified. On a certain occasion, as he prayed before a Crucifix, Our Lord detached one arm from the cross and embraced the saint. You will see that in the lives of most of the Saints the graces they received were related to their particular devotion, and to the manner in which they had honoured some special mystery.

Why, then, my dear daughters, would you not apply yourselves to honouring one mystery after the other so as to discover which one would best sanctify your soul?

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Many souls have been drawn by devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Bl. Juliana, St. Alphonsus of Ligouri, Marie Eustelle, who may perhaps be canonized some day, and so many other Saints who have been set afire and absorbed so to speak by this mystery.

Do not exclude any of the devotions approved by the Church; but consider them all in their relation to the adorable Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ, or to the various phases of his life: His hidden life, His public life, His sorrowful life, His risen life, or His eucharistic life, for He continues to be in our midst in the Blessed Sacrament. It is to Him in His Eucharistic life that we can best practice devotion to His Sacred Heart although doubtless this devotion can also be found in His Childhood, His public life, and just as truly on the Cross, where Our Lord shows us His Heart burning with love for men. Do not isolate this devotion, never separate it from Our Lord; rather consider it always as part of the mysteries of Our Lord.

What I have recommended to you is, I think, very much a part of the spirit of Assumption. Do not split your life hour by hour, but neither must you be careless or lazy. Have a set purpose, one concrete thing that occupies you, and during



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your whole life, do not allow it to suffer any interruption. I would wish that the novices be formed to this interior occupation. That the older professed Sister find in it their life, their rest, their very existence. For they should know better than anyone the devotion to which God calls them, and thus should feel more obliged to be faithful to it.

It is said that the souls who have honoured here on earth some special mystery will form, as it were, in heaven the guard of honour of that mystery. There will thus be one group of the elect which will bear a greater resemblance to the Holy Infancy, another one will wear the marks of the Cross. ~~To which group of elect will the Assump-~~ tion belong? But perhaps Our Lord has a special seal set apart for you. In the Franciscan Order, for instance, St. Francis of Assisi is marked with the cross, while St. Anthony of Padua's characteristic is that of the Holy Infancy.

Go to Our Lord, my dear Daughters, and try to realise what He wishes for you, laying your soul open to the divine resemblance. When you are copying a model, you do it very painstakingly, looking at it very closely so as to reproduce it perfectly.

10. 9. 76.

My dear Daughters,

In one of his last instructions if I remember rightly Father d'Alzon left us this word of Our Lord's "Peace be upon you" (St. John XV.13). Peace is of all good things the best, the legacy Our Blessed Lord left to His own, their treasure here below. Satisfaction, wealth, pleasure, all those are for worldly people; but peace, supernatural peace, interior peace that radiates from those who have it, is Our Lord's special gift to His friends.

When I pondered on this as it affects you, I asked myself what is the greatest enemy of peace for people consecrated to God, even for all people in general. That brings me to speak to you about a thing that is not given due importance, since after long years in the Religious Life one so often finds it very much alive in one's souls: I mean, impatience.

Impatience is the great enemy of interior and exterior peace, of peace in public affairs and in private life. So it is well often to ask oneself a double question: "How far have I fought against impatience? How far have I learnt to keep patience with regard to trials, to the ways of God", and to the annoyances that come from creatures?"

The Holy Spirit warns us that we have to work out our salvation in the midst of trials. To beginners He says: "My son, if thy mind is to enter

the Lord's service prepare thyself to be put to the test". (Eccles. II, 1). "Submissive be thy heart; bow thy head, he whom God wills to receive He submits to trials like gold and silver in the crucible.

We know that "man's life on earth is but a campaigning" (Job VII, 1). Our Lord warns us that we shall go through trials in this world, that life here below is a cross, that we shall meet with great tribulations. But in the midst of these sufferings and tribulations He promises us the hundredfold which is precisely the peace of which I am speaking.

The author of the Imitation also tells us that the older one gets the more crosses one has: that no one is exempt, not even he adds, with naive simplicity, Kings or Popes, whose crosses are often heavier than other people's.

