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DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH LEADS TO INTERIOR  
LIFE AND UNION WITH OUR LORD

2. 3. 79.

My dear Daughters,

St. Joseph's month began yesterday. We cannot keep all the "months" that are kept by the devout, because the Divine Office has the first claim on our time and strength. However, since the Church honours St. Joseph at this time, we should try to couple devotion to him with devotion to the Passion that must occupy us during Lent. It would be well then to make our first meditation on the Passion and to meditate on St. Joseph's virtues at our second meditation or at a visit to the Blessed Sacrament or at some other moment; and I suggest that we make this meditation from the point of view of the interior life.

I know that you all wish to be interior souls. But what St. Francis of Sales says of perfection can also be said of the interior life: each one has her own way of dressing it up: each has her own way of picturing it to herself. One will think: "I know what will succeed for me: nothing else will". Another will say something else. Well, no Sisters. The sure way to attain to the interior life is the way of prayer and sacrifice. Look here, there, and everywhere for ideas on the interior life, and on perfection. You will always find that they are founded on these two things: prayer and sacrifice.

First, prayer. This is easy for an Assumption nun, both because we spend a lot of time in the Cha-

pel, and because, apart from the time of prayer, we can easily remain in the spirit of prayer in our various occupations. There is enough silence and regular observance in the House, and difficulties are sufficiently removed, for us to be able to find solitude in our hearts, and live in recollection and prayer. The spirit of prayer is what fosters Faith and Hope and Charity and leads to union with Our Lord which is the true essence of the interior life.

Look at St. Joseph. See how separated he was from creatures. And look at the events of his life. How hard they must have been for him to understand. They would be hard for us to understand if we had not meditated on them from our childhood. He had to go as a refugee to a foreign country where he did not understand the language. But he never let go of his interior life. You may say: "He had Our Lord and Our Lady with him". That is true. But we have them too. We have Holy Communion: we have Our Lord in the Tabernacle: we can pray to Him, and talk to Him and we can ask Him for all we want. And Our Lady is our Mother. She will never desert us. She is very attentive to our prayers. Legends of the Middle Ages show how she values the love of her children when they have recourse to her and show her due honour and trust. She even came to reproach a student who once neglected his daily devotions to her. She is a Queen. How great are her power and her mercy! She is solicitous for the Universal Church and has a special solicitude for the Virgins

who follow in her wake, for the monks and nuns who live under her patronage and bear her name. It is impossible to doubt that she is near us when we call on her.

So what we lack is not Jesus and Mary, but Faith, Hope and Charity, and union with Our Lord.

Union with Our Lord has various degrees but in everyone of us it must exist at least in its initial stage. The way to make this union closer is to put ourselves often under the influence of Jesus and Mary: to look at them and to imitate their virtues, and above all to be silent. Silence is the great means. How could one pray if one did not keep silence exteriorly and strive to keep it interiorly? and if one did not acquire the habit of imposing silence on thoughts about self, on self-will, on all the noisy talk that goes on in one's mind, so as to be able to talk to Jesus and Mary?

There are various degrees in all this. If a novice who has recently left the world has not yet imposed silence on the inner world that she brought with her that is not very surprising. But if a professed Sister who left the world a long time ago still has a talkative little world within her, it is much more serious. Pay great attention to this, Sisters; it is important. If year by year one imposes more and more silence on one's tongue when it wants to talk uselessly, and on one's mind when it indulges in thoughts that are not of the Kingdom of



God, one ends by establishing that interior silence in which the soul can be united with Our Lord. That is a thing that touches, not only on the spirit of prayer but also on the spirit of sacrifice. "You will make progress only in so far as you do violence to yourself" says St. Francis Xavier and the Imitation and all the Saints.

The spirit of sacrifice is needed to keep up the spirit of prayer; and the spirit of prayer is needed to lead you to the spirit of sacrifice if your interior life is to thrive, because the interior life cannot get on with any of our faults and vices. Does that seem a strong word? Yet what can I call them? If imperfect habits, bad moods, become habitual, they are like vices: the vice of pride, the vice of cowardice, of impatience, of touchiness. For the interior life to flourish all that must be got rid of, and this requires the sacrifice of everything---of our consolations, or rather of our pleasures.

Have we any pleasures? Yes. Some things give us pleasure, others don't. Some things afford amusement to our minds, others don't. We should like to indulge in some things, not in others. I speak of such things as ~~these~~, not of the pleasures of the world. If I were to say "consolations" I might give you a false idea, because the word "consolation" generally means good things that come from above and there is no need to sacrifice them. There are things that give buoyancy to the soul, that lift it up to God and should not be sacrificed. Nor should you

sacrifice whatever in prayer, in all your Religious life inspires you with generosity and fervour. There are folk who say: "I give up all that, I make a sacrifice of it. I do not need consolation". Well, they make a mistake: they are imprudent. God knows what you need. Be grateful for what He gives you.

Your satisfaction---that is the right word, that is what must be sacrificed. The sacrifice of your satisfaction is what will make room for consolations. The satisfactions of nature are an obstacle to the consolations of grace, and hinder union with God. In so far as you sacrifice them, do without them, refuse to indulge them, cease to like them and seek them, turning your desires away from them, so far will you be able to live a life in which Our Lord heaps favours on the soul, fills it with light and becomes its all.

If you detach yourself from external things and from merely personal interests, you can turn your whole attention to our Lord, whether in Holy Communion or in the Tabernacle, whether in His various mysteries or in His presence everywhere. That is what makes an interior soul. To shut your eyes, and adopt a self-conscious way of walking certainly not interior souls. Others are full of simplicity and kindness and a welcoming spirit. They see Our Lord everywhere, they follow him, and obey Him, and offer Him sacrifices and acts of love and faith and hope. Those people are interior souls.

I feel sure St. Joseph was like that, friendly, kind, easy to deal with. Though he did not like talking, he would never have refused you a consoling word or a kind smile if you had met him on the road or gone to his house.

Do not forget, Sisters, that when I speak of devotion to St. Joseph I mean the kind of devotion that makes for interior souls, who want to share his love for Jesus and Mary, and who strive to imitate his virtues. I bypass the devotion that only wants to get things from this dear, kind Saint. There are people whose devotion to St. Joseph consists in asking him to get their daughters married or to make their families rich. This is a form of devotion that puts some people off, and that has no connection with ours. We have better things to ask for, not so much temporal things as spiritual gifts that will help us to develop our interior life. And those are the graces to ask for also when we meditate on the Passion, the great, grand source of interior life. Our Blessed Lord's Cross is the fountain-head of the spirit of sacrifice, of strength, of silence, because it was above all on the way to Calvary that Our Lord showed the strength of His silence, the strength of His abnegation.

We have to try to put ourselves under Our Blessed Lord's influence at meditation for the whole day. I should like each of you to put herself anew under His influence every quarter of an hour and say:

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"My God, what do you want of me? How can I be like you?" "Quid nunc Christus?" as St. Vincent de Paul used to repeat so often. What would Christ Our Lord do in my place now? What must I do to be faithful to whatever grace He is offering me now? That is the way to succeed, by one means or another, in putting ourselves under His influence so that you will depend on Him, imitate Him, be one with Him, and lead an interior life that will be truly alive.

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Sunday, March 30, 1879 - Meditation  
on the Passion and Humiliations of O. L.

My dear daughters,

I only have a word to tell you in order to invite you to continue more than ever the meditation on the Passion of Our Lord and I entreat you to consider it from the point of view of the Savior's humiliations.

It is a strange thing but human nature seems to dread humiliation more than pain, sacrifice, or sufferings. To be humiliated, to be counted as nothing, to be abandoned, seems to be the greatest of human sufferings. Our Lord had willed to take humiliations upon Himself in such a complete and extraordinary manner that it is necessary for us to stop and think about it.

We must often think of Our Lord dragged along the streets of Jerusalem, treated as a criminal and as a villain; loaded with insults; consider how his friends grew cold towards Him and kept away from Him like everybody else, except His Mother, they were in a state of doubt, of neglect and of estrangement with regards to Him.

And then, we have to examine ourselves, because if you have come to think of it, it was for love of us that Our Lord has willed to sacrifice everything,

at that moment. He sacrifices the affections of the heart, He suffers in His Mother; His friends grow cold and abandon Him; He sacrifices all the things of the earth, His reputation, His body. It is in the face of this absolute renunciation that the Saints have conceived the ardent desire to make the sacrifice of everything to God.