How is it then my daughters, that one so rarely finds souls with dispositions of patience, acceptance peace, in the face of all that God sends to everyone? Generally when people have a cross or a trial, something to suffer, or a temptation, they say "OH! if only I could be rid of this!" without thinking that every trial that is removed will be followed by a greater one. For anyone who is not very brave it is wiser to love the cross one has now, remembering that if that one went, it would be followed by a heavier one.

That is not the highest of motives, and generous souls, instead of shrinking from the cross

ask God to send them sufferings. However, that is a request that it is generally wiser not to make, because we are poor weak creatures and we cannot count on our strenght. How easy it is to see we are weak, and how often we fail before the slightest trial!

Examine during a fortnight what things makes you impatient---. I do not mean outwardly; I hope you manage not to show your impatience outwardly; I mean what things cause inward rebellion, ruffled feelings, vexation, that comes from our unwillingness to accept the trials God sends us. Examine what are the things that cause this trouble. Often they are such little things! We must convince ourselves that the trials creatures cause us, such as characters hard to get on with, difficulties in our employment, being slighted or looked down upon, are sent by God, come to us from His hand. God sends us both our state of health that is so often a great source of impatience, and our state of soul which is another great subject for suffering. Some things we find hard to bear because of aridity at prayer, because being ardent, sad or anxious---each one's character is different---we cannot find bodily miseries and trials in one's soul, especially when they are made harder outwardly by our occupations and the people we have to deal with.

If there were no difficulties in the school, if there were marvellous mistresses everywhere!

If there were enough Sisters and if all the children were easy to manage! If only we hadn't that child who makes lessons impossible! Or else, if everything went on wheels in the kitchen, and the stove was all right! if in the linen-room all the linen was in good order (because each one has her own little difficulties) there would seem to be no cause for impatience.

But that is not the way things go. There are Sisters who are slow and who find others hasty and tiring, while the quick ones find the slow ones tiresome. God wants things to be like that, so that we can find in each of our neighbours an opportunity to practise patience, and in big or little crosses something to offer Him, opportunities of effort to keep patience in our soul.

So, later this Chapter, I ask everyone, to see how far she has got with regard to this. First look at the causes of impatience in yourself. Then those that come from your circumstances, your employment or your neighbour. People sometimes say: "Oh I am like that; that is the way I am made". That way of yours is just what God wants you to change. It won't go with you to Heaven, God doesn't like it. He wants you to get rid of it, of your personal tastes, of everything that makes you individualistic, so as <sup>to</sup> become "another Christ" to "put on Christ" and adopt His thoughts, His tastes, His way, His behaviour. You have to shape yourself to fit the mould you find in the Gospel. You are

called to be citizens, not of north or south, not of England or Spain. As Father Lacordaire expresses it so admirably: "We monks, belong to no locality, nor to space nor to time: we belong to Eternity". Indeed, a Religious belongs much more to the heavenly country than to an earthly one; her conversation ought to be in Heaven; her motives should be drawn from Our Lord's example; her thoughts and desires and sentiments from His.

After this long digression I come back to my subject. Since impatience runs counter to God's treatment of us, I wonder we do not scruple more about it. No, I will not say scruple because scruples are things we must not have. But I wonder how it is we do not have more remorse about our impatience. Why do we not work more generously against it? Alas, in old age we are very impatient because in youth, we failed to work at establishing our soul in that supernatural peace which is the state Our Lord wants to find us in, so as to be able to do His work in us. Our Lord wants to find peace in us so as to give Himself to us at prayer and it is in great peace and restfulness of soul that He wants to see us working for His glory. Truly it is impossible to be conscious all day long of perfection and supernatural ideas, and impossible to do good, to give edification, unless one has the secret of possessing one's soul in the Divine Peace that Our Lord brought into the world. The other day I was reminding a Sister of the answer St. Francis of