The basis of a religious vocation consists in sacrificing everything to God and for God. It is for that reason that one leaves her family, her friends, her relatives, her name, her fortune, the right to dispose of herself, with the desire of establishing herself in the pure love of Jesus Christ. It is also for the same reason that she sacrifices all other attachments, all the pleasures, all the satisfactions she can find in this world, in particular her liberty and all types of honors and friendships. But we do not understand right away what Our Lord demands of us, in order to develop a pure love for Him, I mean, that fidelity which makes us ready to leave everything in order to love Jesus Christ above all things, to love Him perfectly, to seek Him only.

Therefore, I ask you to meditate on the prayer of St. Ignatius from this point of view: "My God, I offer you my understanding, my will, my body." One can speak only of what belongs to oneself; one can add: "You have given me everything, my friends, my existence in this world, an easy life, and liberty. You have given me



everything; I offer you everything, I give you back everything. As long as I have your love and your grace I am rich enough: that is sufficient for me! .. That is religious life! As long as one possesses love and grace, one is rich enough, that is enough. It is also the best answer to the different temptations that come up. They say: "I love that person.... I need to expand.... I need to talk ... to be loved." To these natural needs, you should answer: "If I have your love and your grace, I am rich enough and that is enough for me." Everything else should be given to God, offered and presented to Him in gratitude for that which Our Lord without any obligation on His part, has made for us.

Our Lord loved us so completely that He left everything for us, sacrificed everything for us. I ask you, what are we, in what are we worthy of the love of God, Who is infinitely perfect, good, the source of all happiness? If we could love Him as He loved us, we would be great saints!

Examine yourselves on that point. It is easy to say but long to meditate on. We need much time to penetrate ourselves with the love which Our Lord has shown us and with the love which He wants from us. We have to come to ourselves, put aside all the obstacles to our heart and establish ourselves in the state of pure love. We cannot deceive Our Lord Jesus Christ: He sees well what is in our heart, what we hold on to. He

sees whether we still have some attachments, if we are still attached to liberty, to honor, to creatures, or if we cast our soul truly and resolutely to Him.

Let us strive to obtain from Him by this act of generosity, the greatest of all goods, which is a great and pure love for Our Lord Jesus Christ. There is the great treasure; whoever can obtain it before leaving this world is fortunate, whoever can live with this pure love how beautiful his actions will be, how agreeable to God! How holy, how meritorious.

If in this big city there were a just man who was completely empty of himself, and of creatures and having this love for God which is so pure that no love for anything else interferes, if he was so completely carried away by this love, don't you think that he will obtain everything from God? Are we not destined to become like those just men?

That is what St. Francis of Sales meant when he said: "If I were aware that in my heart there was a single fiber that was not of God and for God, I would pluck it out immediately." That did not prevent St. Francis from loving very much the creatures with whom he lived; he had a treasury of tenderness for everybody, however, he used to say: "We must always see our neighbor in the heart of Jesus Christ and never take them away from it." That was his treasury of tenderness, a tenderness which passes through the love, the charity, the

mercy, the delicatessen of Our Lord.

Our Lord did not love everybody in the same way; we cannot love everyone equally. In His Passion, Our Lord had something particular for Mary Magdalene, for St. John, for St. Peter. He bestowed to each one the graces that suited him, but alas, He Himself received nothing, He was deprived of everything! St. Peter left Him, St. John was more with Our Lady and could therefore not be a consolation to Christ.

What happened to the Apostolic College, to the friends of Christ, to those whom He loved as His friends, to whom He gave profusely His blood, His sacrifice, His graces? What happened to those who were usually intimately associated with Him, as a source of joy and consolation? It is in this sense that we have to make the sacrifice of even the most legitimate friendship, while keeping at the same time, like Our Lord, a generous and faithful heart which seeks the sanctification and ultimate good of those who have been confided to Him.

I do not believe that there is anyone among you who has been destined to be treated the way Our Lord was treated, yet in times of persecutions Religious women had been arrested, taken out from their convent and dragged to prison in the midst of shoutings, injuries and ill treatment. This has happened in England. If they loved Christ their hearts must have rejoiced, and in the long solitude of the dungeon, Our Lord Jesus Christ, His cross, His sufferings, His humiliations must have been their joy and consolation. If we have not been called to all that,

we have at least to build in us some of those dispositions and those virtues. And if, in our everyday life something humiliates us, lowers us in the esteem of others or strips us of honor, should a Religious have to worry much about it?

People think that we have done wrong; what if they think so? People have thought of Our Lord as a hypocrite a criminal. No one will ever think that way of any of us. They may sometimes say: "That religious is stupid"; but they will not easily say: "She is a criminal or a hypocrite". We usually do not worry about things as big as that. If we have a great love for Our Lord's humiliations, we will not worry, we will maintain ourselves in peace, tranquility, charity and silence in everything.

Silence is a difficult thing, because many people feel a great need to talk when they start suspecting that others' esteem <sup>for</sup> them has diminished. When they are told something humiliating or when others think that they have been wrong in one thing or another, it becomes for many people an occasion for a long speech. O. L. kept silent. He kept silence in the midst of sufferings, injuries, humiliations, contempt. It was silence which sanctified His Passion. We could talk about this indefinitely. But it would be more profitable for us to pray, to meditate, to stay before the Bl. Sacrament and nourish ourselves with the words of the Gospel, trying to penetrate it's depths.

(Chapters of  
M.M.E.)

EASTER SUNDAY

(cf. "Resurrection")

(13th April, 1879)

Very dear daughters,

You have just sung: " This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad. "

However, I don't know if you feel the way I do, but every year I feel that the joy of Easter is first of all a serious and profound joy, a joy of eternity. For the Apostles and the disciples, for all the early Church, who had seen Our Lord pass through such suffering and anguish, the day of Resurrection was without doubt a day of joy, but a joy which like all passages from great suffering to great joy, must have had something of seriousness and solemnity. Moreover, what strikes me in the Office is that as the days proceed the Church becomes more joyful, it regains its pace, it multiplies the Alleluias; but on the first day the " Victimae Paschali " is, in its beauty, still serious and solemn.

It is therefore a great day, this day of Easter, a day when one must try to live in oneself the passage from one life to another. ( You know well the meaning of the word Passover- Pâques. ) See how the Apostles were transformed! How from the weak creatures that they were before the Resurrection, they became strong, full of faith, ardent! How they began to soak in the spirit of Apostolate which would be confirmed in them by the Holy Spirit. And for us who have already received the Holy Spirit, the feast of Easter could produce all these effects of transformation and passage.

If we look around outside ourselves, at what is happening in the Church, we see what great transformations are made in souls on the feast of Easter! For Christians, it is the time of great reconciliations, great acts of forgiveness, great transformations of life. If they have a guilty conscience about something, they prepare themselves all during Lent to go to Communion on Easter Sunday, they go to Confession, they give up the bad habit, they renounce it. If they have evil inclinations they leave them to be risen with Christ. This is how Easter is celebrated by the great sinners, when they have faith. They might have an enemy, some hatred in their heart; and during the year, perhaps several years, they haven't been able to overcome it. Finally, they come to a particular Easter in their lives, and they are transformed.

For us, it's not, at least I hope not, from a state of mortal sin that we have to rise, for how could anyone approach Our Lord so often and yet live with inclinations leading to mortal sin? But haven't we all certain little attachments, little habits, certain inclinations leading to venial sin? And so today is the day to go higher, to make greater sacrifices for God, to leave behind the life that is merely that of nature.

We still carry about in us the " old man ". Even St. Paul complained about it, so anyone who doesn't feel it must be awfully proud. Let this Easter be a separation from the natural life and victory over the "old man"! Each one knows her place of struggle and



triumph; where are her weaknesses, her imperfections, her attachments, her occasions of venial sin: let her make an effort there, a resurrection.

" Our Lord is risen, no more to die ". He enters into our hearts: it is He whom we have received this morning, risen and glorious; we bear Eternal Life. It is Eternal Life which has come to life in our flesh which is glorious forevermore and now bears the mark of divinity. But today's feast reminds us especially of triumph and manifestation. It is this same glorious and radiant flesh which has been our food this morning; so let there not be any corner of our being that is not entirely illuminated.

It is the sun of truth, of justice, that you have received in your heart: try to let Him enter completely, to let Him penetrate all, so that He won't leave any hidden faults which could develop into bigger failures: try to let Him reign over all, to illumine all, to transform all: let Him lead you in the ways of Eternity. It is as if, this morning, when Our Lord came to you, each one was transported to the throne of the Lamb, to adore God by means of the Lamb who was her food, He who, in His Glory and Splendour-such that the eye of man cannot see- is sitting on the Cherubim. For an instant we have approached Him by this Divinised Flesh, and each one has been able to render Him an adoration suitable to His majesty and a Thanksgiving which can satisfy Him completely.