Sales gave to someone who expressed surprise at his extraordinary calm in extremely disagreeable circumstances. "Would you expect me to risk wasting in one moment the little store of peace that has cost me 20 years to acquire?" So you see he had been working all those years at settling his soul in supernatural peace. And this brings us, Sisters, to the second thing that I ask you to examine. When you have looked for the causes of your impatience, I would suggest your examining how, up to now, you have worked at acquiring patience and what store of patience you have laid up in your soul. That is your wealth, your most precious treasure. It is quite allowable that you value it, so that if when an occasion occurs, you too could say "How could I be expected to risk losing, for such a rubbishy thing, the peace of mind that has cost me so much to acquire?" No one could dub as an imperfection such a benefit as peace of soul. A nun is in her rights if she is attached to it and defends it as her property. It is the heirloom Our Lord left His followers. Pray, Sisters; pray a lot to obtain it.

Ask for true peace, peace through patience; there can be no other. To want peace without difficulties, without annoyances, is not Christian, but pagan. Look at the history of paganism; men sought for peace and nowhere could they find it either in the family or in the State. God seemed to be multiplying things like war, pestilence, earthquakes; so many towns were ruined; there were

disasters of all sorts in those days.

As for us, followers of Our Lord, the peace we must pursue is not free from trials and tribulations. We must seek it in patience, in the life of Our Lord, in the imitation of His virtues, in the teachings of God's word. If you look up the word "patience" in a Biblical concordance you will find it is used quite an extraordinary number of times. Time and time again it is mentioned and especially in the New Testament: the Holy Spirit attributes it to God Himself, and shows it to us as the virtue of virtues, the bond of perfection, the very best way to make our work and all our deeds perfect.

So, dear daughters, seek your peace by patience. Make that your resolution for today. Don't forget the two examinations I have recommended: one on the little things whether interior or exterior that makes you impatient: the other on the degree of peace that you have stored up in your soul, and on the efforts you make to become like Our Lord in His Patience and His Peace.

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My dear Daughters,

We are beginning a series of feasts of Our Lady. Last Sunday it was the Seven Sorrows: today it is Our Lady of Ransome, then there will be the Patronage, the Holy Rosary, the Motherhood and the Purity.

It is a good moment to speak about the trust and devotion we owe her. I have often spoken to you about this, so today I shall speak only of one point of view, namely, that we should often praise and thank God for the graces and perfections with which He endowed Our Lady.

Of all the things God has made and shown to man, the most wonderful is Our Lady. She is His masterpiece, in her every perfection and every virtue is united. Her humility matches her greatness. Whatever happens to her, whatever the circumstances of her life, she responds with consummate virtue. When the Angel comes to announce the mystery of the Incarnation to her, she gives the sublime answer that has filled all generations with admiration: "Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum". (Luke 1.38). At the foot of the Cross her silence is more wonderful than any words, and she stands there while Jesus undergoes the cruellest of deaths. We do well often to remind ourselves of all Our Lady was, so as to praise God for it.

At Lauds we praise God for all He has created, earth, sea, mountains and valleys: for all He has

done for man, and we call on all creatures to bless Him. I can think of no better devotion for Our Lady's feast than to bless God for having made so good and perfect a creature, so gentle and holy and full of the highest graces, who sums up in herself all the different kinds of beauty lavished on other creatures.

Theologians say that it is not enough to admire in Our Lady all that she is by grace; we must also admire the wonders of nature that God put in her, because she is a marvel in the natural order. And it was to these gifts of nature, so perfect and so sublime, that God added outstanding treasures of grace, so that her first degree of grace surpassed the highest graces of the Saints. The words: "Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis" from Psalm 86, are applied to her, with the meaning that Holy Mary began with the degree of grace that the Saints reached at the end of their course. At the first moment of her Immaculate Conception, she started with the highest degree of perfection ever attained by a human soul, even the most advanced in holiness.