You have been able to cover your life entirely with His precious Blood, the Divine Blood which enters into man to penetrate and enlighten him to the depths of his heart. St. Vincent de Paul, whom I so often quote, said: "He is in our feet, in our hands, in our hearts, in our minds. And what is He doing there? He renews all, He inflames all, He purifies all. " So it is, that in a moment, all our faults and ugliness are covered with this precious blood and we become pleasing to God.

You have been able to prostrate before the throne, to ask with His power for His favour. And what have you asked for? You have asked above all for His love, not only for yourself and your sisters, but for the Church, for our Holy Father the Pope, for the heads of Government, for the Bishops and Priests, for your superiors.

Then having prayed for one another and for the faithful, pray for those outside the Church, who are also present before God, that there may be one Flock and one pastor. And ask Him also that in the Mystical Body which is His Church, we would be what the heart is in a body, the most vitally alive, the purest, the furthest from what is imperfect so as to have our dwelling in the very Heart of Jesus Christ.

May we find here the joy of Easter, a profound joy which transforms us, a joy which consists in adoring Jesus Christ in Glory, in Power, in the Majesty of His Triumph over all the nations of the earth, and His triumph in us; a joy which renews us in the joy of our vocation.

I haven't spoken of another prayer which should also be in your heart. There are some Saints who thought that on Good Friday and Easter Sunday Purgatory is almost completely emptied. We must contribute to this and obtain for these souls also the joy of Easter. Ask that the grace of the visit of Our Lord to Limbo be extended all the way



to this Kingdom without light, full of suffering, but also full of hope.

Finally, you know that the newly baptised are dressed in white for Easter and throughout the Octave; and you, Religious of the Assumption, you are almost entirely dressed in white for the Solemn Feasts. Let this be not only in appearance, but in reality, and may the Purity of Easter dwell in you and continue to grow until the moment when, following the Lamb wherever He goes, you follow Him robed in the white garments washed in His blood and purified of all stain.

EFFECTS THAT OUR LORD PRODUCES  
IN THE SOUL  
WHEN HE COMES IN HOLY COMMUNION

Sunday, June 15, 1879

It is difficult this week to speak of anything else but of the Blessed Sacrament. We have often spoken about it as the object of our adoration; let me take today some of the effects that Holy Communion must produce in our souls if we cooperate with our preparation and fidelity.

He whom we receive is the very Word of God, the eternal Word, the divine Word, He who announced to us all truth, and to whom we owe life — for from the beginning of time, it was through Him that all things were made -- it is He who came on earth to teach all good, all wisdom, and all truth.

When He comes to a soul, He is not dumb. For if it belongs to the Holy Spirit to bring fire, light, and ardor, it belongs to Our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Word-become-Flesh, to enlighten by word, to speak to the soul, and to be this word which converts; and even one of His words gives eternal life, as St. Peter

says: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast words of everlasting life." (Jn. 6, 69)

Often one does not hear Him because she is not recollected in herself. It is said in some part of Scripture: "Redite, previcatores, ad cor," "Remember this and be firm, bear it well in mind, you rebels" (Isaia, 46,8). Why do you offend God? Why are you still sinners, still imperfect? Why are you prevaricators of the rule of perfection? It is because you do not enter enough in your heart. Close your ears to the noise of outside; open them to the word which speaks inside. Try to render yourselves attentive, to ask interiorly that which you need. The persons who acquire a holy custom to converse interiorly with Our Lord Jesus Christ, to enter in themselves to listen, sanctify themselves as if from necessity.

It is a great thing to be able to hear Him who is the word par excellence, to listen to Him, to obey Him, to close the eyes to things exterior, to close the ears to noise which comes from outside, to recollect oneself, to listen, to obey, to assimilate the spirit, not ours, but that of Jesus Christ.

I have noticed that when Our Lord comes to the soul and it listens, He imprints in it

two things. The first is a very profound respect for His Father, a great adoration of His Father. Our Lord came on earth to be the adorer in spirit and in truth. He came for a religious purpose. Religion, I don't need to tell you, is that which unites us to God, that which makes us render to God all the duties which are due to Him: this is the first purpose of the mission of Our Lord.

Our Lord came to make reparation for the insult done to God; He also came to redeem us from sin, but this is a subordinate purpose. The first is the glory of God, the reparation of the outrages made to the holiness of God, all the perfections of God to be honored. See in the Pater: Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done. These are the first three supplications. Our Lord always put these first: not that our welfare is not found there, for he who asks for the coming of God's kingdom asks for man's greatest good even in this world to reach the good of eternity; but it is from the side of God that all things begin.

Now, to the soul that listens, Our Lord inspires a profound respect, a true religion, an adoration without limit, the most ardent acts of love. He gives it an idea superior to that of the natural intelligence, a notion of the heart, a concept of faith of what God is, this eminently

desirable Perfection, this Goal to which we must tend, toward which, if it were disengaged from the ties here below, the soul would precipitate more rapidly than the stone detached from on high would fall on earth. The soul, freed from the fetters of this earth, would shoot towards God with a desire, an adoration, an inexpressible love, with all that you can imagine of the most ardent and the most eager, with a thirst, a respect, with all the sentiments of which the human soul is capable, when it is in the highest degree of its desire, of its love, of its adoration, since adoration contains all that.

Our Lord comes to the soul to imprint in it this sentiment, as a fundamental attitude; any person who has this fundamental realization of the perfections of God, of what is due to God will soon be able to sacrifice all, to count as little. You understand that there is an all in this world, a certain all: all that appears, all that is heard, is known. A soul well penetrated by who God is, who knows Him through the light that Our Lord gives him, sees another "everything" hidden from our senses, that we do not see, ~~that~~ we do not hear, that we do not touch, but which is much more real than all that we see, all that we touch, all that we hear: God, the sovereign being, eternal end of all



things, source of all good, beside whom all things below are of little importance. "You have spread out the heavens like a tent-cloth; you have constructed your palace upon the water (Ps. 103)

The earth is, in the eyes of believers, but the robe of a day, a passing dwelling, a place where one lives, where one works, where one tends towards eternity. Life, for the faithful, is like these flowers full of the freshness of the morning, and which, in the evening, are dried up. Thus is it with all the things of the earth. Our Lord imprints in the soul, if it recollects itself profoundly to receive Him and if it lets Him act, a lively sentiment of what is essential, perfect, divine, sovereign, of what is our purpose; he stimulates in the soul the true thirst for this divine, instead of and in place of these little desires, these little occupations to which it turns to quench its thirst.

You know this story of the Bible. The Israelite army was once made to cross a torrent and its chief took only those of his warriors who drank of the water in their hand without stopping, without bending the knee (Judeges 7, those who crossed rapidly, and did not taste but in passing, that which was for them a refreshment



This is what I would like you to understand.

In life, one must, no doubt, refresh oneself but in passing, drawing in the hollow of one's hand as much as is necessary to live, but not stopping at it to take from it his joy, his happiness.

I do not speak only of religious: all creature who establishes his joy in this world, who stops there, who does not see beyond that, this creature is in an absolutely false way which does not lead to truth. Death comes: he finds himself not having sought, willed, desired, that which alone is desirable, amiable, estimable, perfect, sovereign. On the contrary, the more a soul penetrates itself with eternal beauties, the more it opens itself to the light, to the truth, the more it is disposed not to attach great importance to what passes, the more it is apt to sacrifice all, to abandon all on the route; and it learns that from Our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a second effect that Our Lord produces in the soul, when He comes to it in Holy Communion, and I would like you to notice it. I do not say that He does it for every Communion, for sometimes He keeps silent to try you; but often, if you listen to Him well, to Him, the eternal Word, He will tell you the

word which is that of your salvation.

If you encountered a Saint, a man perfectly enlightened who, through supernatural intuition knew the depth of your soul, who said to you: "Here is the defect to be corrected, the virtue to be acquired, I see this in God's light" — such has happened to Saints, as St. Philip Neri who knew all the sins before they were confessed to him— who among you would not consider herself fortunate to meet this man, who would say thus the secret of your soul, your intimate need?

Our Lord, if you asked Him is disposed to tell you, with a science that surpasses that of all the Saints: "Here is your fault." Perhaps He has told you already, but you were not struck by it. Our Lord will diffuse in your soul a new light if you bravely expose to Him your needs. Sometimes, one will say them, but taking care not to discover the principal defect, the real and deep wound. One tells herself: "I want to serve God. . . I want perfection"; but the defect which lies at the bottom, which causes the faults that one has to confess most often, the imperfections that one commits in the religious life, one does not want to see it. Our Lord is disposed to make it known to us; He will give us the remedy both through love and through light.