Thus it was that Our Lady began: she was privileged above all others, made holy in her conception, full of the most outstanding grace, chosen by God for His highest plan, destined to be a second Eve. To all this she responded by a boundless fidelity. She always corresponded with all her graces, always grew in fidelity, so that she became supremely perfect in love, generous in sacrifice, strong in suffering, united to Our Lord, so fully His image that we cannot form any true idea of the grandeur of her perfection.

Having thus looked at Our Lady and seen what praise and admiration and blessings we owe God, I was going to say something else we have to do. But I change the subject here to emphasize what a great part of the homage we owe to God consists, and we must never forget it, in praising, adoring, glorifying and thanking Him. See the Gloria in Excelsis: Laudamus Te, Benedicimus Te, Glorificamus Te, Gratias agimus Tibi. All is praise. And only after that comes the prayer: You who take away the sins of the world, have pity on us.

It is the same in our spiritual life. A very important place must be given to the acts by which we adore and praise God, offer Him thanks, and glorify Him, first in Himself, and then in all His works. Now, among all His works, the greatest is the Incarnation. It is an infinite work, a work that is as great as God's Almighty power. Our Blessed Lady too, is in a way an infinite work because to create a Virgin Mother is a work absolutely beyond human understanding, that stretches out to God's Infinity. So we must make this wonderful work of God first and foremost the object of our praise and thanksgiving, glorifying and blessing Him for it.

Anyone who might think that in the spiritual life it is enough to pray for what one wants, to try to acquire by meditation what one lacks, to compare one's soul with God by examination of conscience, would be greatly mistaken. Certainly these things are necessary but they are not sufficient in our dealings with

God. The virtue of Religion obliges us to look at things first from the point of view of God, and to seek His interests.

Now I come to the second way in which we must look at Our Lady. It is one of joy and consolation for us since it considers her mercies. In her, God created the most perfect heart a woman ever had, the holiest heart among all creatures. He filled it with kindness and mercy for us, with zeal and compassion for sinners. And like God, who is Sovereign good, and always wants to bestow Himself on His creatures, Mary, His most perfect creature desires unceasingly to bestow on you God's graces of which she is full and of which she is almoner. And it is true to say that she has never been called upon in vain, that she has never turned the cold shoulder to anyone who appealed to her, and that her help has never been lacking to anyone who asked for it with faith.

We have not enough confidence in the Blessed Virgin. If, always, we called on her in temptation, in sorrow, in difficulties, and went to her as to a Mother and threw ourselves with love and trust in her arms, we should not so often be broken and crushed, because we should always have as a prop to lean on, this purest and holiest, most perfect and most powerful motherly heart that ever was. The inhabitants of Heaven pay attention to us and watch us with more unceasing solicitude than to the inhabitants of this world. We must not forget that. Sometimes one says to oneself: "If only I had someone who saw what I suffer! (and I do not

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mean in a merely natural sense: I speak of a real need of the soul)...If my Superior or my director could see the state of my soul, its difficulties and needs, so as to help me!... My dear daughters, it is quite certain that Our Lord sees all that; He sees your soul, its sorrows and its difficulties. He is always and without ceasing attending to us and giving us the grace we need.

Our Blessed Lady too attends to us, and most especially to us nuns who bear her name and who are her daughters. Though she is the Mother of all Christians we have a special claim on her as our Mother, in a more special way than most baptized souls, even than those who consecrate themselves to her at their First Communion or on her greater feasts or by joining her Association. We have the same right to call her our Mother as we have to call Christ our Spouse. And as Our Lord is called Spouse to all faithful souls, and with a deeper meaning of souls consecrated to Him in Religion, so likewise when we call Our Lady our Mother that name has a deeper meaning than in the case of other baptized souls, by the fact that we belong to an Order that bears her name.

Today, we honour her as Mother of Mercy. And the legend in the Breviary shows her so solicitous about the sufferings of the poor Christians who groaned and wept under the cruelty of the Saracens that she came herself to start an Order for their deliverance. She sees our sufferings too and gives them her attention. We must respond, by wholehearted confidence, to the

care she has of us. This confidence must grow day by day: as we experience the effects of her Motherly kindness. And the affections of our heart must grow ever stronger towards Our Lord and towards His Mother and the inhabitants of Heaven whom we hope to join one day!