Light, in religion, is not often lacking; it is given, but the human word does not have this blessing to give birth at the heart's depths, the ardor which makes one embrace all that is contrary to the natural light, to this interior natural reasoning by which one excuses himself, establishes himself in his way, retains certain imperfections. Our Lord will say, if one recollects herself in Communion, if one opens to Him the depths of the heart, this word which conquers all, which is light, and heat, this something which, at the bottom of the soul pushes us generously on the way to heaven, to perfection, to sanctity.

We receive Communion often, but often we do not receive its effects. Are we attentive enough, recollected enough the whole day long? At prayer do we try to apply to ourselves these two points which I have mentioned? What make a soul holy are not the lights on particular points; rather, it is a great idea of God, a great purity to please Him, a great generosity, a great fidelity.

Stay this week on these thoughts. May our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in Holy Communion and at adoration lead us there. Let us be souls who adore in spirit, in truth, attentive souls, generous, faithful, recollected.

I spoke to you about contemplation.  
There too is the road to the interior life.  
Perfect are the souls who contemplate the things  
of God, who hear them, who ponder over them,  
as was said of the Blessed Virgin that she  
pondered in her heart all the things that she  
saw in the life of Jesus Christ.

28. 10. 79.

My dear Daughters,

When we hear the beginning of the Chapter on Charity in the Constitutions, it has often occurred to me to explain to you the order and economy of mercy in Jesus and Mary. Mercy ought to be in us according to their pattern, since we are told that we must show "that we are true disciples and brides of our Divine Saviour, and true daughters of the gracious, gentle, and most merciful Virgin Mary".

This is such a simple thing, you may say, that it needs no explanation. But the world has such false ideas about mercy and some people enter religion with such mistaken notions on it that it seems a good thing once and for all to fix the fundamentals concerning it. These fundamentals are found in Our Lord and Our Lady. What always predominates in Our Lord's thoughts, words and actions is God's glory, His service and His love. His Blessed Mother, even more than the Angels, lived for God's honour. In her feelings, her thoughts, her sentiments, everything was directed to God's glory. And following their example we must give the first place to God's glory.

Can we be merciful towards the least thing that offends God? No. No indulgence, no mercy is possible towards what offends God, towards vice. Our Lord shows this in the Gospel. He is never merciful, and He never can be merciful towards a sin that continues to exist, towards an offence of God still persisting. And Our Lady, who is all mercy and clemency, has a horror for any offence of God however small. Then what in

fast is mercy, if even in Jesus and Mary it can bear no sin,  
no offence, nothing in the least derogatory to God's law.

It means coming to the rescue of a soul to draw it away from  
sin, it means having charity as great towards persons as  
hatred for vice is deep. St. Augustine speaks of this in his  
Rule on the subject of corrections and warnings.

Our Blessed Lady is most gentle and most merciful be-  
cause she never abandons a sinner, but follows him with  
motherly love to draw him away from sin and bring him to a  
state in which he can procure the glory of God. But it would  
be coming down from her throne of purity and light if she has  
the least indulgence for sin.

Everything in mercy and clemency and charity then, con-  
sists in loving souls in order to draw them to follow the  
paths that lead to the glory of God in all things, or to  
keep them in those paths.

I think I have told you that when one seeks to procure  
God's glory, one also works for the good of souls. And this  
is never so well done as when God's honour and glory are  
given the first place. That we have to seek is the sancti-  
fication of souls in God's glory. And that is where we  
differ from the world. You may sometimes hear such a ques-  
tion as this: "Why not have more compassion for this poor soul  
in sin?" Such things are said because the right order of

mercy is Our Lord's and Our Lady's and it consists not in a  
compromise with sin, but in drawing the sinner out of it.

And I add: mercy has a great effect which is this:



every fault that is regretted that one knows has been forgiven is not only forgotten but wiped out. To forget faults, is one of the things that Our Lady asks of us most of all. The remembrance of other people's faults, whether against God or against us, whether public or hidden, is detestable. Charity demands that we love others, to make them get rid of every kind of imperfection, that we follow them as Our Lady does with our heart full of love, and that we bring into play zeal, authority, even severity if we are in charge. But as soon as this fault or imperfection no longer exists, as soon as the soul has regretted it and left it so as to walk in the path that leads to God's service and His glory, then it is time for that perfect mercy, which is in God, which wipes out everything, forgets everything and throws all past iniquities into the bottom of the sea. Not only in the New Testament but in the Old Testament there are words of mercy such as: "If your guilt be crimson-dyed it shall turn snow-white" (Isaiah I.v.18). God will relent and have mercy on us...burying our sins away sea deep (Micahs VII.v.19). That is the real quality of true mercy: it wipes out, it cancels, it takes away every trace of things that have disappeared from God's sight. And in that we must have the same sentiments as Our Lord and Our Lady.

If in the Gospel we see that Our Lord spoke with harshness and severity to those who persisted in their pride and hardness of heart, we see on the contrary that His Heart is open to the greatest sinners as soon as they are converted. It is not the greatness of the fault that counts with God,

nor must it with us; the whole question is the degree to which the soul rejects and detests the fault. A person whose sin is greater but who has completely rejected it, is nearer to God's Heart than another whose sin is less but who remains in it.

The great question then is the soul's degree of separation from sin and of horror of it. And in this matter we have to share God's sentiments. Where we see a soul wholly rid of its imperfection and going straight to God, we must have extreme love, great sympathy, kindness and joy, because the happiness of Our Lord and Our Lady is so great.

What I have said about other people I say also about ourselves. Could anything be more consoling to us and more likely to help us to keep on in the way of perfection than this view of the mercy of Jesus and Mary?

Our Blessed Lady never abandons the soul of a sinner; as far as she can she keeps on obtaining for it lights and inspirations of grace; she holds back God's arm, she delays His justice, so that, if possible, there may be a conversion. Secondly Our Lady, always merciful, when she has obtained for us the means of getting rid of sin helps us to correct our faults. Everyone has faults. One will be impatient; another proud, another indolent, another will show off, but we detest our faults when we repent. Our Lady is always ready to receive us, and it is a very great joy to be able to take refuge with Jesus and with her. It is also very consoling to live with people who see things as we do, not loving sin or vice whatever it may be, but loving our neigh-

hour in true charity, and if he has succeeded in getting rid of sin, to share the joy of Jesus and Mary so that last year's imperfection may be drowned in the sea and no longer exists for us because the soul that had been stained and imperfect is clothed in the crimson of the Lamb and has regained all its beauty in the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

OF LONGING FOR HEAVEN AND OF PURIFICATION AND  
SUFFERING

2. 11. 79.

My dear Daughters,

Today, we are between two feastdays, All Saints and All Souls. This latter can be called a feastday, since on it a great many souls are set free by the Church's prayers.

These two feastdays draw our minds right out of this world. Indeed, what is awaiting us? In a short time from now where shall we be? What do we desire? It is great folly to desire anything on earth when we can aspire to the good things of Heaven, when, by accepting the opportunity of sacrifice here below we can prepare our eternal happiness.

About this, there are two things I want to say. First, I suggest you examine if you have any desires, because the author of the Imitation says: (it is rare that our desires are not spoilt by some imperfection, if these desires are not wholly subject to God's Will. So let us have no desires, I mean for the things of this world: to be here or there, to have this or that, to have such and such a consolation or employment, and so on. As regards desires for things of earth we must have very few, and these few must be wholly subject to God, wholly abandoned to His Will. St. Francis de Sales used to say: "I have few desires, and if I were born anew I would wish to have none at all, and to know no will but the most dear, holy will of my God".)

I would say the same for our faculty of choosing

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Our will and our affections become attached to things that we desire strongly. And in proportion as we detach ourselves from earthly desires a more burning desire for the happiness of heaven will be kindled in our hearts. Doubtless we must leave to God the choice of the day and the hour when it will please Him to call us to that happiness: before saying "I should like to go in a week, or in a fortnight" one would have to be sure of being ready. It is easy to understand that Our Lady died of love through the ardour of her desires, because in her there was not the slightest stain. One can understand too that St. Teresa can have died of the ardour of her desires, because if there had been any stains in her life she had got entirely rid of them. But I do not think we could truly say the same for ourselves.

What we must ardently desire is not any special moment but God Himself, the happiness of seeing Him and possessing Him. For that, we must here and now desire to possess Him more and more, we must fix our eyes more constantly on Him, love Him more, so that we shall often say not only in words but in practice, the beautiful prayer of St. Ignacius that I love, and that I often quote. "Take, O Lord, all my liberty, receive my memory, understanding and entire will. Thou hast bestowed on me whatever I have or possess: I give back all to Thee, and deliver it to Thee to be entirely subject to Thy will. Only grant me Thy love and Thy grace, and I am rich enough and ask for nothing more". And truly if our thoughts and desires and all that is within us tend towards the grace and

love of Jesus we shall begin even in this life to keep our eyes fixed on God and by that means we shall become detached and purified.