I add only one word about imitating Our Lady. We find such happiness in her kindness, her mercy, her sweet gentleness and humility, her clemency, her union with God and her obedience. Would it not be a denial in act of all this if we did not try to have something of her virtue in us? So that people would find in us some likeness to our Heavenly Mother? and that occasions and circumstances would draw from us a response of submission and humility and faith like hers, and above all, silence like hers? Look at the Gospel and see how Our Lady keeps silence, and never talks of herself. And since today we are keeping the Feast of Mary, Mother of Mercy, let us attend especially to the imitation of her gentleness, her kindness and her charity towards everyone.

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My dear Daughters,

Advent is near and it suggests a thought, an austere thought, but a necessary one, the thought of penance.

Penance is an essential foundation for the Christian life and much more so for the religious life.

We are told that St. Augustine, on his death-bed shed abundant tears which he recited the seven penitential psalms, and declared that no Christian should face death without penance. What did He mean by penance? At that moment he was not thinking of bodily austerities. He had suffered much and with great patience and fortitude. No, he meant that no one should meet death without contrition, the interior virtue of penance. Why was he so moved as to weep? You might say that he had much to repent of. True, but it is theologically certain that Baptism washes all sins, and he had been baptized when he gave up his sinful life and gave himself to God. Theology also teaches that perfect love takes away sin, and St. Augustine was a great lover of God.

We must apply his words to ourselves: "No Christian ought to face death without penance".

Penance is a necessary foundation for perfection and St. Jeanne de Chantal declared that she would have no opinion of anyone's virtue if it was not founded on hatred for sin. And St. Theresa says: "Every soul, however advanced needs to come back to self-knowledge".

Perhaps you have never committed a grievous sin. But what about the results of original sin that are in all of us? Who could boast of having no trace of secret pride, or of touchiness, and no attachment to self-will? You tell God every-day that you love Him above all things and much more than yourself. Even if we live up to that we are bound as nuns to something more. We have to acquire the virtues contrary to the capital vices. Humility that drives out the last vestiges of pride - and a nun must acquire it to follow Our Lord and share his dispositions towards suffering, contempt, injustice and towards life and death.

There is Poverty too that drives out all stinginess, all attachments, and that is a necessary mark of the religious life.

And Purity. It does not only guards a nun from all that might stain her soul, but it is itself guarded and, as it were, wrapped round by her contempt for all that is worldly.



For a religious. Envy is inadmissible. We ought to be glad when we outdone by others in God's service. We must serve God as well as we can, and yet like others to do even better so that God will get more glory.

Another essential mark of a nun is the habit of mortification, the mortification that detaches her from the pleasures of sense so that she gives them up, does not want them, does not accept them.

As a fruit of mortification and humility a nun must be ready to practice patience and gentleness whenever occasion requires it.

And finally she is expected to be hardworking, ardent in God's service and eager for God's glory and the good of souls.

Have we all these virtues? Who has! We would do better to see what faults we still have that are contrary to them and make of that the matter of our penance. Listen again to St. Augustine: "The essential thing is to bewail, not the sins of the past, but the inclination to sin that remain in us".

Supposing that one of you had in the past committed a grievous sin of which she had entirely repented and which was now as far from her as the North Pole is from the South Pole, no doubt

she should still grieve for having offended God, but her danger does not lie in that direction. It lies in any pride, impatience, softness that she still has and that may lead her to offend God by venial sin, which in its turn to tepidity leads and that is the road to enmity with God.

All this makes me want to impress upon you the importance of intensifying your spirit of penance. It rouses us to call on God and draws down on us His mercy. We have a great need of this spirit of penance both to take away our tendency to sin and to enable us to practise the virtues a nun ought to practise and that we still lack.

That opens us a wide field for our efforts. I advise you to read the chapter in the fourth book of the Imitation - Chapter VII - which says that before Holy Communion, we should lament and grieve in secret over our daily offenses, over the miseries of our passions and the faults we most often commit. Notice that there is no question of serious sins but of being drowsy over holy things and wide awake for news of the world; of talking so thoughtlessly, of being so distracted at prayer, and so on. That shows what saints and holy people who live in the light of God think of preparation for Holy Communion and of how we should grieve for our most habitual faults.

St. Augustine says that what can conquer habits of sin is vehemence of repentance. It is not easy to have deep sorrow for our habitual faults. But we can stir this sorrow up in our hearts by looking at God, not the God of terror but the God of kindness and compassion who has lavished so much grace and mercy on us. Look at the great love he shows us, look at the happiness he has in store for us. Contemplate Our Lord suffering for us. He gives Himself to us so often and he longs so ardently for our love. In the light of such goodness and love look at our constant failures, our attachment to venial sin, and the evil inclinations that sometimes make us unfaithful to God.

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RECTITUDE AND RECTITUDE, DISTINGUISHING  
CHARACTERISTIC OF THE SPIRIT OF THE ASSUMPTION!  
OF RECTITUDE IN FAITH - December 10, 1876

My dear Daughter,

It has been sometime now, that I have been wanting to point out to you a word we read in the Gospel of the First Sunday of Advent and that the Church makes us repeat everyday at Lauds: Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight His paths. I give this idea a great deal of importance and I would like to explain it to you. I do not know why, but I asked myself sometime ago, what was the quality that was most appropriate to us, as Religious of the Assumption, it always occurs to me that it is rectitude.

Rectitude is a great thing before God. When Holy Scripture wanted to paint the portrait of Job, that admirable man who was to be for all Christians the model of patience and the figure of Jesus Christ, Himself afflicted with sorrow, it shows him as simple, straightforward and God-fearing. It is under these traits that he is painted by God Himself to Satan: Have you seen my servant Job? Have you seen how simple and straightforward he is in My presence? How he serves Me faithfully?

At the other end of time, if you read the legend narrated by the Church to the praise of Saint Vincent de Paul, you will see that it also says of him that he is simple and straightforward, simplex et rectus, not pleasing himself in anything except in our Lord Jesus Christ whom he endeavored to reproduce

in all his actions. There is something more,  
though — I will return to it presently.

Why is it this characteristic of rectitude  
that I think best fits us? It is first, because  
of the very mystery of the Assumption. The Most  
Holy Virgin, when she left this earth sped towards  
God with such rectitude, that she was borne straight  
to the bosom of the Father, such were by the impetus  
and ardor of her desires than by the hands of the  
angels. If we go over the whole life of the Blessed  
Virgin, we will see that she was made straightforward  
from the very moment of her conception. We, on our  
side, are born with original sin; we are inclined  
towards the lower things; we have in us a bad seed  
which leads us to all the sins, a self-love that is  
so living, that it is curious to see how a child  
will show vanity and personalism as soon as reason  
is aroused in her.

The Most Holy Virgin was not made this way:  
she was pure, spotless, without stain, burning with  
love, chosen by God to have more perfection than all  
the angels and the saints, and a virtue so pre-eminent  
that only God excels her. From the moment of her  
Immaculate Conception, all the affections, all the  
thoughts of the Most Holy Virgin were turned toward  
God: all the actions of her life were turned towards  
Him with such rectitude, that she reserved nothing  
for herself, that nothing remained for her here on

nothing was taken away from God. This was the  
of her immaculate Conception, and surely this  
a beautiful example.

I say that the Religious of the Assumption  
should strive for rectitude. I mean by this that they  
must strive in all things, to go straight to God.  
Doubtless, their rectitude will remain inferior to the  
Blessed Virgin's; but they must strive for as much  
rectitude as a religious could have, after all the  
graces she has received: first, the grace of Baptism;  
then in general, the grace of a Christian education;  
the grace of the sacraments; finally the grace of  
religious profession which comes like a second  
Baptism, to re-establish the soul in the simplicity  
and rectitude after the Noviciate has prepared her  
for it.