The Saints got to Heaven by practising virtue and most of all by fidelity to prayer, because if each saint had his own special characteristic, there is not one of them who did not pray a great deal: and prayer is the beginning and the means of all holiness. But it is by suffering, that one must get to Heaven. All the stones of the heavenly Jerusalem have to be chiselled here on earth.

Those who in this life have not accepted suffering will pass through Purgatory's flames so that the sufferings of the after-life may do the cleansing needed for admission into the heavenly Jerusalem.

Don't imagine that there is question of bodily suffering only. These are sent at times by God and they are most purifying. However, it is not so much the body that sins as the spirit. What mostly are our sins? Distractions, impatience, movements of self-love. It is the soul, the spirit, that commits faults so all the sufferings of the spirit, of the heart and soul, all the things that cross us and that we wish we could be rid of but which meet us by the Will of God, all that we must accept.

God does not ask us things that are off our beat. All the Saints say that the sufferings God sends us have infinitely more value in His eyes than any we choose for ourselves.

For that reason we must have an ardent desire to bear them well. That is what our Rule means when it



it says we must strive not to complain of anyone or anything, to welcome what thwarts us in a humble and gentle spirit, to carry between God and ourselves our big and little crosses, so as to gain more merit for Eternity, and to obtain the most precious effect of suffering which is the purification of the soul, fitting it for the happiness of Heaven.

Let us have a great desire, great patience, great goodwill to accept anything that may thwart us in this life and win us merit. Let us try not to give way to self-pity, not to grumble, but to offer our crosses to God with a free and cheerful heart, keeping everlasting happiness in view, so as to find nothing too hard to bear.

The truth is, our crosses are not very heavy compared with the crosses of people in the world. I meet some who lack everything in life, others live in anxiety for their children, some suffer from their relations, or are thwarted and ill-treated in their homes. People outside the Convent certainly have sorrows and crosses far and away harder than ours. How can they bear them since they have not such graces as we have? They bear them because they have to, but often they grumble and lament because they do not look enough at the heavenly city. While our crosses may be less heavy, more in proportion to our strength, we must carry them on account of the heavenly reward and on account of our miseries.

Someone speaking to me of her sorrows and sufferings said a thing that pleased me very much: "I say to God, 'My God, I have thoroughly deserved them.

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and I accept them with all my heart!" Let us make this double disposition our own and say: "My God I deserve it" and also add: "My God it is for love for you that I accept it". In this way our suffering becomes more meritorious for Heaven than if we only took it with resignation and patience. This disposition is undoubtedly good, but it is not so good as when loving acceptance is added to patience.

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ON HUMILITY

21. 12. 79.

We all have a great desire to receive all possible graces at Christmas. I want to remind you that the disposition which most attracts God to a soul is humility. We have a very beautiful Rule on humility, but there is still something more to tell you, to bring to your mind the fact that humility is as close to submission as it is to charity.

In today's liturgy, St. Paul tells us that it does not matter if we are judged by the world. It is not the judgments of the world that give the measure of what we are. To be esteemed by the world or to be held in contempt does not really matter: God is our judge. At each moment, God looks into our soul and sees in it a certain degree of virtue, or an imperfection, a certain disposition of fidelity, of self-will, of generosity, briefly, dispositions which make us pleasing or displeasing in his sight. During the retreat we shall make before Christmas, you should continually place yourselves in God's sight, and try to know yourselves in this interior light.

Most of you, I think, having had to do with people in whom - as they were religious - you expected to find certain virtues, have asked yourselves: "How is it that this soul is <sup>so</sup> devoid of such virtue?" One is surprised to find in someone so much self-love, or again the need to speak of

self. I must say I was surprised to meet an ecclesiastic who could only speak of "I" and "Me". It is because there are many people who, while desiring to serve God and sanctify themselves, do not see at first in themselves certain faults, certain failings, which often strike others painfully. In later life, God sends them trials, contradictions and humiliations to purify them. From this point of view, "being judged by the world does not matter, but it does matter that we profit of the judgments of the world, which often strike at a reality in us, and self-knowledge. We should not therefore be annoyed at such things, but ponder in our soul and say to ourselves: "Without doubt, I do not know myself. What is the source of this imperfection? What is there in me which is an obstacle to God's light? What does Our Lord's most pure light find in me which stops its diffusion?"

You know, of course, that God dwells in our souls. He dwells there in several ways: first of all by His being, and He expects our adoration. Then, by His grace. God not only created us, but He gives us His grace and makes us His friends. Our Lord dwells in us by His grace and His Spirit, and at the time of Holy Communion, He also dwells in us in His humanity. He is as it were, the soul of our soul. He lives in us and gives us His Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in us as in His Temple, "Templum estis".

Why are we not easily recollected? What prevents us from entering into our own selves to receive the light of the Most Holy Trinity, who dwell in the depth of our souls? What veils the sunlight are our sins and our imperfections. They leave us in our own spirit instead of putting the spirit of Christ in us.

As Bossuet puts it, God is in the depth of our soul, like the sun shining through a crystal. If you place a crystal globe in the sunlight, it will be penetrated by its rays. If instead of a crystal globe you take an opaque one, or one which you cover up, the sun, cannot shine through it. Unfortunately, such is the case of our souls. And that is why the Holy Scripture often repeats: "Redite prevaricatores ad cor." "Evil ones, look into your own souls". Go into your souls to listen to the one who speaks to you, to adore the one who dwells there.

You all know the chapter of the Imitation about the Kingdom of God which is within us. It is there, we have to enter, so that the light will shine on us. One of the first things it should throw light upon is the knowledge of God and of our own selves. "That I may know you, O my God", used to say St. Augustine. "That I may know you in order to love you, and that I may know myself, to despise myself!" That I may finally become a humble, lowly creature, despising myself. That I may

finally become a humble, lowly creature, despising myself. That I know my imperfection, my weakness, my misery. That I may thus present myself before God, seeking Him in faith, adoration and love within myself. That I may listen to His teaching, being faithful to it, seeking His light to illumine my heart.

When the light of grace has thus taken possession of our whole being, it finally shines in the sight of men, because it fills us and makes us light-filled souls. It is in this sense that it is said in the Gospel: "Be not men of darkness, but men of light". And elsewhere: "Let your light shine before men" (St. John XII.35,36; St. Mt.V.16). We do not shine with our own light, but it is Jesus who shines through us. It is a divine light which is in us, which shines through us, because we are under its influence and sway.

Someone was saying the other day, that what is most dear to us is our reputation. I found this terribly natural and human. This is so perhaps in the world, but for us, Religious, what should be dearest to us should be the honor and glory of God, the spread of His reign over souls. As ourselves, our religious life should be our dearest treasure, and all that makes us more perfectly religious. It is this which establishes us in a state of perfect charity towards God.

If we try to be dependent on God's grace, if



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we try to abide in a state of perfect charity and love, we shall become children of light and shine forth the grace and light of Christ. Thus the kindness of Jesus will be formed in you and the words of the Gospel will be realized. Our Lord will live in your heart and He longs to make His light grow in it, so that His warmth and His grace will shine forth from it.

This is what we should seek during the retreat, especially at Christmas, which is a time of renewal, when Our Lord comes again to live in us. He comes to share with us His power, to grant us His grace, to become our Saviour, Our Father, Our Master, Our Friend, Our Spouse. Let us therefore prepare ourselves with great care for this great feast, especially through our humility and our dependence on Jesus.

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LIVE THE LIFE OF FAITH TO LEAVE THE  
HOLY GHOST FREE TO ACT IN THE SOUL.

16. 5. 80.

My dear Daughters,

In the discourse after the Last Supper Our Lord says: "My Word is Truth". The one and only great truth is the Gospel, the word of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, He promised us that the Holy Ghost would be our Consoler, our joy, our support; that He would remind us of all Our Lord's words and would clothe us with strength from on high. Now far, Sisters, have these effects been produced in us who have all received the Holy Ghost in Baptism, in the Sacraments, and in a very special way in Confirmation? Each of us at Pentecost asks for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Ghost. But what does He do in us in connection with that light by which He makes Our Lord known, that life which is found in Our Lord's words, with the grace of remembering these words and understanding them and of putting them in practice? What does the Holy Ghost do in us as regards the joy with which He secretly fills the heart, the joy that He brings to souls of good-will and with regard to holiness, His own special work?