Often they say that simplicity is distinguish-  
ing characteristic of the Institute. This virtue  
comes from rectitude. "To be simple," says St. Francis  
de Sales, "is not to have any duplicity; it is to  
have our gaze ever fixed on God." This is what he  
calls simplicity; and it is also rectitude. This  
makes us turn always towards God, not to stop at  
equivocation, at difficulties, at reasonings, that  
beyond all human things, beyond oneself, we try to  
go straight to God.

I would be very much mistaken, if the majority  
of you did not say: "This is what they try to teach

in the Noviciat. — because if we insist less on  
many minor details, we always try to catch souls to  
go straight to God.

I have indicated the principal characteristics  
of rectitude. I return to what was said of St.  
Vincent de Paul; that he was simple, straightfor-  
ward, seeking to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in  
all his actions, — showing us thereby, what should  
be our rectitude in the service of our Lord Jesus  
Christ.

Our Lord remains habitually with us by grace.  
He comes down into our souls, at many moments of  
our life by means of the Sacraments; but we must let  
Him live and reign in us, not only by the rectitude  
of the servant who remains faithful to His master,  
but by the rectitude of the spouse who relates  
everything to her spouse. This is the general idea.  
I would have to go to infinite lengths, if I went  
into all the details. I will merely indicate to you  
what should be our rectitude in faith.

We should have so pure, so unmitigated a  
faith that nothing can alter it. We should believe  
all that the Church of Rome believes and teaches.  
We should love all that the head of this Church pro-  
poses for our belief. We should attach ourselves  
to what he teaches, by a living, pure and whole  
faith. The Fathers of the Assumption sometimes say  
that the truth is the characteristic trait of the  
Assumption; but what is rectitude in the faith, if

not truth, the adhering of the soul entirely to the truth, and by this means, the withdrawing from the danger in which many souls allow themselves to be drawn today?

We meet, for instance many liberal Catholics, who accept the Credo but who reject the Syllabus and who cannot accept the fact that the Church should ever have decided what should be the way of governing human societies. They are willing to believe what the Church says about the sacraments; but they reject what she says about the modernist doctrines; but, outside of the sacristy and the sacraments, they want to be their own masters and govern themselves as they understand it.

Whoever lives by the doctrine of the faith, does not make any exceptions; he takes faith in its fullness, in all its extent, and turns over to it, the government of his whole life. To faith, he adds the spirit of faith and it is this, above all that is expected of you. We should have an unmixed and unclouded faith. We should be simple and straightforward before God, seeking the good, fleeing evil, allowing our Lord Jesus Christ to govern our life in all its acts. We should allow His Spirit to reign in us, in order to imitate what He was towards the world, towards creatures, towards children, towards death, towards life, towards trials, towards friends, towards enemies, towards everything.



This is what we should be in all uprightness;  
this is what we should be in the spirit of faith, not  
only as was that Patriarch of the Old Law, but as  
St. Vincent de Paul, seeking in all things to  
imitate and to please our Lord Jesus Christ.

I cannot go on forever today; but I could con-  
tinue to show you how rectitude may show itself in  
hope, in love, in poverty, in obedience, the Rule,  
and your neighbor and above all, how it can be found  
in humility; because humility is also rectitude and  
when one goes very straight in the practice of humi-  
lity, we go that way also very generously. But I  
stop here for today.

24. 12. 76.

My dear Daughters,

I am not going on with what I spoke about last time, but I want to say a word about Christmas Eve.

In your meditations at this time of preparation for Our Lord's birth, keep in mind, as the Saints recommend, that this mystery was accomplished for you, personally. Nothing moves the soul more than the thought "Our Lord came on earth for me. He chose to become a little child for me. He brings pardon and peace for me".

Certainly, it is for all sinners, and for all men that Our Lord comes. Nevertheless, in a very special way it is for you that He comes. For you He accomplished the Mysteries of the Incarnation, of His life hidden in His Mother's womb, of His birth in the stable at Bethlehem. Now He does all this for love. What infinite love, what a love of choice, of preference it was that made Him come into the world for you! What countless graces, what forgiveness, what mercy He brings and how boundless must be your hope and trust.