Those are questions we can ask ourselves. And if these things do not happen in us we may ask ourselves: "Is this because I fail utterly to fulfil the conditions necessary for the Holy Ghost to pour out all His effusions in me? Fail utterly, no. We fulfil them to a certain extent, but to a

certain extent also we fail. And that is why we only receive some of the graces that the Holy Ghost brings to the world.

[ I feel tempted to say to-day that the most necessary condition, the most suitable one for a religious soul, is, to live the life of Faith. In so far as we live the life of Faith, so far do we give the Holy Ghost influence over our soul. Correctly speaking, the religious life is a life of Faith; Faith is its mainspring; Our Lord's words are its food; Faith remembers His words and understands them; it is a life that is more attached to the things of Heaven than to the things of earth: the soul passes through these but without dwelling on them.

You are of different stages, Sisters, May I tell you, who are beginner, that to enter on the life of Faith one must be detached from the life of the senses. You will answer "but I do not live by the life of the senses". That is true. All the same, where do most of your impressions come from? Isn't it from what you see and hear, from what happens to you or what you are attached to? St. John of the Cross used to say that we must try to shut out impressions that come through our senses; that we must try not to dwell on what we see and hear in this world; that we must banish from our mind all that has given us pleasure or pain so that God will be able to write on a soul that is white, pure, and free from all earthly impressions. When one enters religion that is what we must begin with.

When we are older in religion we must ask ourselves: "Do I brood over things that come to me every day from creatures?" very varied things. There are joys and sorrows. First there are rightful sorrows that we cannot help feeling. But to give them a permanent place in our heart is not living the life of Faith: keeping them, nursing them, often coming back to these things that happen to us on earth. After a time one must try to turn one's mind to eternity, and see these things only in their rightful place in connection with eternity. For example, we remember those who have died, and see them ~~in~~ eternity, in glory, in hope, and not just brood over our sense of loss and separation. There are other kinds of sadnesses not quite so lawful or so just. One feels not being thought much of: one suffers from the daily contact with characters that rub us up the wrong way; one is troubled when human things do not turn out as one had hoped. In a word, there are all these different human causes of sadness that are not so legitimate as the loss of our loved ones. In the midst of these every day little trials one must say to oneself: "I am made for higher things; I am made to find joy and peace in my intercourse with God, in union with Him. I am already a citizen of eternity".

When you entered religion, you gave up the world to embrace a better life and to have your conversation already in Heaven, so your desires, hopes, joys and thoughts must tend upwards. Therefore, the least fault you commit ought ~~not~~ to give you more sorrow than this or that difficulty or annoyance. The slightest thing that comes between you and

God and prevents Him from living in your soul ought by rights to cost you more than any trials that can come to you here below. Those are the great events in the life of anyone who loved God. And it is the same with joys. ]

Even a nun can have vain joys. Vain is the joy that comes to us from human contacts that give pleasure. A joy is of this world if it comes to us by our eyes, ears or senses. And if one knows how to refuse oneself these joys that are lower and do not last, one finds everlasting joy, peace and purity, and union with God, all of which come from the Holy Ghost who wills to imprint them on souls that He finds free from the things of this world.

So, Sisters, let us free ourselves. This is necessary for us all: for beginners, and for those who are older.

Those who have been longer in religion must have learnt to live more by the life of Faith. But to grow in the life of Faith we must all be attentive to developing what belongs to the supernatural order, to giving more importance to what leads Heavenwards, to what belongs to our interior dealings with God, such as prayer, sanctification, the perfection of virtue.

Put yourself back again and again under God's influence, so as to listen to His word. He speaks very softly, so to hear Him one has to separate oneself from the vain noises of this world. By doing this we become capable of receiving the secret, divine outpourings from which holiness will come.

It is from the Holy Ghost's influence that holiness comes. If we are bound to tend to perfection we need a means. What means? By giving the Holy Ghost a free hand in us. But if the Holy Ghost is to act in us He must not find our soul all written over with a lot of words. If we let ourselves go to the emotions and thoughts of this world, to its joys, its business and its annoyances, the Holy Ghost will not find a blank page on which to write His heavenly doctrine, nor a quiet corner where He can make Himself heard, nor a place where He can imprint His joy, His strength, His grace and His holiness.

So, it is partly on us that this loving action of the Holy Ghost depends. I know well that we could do nothing towards it if He had not first come to strengthen us. But He came by grace and the Sacraments and He can do nothing within us unless we co-operate with His action. So our first co-operation must be to give up earthly and passing things and to keep under the influence of the Divine Spirit whose outpouring we beg for to-day.

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## FEAST OF THE BLESSED TRINITY

23. 5. 80.

My dear Daughters,

Last Sunday we spoke of the life of Faith. Now the object of our Faith is first and foremost the Blessed and Adorable Trinity whose feast is to-day. It is by Our Lord that we know this mystery. He is both God and Man, our Head and our Redeemer. How often, in the Gospel, does He tell us that His words are the words of the Father: that what He says, He says not of Himself: that he who hears Him hears God's word. That is obviously true since He Himself is God. But His word is the word of the Blessed Trinity.

The great devotion of the Religious of long ago was to be always attentive to the eye of the Blessed Trinity. God's eye always attentive to their actions, their attention always on that eye: there you have the foundation of the mysticism of the Desert Fathers. To be always attentive to God looking at us, is a grand and simple devotion, to know that He judges our every act, that nothing is a matter of indifference, to the Blessed Trinity, that no thought or word of ours is hidden from God, that everything is seen and judged by Him: no mistake is possible in this. When we keep anything hidden in our soul that is not wholly for God, not quite straight, not quite humble, not quite simple, He sees it.

It was under the eye of God searching the most hidden recesses of their souls that the Religious of old strove always to become more pure, to live in loyalty, purity and an ever-

growing perfection by simple Faith.

Well Sisters, we too must give our mind to that. Some of you must have known M. Charrier, of the Foreign Missions, I think, who had suffered the first stages of martyrdom. He and his companions had been taken up, tortured and beaten with rods, and were freed by the French just as they were going to be strangled. He told us that in China there was only one devotion never to forget the Presence of God. To forget it was to be lost. The only strength was the thought that everything one does or suffers is for God.

We live in a time of ferment and agitation. Evil plans threaten us. Will they be carried out? God alone knows. But in the midst of so many uncertainties we can draw great strength from the habit of living in the Presence of God. You know the psalm says: "Quare fremuerunt gentes et populi meditati sunt inania?" (Ps.II.v.1). "What means this turmoil among the nations why do the people cherish vain dreams?" Peoples may be in agitation, but One is mightier than they, and He can break as a potter can break a piece of earthenware in his hands. What are human plans compared with God's Will? If God wills the Church to be tried, it is so that those who deserve it shall receive a crown and greater graces to bear the trial. And so the remembrance of God's Presence, the habit of living under His eye is an infallible means of coming through trials and obtaining help.

There follows from that, a double bent in presence of all that threatens us in this world and two things I specially want to recommend to you.

First a resolution, firmer than ever, never to consent to any disposition that would be a venial sin. You see, purity is the first kind of strength to oppose the world's threats. It means to be pure in God's sight, to avoid every imperfect disposition, to make one's soul so faithful, so opposed to any compromise, in which might be the least sin that God will be with us and that we shall be truly His children.

The second thing I specially recommend is unbounded trust in God. By this we are sure to have God Almighty with us and for us. It makes us His children in a special way: He becomes wholly our Father, and the Gospel words: "Are not sparrows sold two for a penny? and yet it is impossible for one of them to fall to the ground without your Heavenly Father's will. And as for you, He takes every hair of your head into His reckoning" (St. Matthew X.v. 29-30) become wholly true of us. Doubtless they apply to everyone. But God's Fatherhood is specially tender to those who are specially His own, more than for all the others. The care He took of Our Lady, of the Apostles, of all the Saints, He will take of us, if by generous fidelity and boundless trust we surrender ourselves wholly to Him.

Many things will be said outside. People will tell you of threats, of wicked plans that may alarm you. But do not let this disconcert you. Rather let the Feast of the Blessed Trinity bring you two hearty resolves: on the one hand hate evil, recoil from the least offence against God, and on the other cultivate great purity of heart and fervour in the Religious life. We shall fail sometimes because we are

fragile. But at least we can rise again at once and keep nothing in our heart that God will not be pleased to see there. Let us give ourselves to Him with boundless trust, with perfect surrender, with complete abandonment of ourselves into His hands, saying: "Since I am His child, He is my Father. And what greater support could one have than the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost?"

When in the council of the Blessed Trinity everything is arranged for a poor little creature, what madness on this creature's part to have the least worry and anxiety for itself, instead of surrendering heartily to such holy and Fatherly plans! We ought to desire one day to possess the Blessed Trinity. Now, the Blessed Trinity knows what we need in order to come to the Beatific vision, and we do not. The Blessed Trinity knows what we can bear and we do not. The Blessed Trinity knows how much grace we need to bear, what will be sent to us, and we do not. It follows that if we surrender ourselves wholly we shall have but one preoccupation: to be holy, to be as holy as we can, as faithful as we can. We shall win through above all by the two dispositions that I have pointed out to you. They will so guide us that God seeing to the very bottom of our soul will find nothing there that does not please Him.

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THE PRECIOUS BLOOD, SOURCE OF THE SACRAMENTS  
AND OF ALL GRACES; FORGATIVE, ILLUMINATIVE  
AND PURIFICATIVE.

4. 7. 80.

My dear Daughters,

In devotion to the Precious Blood, Sisters, we find the Blessed Eucharist, the Panacea and the source of all the Sacraments, all of which draw their life from the Precious Blood. From Our Lord's open side came forth the waters of Baptism tinged with His Blood. And this Blood, offered up beforehand is what fills the Chalice on our Altars. So that is where every soul is cleansed and gets the whiteness of the garments that make it fit for the eyes of God. The glory and purity of the elect have the same source. "Who are they and whence do they come, those who are clothed in white? They have come here out of great affliction; they have washed their robes white in the Blood of the Lamb (Apocalypse VII. v.13-15) And all that beautifies this dazzling whiteness, all the virtues, all the haloes, the beauty of the Saints, the beauty of Heaven is the fruit of Our Lord's Precious Blood that brings forth thirty-fold, sixty-fold, and even more; the Church tells us in St. John the Baptist, according to the faith and the love and the fidelity, with which a soul receives this heavenly dew.

When our last day comes and we leave this life I hope that none of us will leave it without having been washed once again in this Precious Blood by receiving God's Sacraments, and that even our body will have been purified by the Holy Oil

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that draws from Our Lord's Blood the power to sanctify all our senses. But besides these heavenly helps, and even more if they were lacking, may our soul's last movement be to put itself by faith and love under the outpouring of Our Lord's Blood, in presence of which Divine Justice itself has no hold.

And you see, Sisters, what we hope to do in our last moments we should do many times during life. So go often to the foot of the Cross, and before the Altar, to receive drops of the Precious Blood and be wholly purified.

This adorable Blood was shed for every soul. Alas! ~~the~~ how does its infinite value reach only a limited number of souls? How does it come about that on this earth where the Precious Blood still flows on so many altars, century after century plotting goes on against the Lord and against His Church, His laws, His teaching? We see it, Sisters and we can quote "Quare fremuerunt gentes? What means this turmoil among the nations?" (Ps.2.v1). Why? since it is a question of a Kingdom of justice and goodness and mercy, and since the Lamb who is above all brings nothing but good to men? Yet it is against Him that the turmoil rages, and, on account of Him, against His servants.

We live in an Age when the history of the Martyrs must be specially studied. You remember how often when the Saints who had borne witness to Our Lord had by their sufferings and miracles won over to God a portion of the people present, darkness was seen to fall on the persecutors and their hangers-on, a darkness so great that it seemed to bury them, while



at the same time Our Lord's Blood like dew spread light on those who praised Him. That is a mystery which is happening to-day: some people are in the light, and we have the happiness to be among them, since we are children of the Catholic Church; others, the Church's enemies, the wicked, are in darkness, and the Devil uses his power to increase the darkness round them. There is little we can do for these folk. We must pray for them. One or other of them may come to the light of God, and suffer, and share our Faith. Even the Martyrs, holy as they were, did not win over all their enemies to God. But what we can do is to develop the action of Our Lord's Blood in us so as to become perfect children of light.

To be baptised is not all. To belong to the Church is not all, even to be in Religious life is not all. There must be something more. Our Lord says: "Your light must shine before men" (St. Matthew V.v.16). This light is of course good works, but still more it is the practice of all the virtues. How far have we got in this matter, Sisters? We have received the light, but are we ruled by its influence? Is there no room left in us for darkness and the spirit of the world? I mean, the world that Our Lord would not pray for; and which He declared alien to Him; because this word "world" must not be taken to mean the world as made up of Christian families in which everyone tries to keep the Commandments. The world that Our Lord did not bless was the one characterised by the seven capital sins, and where

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are found pride, love of money, impurity that should not be mentioned here; but alas, where can one find holiness of life, horror of sin, in the world for which Our Lord did not pray? Who nowadays is ashamed of gluttony or sloth? To do nothing, to indulge oneself in everything, are things that in the world which is not the worst, are easily accepted.

That is the spirit of the world. It is quite contrary to the Religious spirit which is based on poverty, chastity and obedience. However, we should be deceiving ourselves if we imagined we have nothing left in us of the roots of the seven capital sins. It is a life-long work to pull up these roots so as to have no tendrils of sloth, of anger, of envy, of all the things that are characteristic of the evil world. Now Sisters, since what must be uppermost in us is light, if we are to fulfil our mission as we should, we must be marked by the contraries of the capital sins. First of all comes humility; next poverty; then purity and mortification that go together; fourth charity and kindness and the absence of self-assertion; fifth temperance; sixth patience; and seventh, diligence.

You know that the old masters of the Spiritual life spoke of three ways: the Purgative way, the Illuminative way and the Unitive way. I want to impress upon you in this connection that this does not mean three separate kingdoms as it were, to be taken in succession, as though one left Portugal to go to France via Spain. No. One does not leave

the Purgative way to enter the Illuminative way and the Unitive way.

The Purgative way must be accompanied by the Illuminative and the Unitive way. In the Illuminative way one looks backwards to the Purgative way and forwards to the Unitive way. Although it can be said that one state of the soul is more marked by purification it must not be thought that a more advanced soul no longer needs purification. St. Teresa says that a soul who does not daily eat the bread of self-knowledge runs the risk of going astray. St. Teresa was in a very advanced state but she never stopped trying to purify her soul into which Our Lord poured so many lights. We too, Sisters, must strive, on the one hand, to purify ourselves of vices, and on the other hand to grow daily in virtue: so that our Sisters may be able to notice in us the impress of poverty, purity, love, humility, patience, generosity, courage in God's service, as well as the virtues that belong more specially to the Religious life, such as obedience, regular observance, fervour and simplicity.

Besides trying to get rid of vices and to acquire virtues, we must tend continually to union with Christ Our Lord. From the time of our first steps, when we still had many faults, Our Lord came down to us in Holy Communion, and we received the grace and the strength that Our Lord's presence and strength and spirit give to the soul. The other day I was saying to you that without Him we can do nothing, - nothing especially in the matter of advancing towards Him. He who is

our aim must also be our means. Don't forget that, Sisters. It seems a singular thing, doesn't it, that Our Lord who is God, and so great, and worthy of our adoration, should be seen as a means. But that is an absolutely certain fact. Our Divine Lord chose and willed to become our means for everything: for doing good and avoiding evil, for acquiring every virtue and for going to Heaven, for doing what of ourselves we cannot do. That is why He said: "Without me you can do nothing" (John XV.v.5).

We must so act, that, looking sometimes at ourselves, and often at Our Lord, we shall become truly children of the light. May those who live in darkness receive as it were a shaft of light from the Sun of Justice by the virtues that shine in us. And we must strive by the good odour of Christ to win those poor souls to Him.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

2. 2. 81.

My dear Daughters,

Today, I would like you to meditate with me on Our Lord's sufferings. We ought to meditate on the Passion during Lent and indeed at all other times, for many, including St. Thomas, are of the opinion that therein lies the quickest way to perfection. Of course meditation of this kind does not exclude devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, neither does it prevent us from dwelling on any other Mystery such as that of the Holy Infancy.

Each one is free to follow her own devotion, but it is still true that during Lent all our attention should be focussed on the Passion, and I think that the best way to begin is to think of Our Lord in His agony. It would take weeks to exhaust so great a mystery, and all I propose to do is to help you with a few suggestions, and so we will begin by thinking of sin and all its ugliness.

Our Lord offered Himself in expiation for the sins of the whole world, but we will pass from sin in general to the consideration of our personal sins seen in the setting of all the others borne by Our Lord. This we shall find easy if we realize the horror sin inspires in the All-Holy, sinless One to whom every least offence against the Father is unbearable.

We shall then with deep contrition and great love resolve to avoid even the smallest fault for the future. It would be foolish to say, "anyway my sins are not mortal sins, or at least they are not all

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mortal". We must acknowledged all our venial sins as well as all our bad inclinations and tendencies to vanity, jealousy, pride, disobedience and laziness, no matter what degree they may exist in us. Then we must think of Our Lord in the midst of His great suffering; freely accepting them in order to expiate our every fault.