I urge you to lift high your hope and trust in God when you are near the Holy Child. It seems strange, but often souls consecrated to God are so impressed by His greatness and His purity, and by the depth of the misery of sin and of the ingratitude there is in not serving God as He deserves, that they have not enough confidence in Our Lord's repeated forgiveness. Jesus forgives by the Sacraments, by His

...therefore as comes he drives out sin. It has been said that if sin had ever entered the home of Martha and Lazarus, it fled when Our Lord came in. St. Mary Magdalene was forgiven; and if, as some writers think on account of his leprosy, Lazarus was a sinner, once Our Lord came in, sin was driven out.

Well, Our Lord is born amongst us on the Altar everytime Holy Mass is celebrated. When He comes, sin must flee away. It must flee away from your dispositions, from your thoughts, from the most hidden depths of your soul.

I don't know if I am clear. There are two things in the soul, its state, and the faults and imperfections into which it falls. What you must make as upright, as faithful, as far removed as possible from every sin, is the state of your soul. That does not mean that you will not commit faults.

For example, you have no affection for impatience you have carefully done away with the tendency to self-love, to domineering, to attachment to this or that which could lead to it. But something unforeseen crops up: you are taken by surprise, and you give away to impatience. That is not the state of your soul: it is a fall. As soon as you notice it, you are sorry and beg God's pardon and firmly resolve to give up whatever occasion might make you fall again. Thus, though you have committed slight fault, one of fragility, the state of your soul remains upright towards God, turned away from all that might offend Him, ready in all things to follow Our Lord.

So pay attention to your state of soul. Don't

harbour in it any trace of self-love, any remains of self-will, any kind of attachment. Alas, we all have these things, but to be attached to Jesus only we must have none of them.

In this way, my dear daughters, you will prepare to renew your Vows. My wish would be, that each of you should most seriously renew her Vow of Obedience. It is the one which cuts away all attachments. A person who is thoroughly obedient, really handed over to obedience or anything that may be asked of her, has no attachments; she does not hold to one house or to another, to an employment or to have none, to her tranquillity or to her honour: she is ready for God's will whatever it may be, and however it may come to her.

Get ready in this way, my dear daughters, so that when Jesus comes to you this evening He will find your soul free from self, from created things and from every attachment, and really ready, by the Vow of Obedience to do anything that pleases Him, whatever you may think about it. Like that you will bring Him a charitable soul, because detachment from self makes one charitable and able to get on with one's neighbour. What can your neighbour do to you? Give you something to suffer without meaning to, or cause you some humiliation. But as soon as you accept the suffering or the humiliation they do not upset you.

A soul that is really detached is at one with God, and with its neighbour too, and so is ready to receive Our Lord who comes to establish the reign of His Father's Will. "No sacrifice, no offering was I demanding: enough that thou hast given me an ear

ready to listen" (Ps. 39v.7-8). Coming into the world he said by the prophet "I am coming to do Thy Will O God" (Ps. 39). Later He will say "My meat is to do the Will of Him who sent me" (St. John IV.34). "What I do always is what pleases my Father" (St. John VIII.v.29). And by this complete surrender to His Father's Will, by His entire union with it, He comes to establish, with love for God, love of our neighbour too. "I have a new commandment to give you, that you are to love one another". (St. John XIII.v.34).

Try to establish yourselves in these dispositions. so that this evening when you receive Holy Communion and when you renew your Vows, you will be able to offer Our Lord a soul detached from self, pure and of goodwill to whom the angels can announce peace: a soul that can hope in God for everything because though you may have your weaknesses and fall sometimes at least, you will have no will or affection other than the affection and will that Our Lord wants to put in you and of which He is the model.

What I say there Sisters, is for the novices too, because they have to offer their hearts in the same dispositions as the Professed Sisters since it is the same Vows that they aspire to make.

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