Our minds should be filled with thoughts such as these as we contemplate Our Lord in His agony, and in them you will find the meaning and justification of all I am going to say later.

Now, let us think of the condition Our Lord was in at the moment when He voluntarily accepted the terrible weight of our sins. It was the most abandoned and sorrowful condition imaginable. "Coepit taedere et pavere et moestus esse". He began to be afraid, and His soul was overwhelmed with fear. Holy Scriptures never makes use of a word, without intending it to be understood in its fullest sense. Yes, Our Lord was filled with fear and terror.

Imagine for yourselves a soul overwhelmed with sorrow. Quite rightly has it been said that no reasonable being would ever belittle physical suffering or count it as nothing, but the suffering of the soul are far more terrible, and Our Lord desired to experience these in all their intensity. Let us contemplate Him as with soul sorrowful unto death He accepts all physical suffering. Let us contemplate Him in His fear and sadness, in His great weariness and anguish, completely dejected and broken. I will not say discouraged, for He is courage itself-but embracing



all that we understand by supreme agony and anguish of soul.

This is the condition to which Our Lord was reduced when He accepted the weight of sin, and it was to this condition that your sins and mine had brought Him.

No true and solid piety can exist in a soul unless it hates both mortal and venial sin above every other evil and I am not alone in saying this.

You will remember that when St. Catherine of Siena asked for the greatest of graces for her Confessor, she obtained for him contrition for all his sins. While he was with her he suddenly began to weep. Yes, this holy priest and Religious was so penetrated with sorrow for his sins that his tears flowed abundantly and he could not cease from weeping. What greater grace could he have received!

Even if you were to be raised above the ground in prayer, ecstasy and rapture, you would not be experiencing a grace any more exalted and solid and wonderful than that which consists in a deep sorrow for sin together with a firm resolution to die rather than sin again.

I expect that by now you have realised more clearly all that Our Lord accepted in expiation for sin, and therefore will be able to draw your own conclusions.

Our Lord's agony lasted for three hours, revealing the state of anguish and persevering prayer into which His soul was often plunged. What a great les-



son for a religious! We are called to a life of prayer though not necessarily to one of consolation. It is quite likely that we shall find ourselves with no light at all, filled with sorrow for past sins and in a state of continual desolation, but surrendering our will to His we shall say the same prayer over and over again just as He did in the garden.

He had been abandoned by His followers and they had fallen asleep. He remained alone with the Tempter, alone with the crimes of the world, alone before His Father who saw only the world's sin which His Son had taken upon Himself, and Our Lord accepts everything, surrenders Himself and prays.

Sometimes a religious passes through just such an anguish of soul. There is nothing for her to do but to unite herself to Our Lord, to suffer and pray with Him. The agony is not yet the final immolation of the Cross, but it is the passion of the soul and the heart, and also of the conscience.

Our Lord as man possessed a conscience and it was an extremely delicate one, so pure and far away from all evil, and perfectly submissive to His Father's will. What a passion of suffering it must have experienced when it was loaded with the indignities of the entire world!

Now that we have contemplated Our Lord in His state of sorrow and suffering, it will seem but little to us if we are asked to pass a week or two in keeping Him company in the anguish and sorrow He so willingly embraced for love of us. Our Lord said to His dis-

ciples: "Could you not watch one hour with me during my agony, praying together with me in suffering and patience, and repeating the same prayer with me over and over again?" And what a prayer, Sisters! A prayer of perfect submission to the Will of the Father.

In the last part of this meditation let us also contemplate the perfect generosity of our Saviour as He accepts all the pain, all His pitiful condition and anguish, the desertion of His disciples and the suffering and abandonment of the Cross. At the same time He foresees all the future sufferings of the Church and all the souls who having been called to Him will afterwards prove unfaithful.

Somewhere it is said: "I have been wounded in the house of those who loved me". Sisters, these words are meant for us, and the wounds are the faults and infidelities found in God's house. He sees all the betrayals - Judas was only one example. But how many souls there are that embrace Our Lord and afterwards betray Him! Indeed all who return to the world after having made their Vows in Religion are images of the kiss of Judas, and I am sure that you will agree with me in thinking that when mortal sin enters a soul consecrated to God, that also is like the betrayal of Judas.

Who knows whether in giving way to venial sin, to anger, resentment or uncharitableness, a Religious may not at one moment or another fall into grave sin. Here is indeed another motive for avoiding every occasion of sin.

Our Lord then wills and accepts everything. Let us contemplate His generosity as He foresees His Passion in its every detail. He knows what terrible sufferings are awaiting Him, and He sees His Father's face turned from Him, but nevertheless He accepts and wills it all. There will be no consolation, only abandonment right to the end, and yet Our Lord freely and completely surrenders Himself to obedience and sacrifice.

If you meditate lovingly and at length on Our Lord's agony you will be able to enter into the Passion through His Sacred Heart and with His own dispositions. Thus you will attain to a perfect and unwavering obedience that is opposed to all sin and which will lead you to love all that rule and the religious life demand of you. Your sacrifices may be great but they will never equal those of Our Lord, no matter whether they come from Divine Providence, from illness or by way of your Superiors. They will never be comparable to His sufferings, but the important thing is to be sure that your interior dispositions resemble His as closely as possible.

By now you will have seen more clearly why meditation on the Passion is the greatest of meditation for if you establish yourself in dispositions similar to those of Our Lord then nothing will impede you, and you will always prove yourselves His faithful spouses. You must surrender yourselves to Him in suffering, persevere in prayer in spite of aridity, and abandon yourself entirely to His will when in an-

guish and pain.

Would anyone in the world look for pleasure and enjoyment knowing all the time that the one she loved was enduring suffering and humiliation? We are in this position Sisters as regards Our Lord. We belong to Him for we have been chosen by Him and since He has made us His it is only right that we should share His sufferings and humiliations. May we learn to do this at His feet by means of prayer.

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OF LEARNING GENEROSITY AND  
PATIENCE AT THE FEET OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

1. 4. 81

My dear Daughters,

When we met last time we spoke of the generosity that is acquired through Meditation on the Passion, and in the service of Jesus Crucified. I have still a few words to say concerning it, although my real intention is to dwell on the virtue of Patience. However, as Generosity leads to Patience the transition from one to the other will not be difficult.

Bossuet in one of his Sermons has dwelt on Our Lord's promptness in complying with everything asked of Him. Indeed Our Lord seems to have made a voluntary sacrifice of the right and power to free Himself from humiliation and abjection. For our sake He allowed the deep waters of sorrow, and the waves of fear and anguish to sweep over His soul. For us He willingly offered His hands to be bound, His shoulders to be lacerated, and His cheeks to be spat upon. He gave all and refused nothing.

Now Sisters we must realize that in our service of God there must be generosity, and this must consist in the entire and perfect sacrifice of self in all that may be asked of us by God and men. Believe me, Sisters, when we arrive as we must at the last moment of life, we shall have no deeper regret than that of having missed opportunities when we could have given and sacrificed ourselves. Perhaps an injustice came our way, or a contradiction, or perhaps we were asked to do something quite contrary to our own desires. If we have not profited

From these opportunities of giving ourselves, then we shall have an immense regret. After all, we are Christians, and we are Religious. We are here as it were to be buffeted by God and by creatures. Think of the hymn for the Feast of the Dedication. There it is said that only those who have consented to be refined whilst on earth will be received into the Heavenly Jerusalem; only those who have been broken, chiselled and fashioned by hard blows and so made worthy to form part of the structure of the Holy City.

St. John of the Cross tells us that we are assembled together in Religion in order to sanctify each other. Now do not immediately think of other people and say: "I wonder if so and so is sanctifying herself?" "I wonder if she is profiting of this or that?", only Superiors need have those anxieties and no one else. It is the Superior's duty to see that each Sister draws profit from the trials and afflictions that come her way, and others have only to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, giving Him though love all that He asks of them.

You are asked to sacrifice your time. Then give it from morning till night. Is it something particularly disagreeable? Then embrace it at once. Perhaps it is your honor that is asked of you? If you will hold to that in Religion you will not get far. St. Teresa says that the honor of a Religious is to put herself under the net of the whole world, and to think of herself always the least and last. That kind of honor we must always cherish. You are asked to give up your own will.



You did not enter Religion for anything other than that.

Perhaps you find something particularly contrary to your own views, either in an employment, or in an arrangement, or in the character of those you live with. If so, accept this contradiction with love.

In order to be your exemplar Our Lord desired to embrace all the sorrow, anguish and sadness, all the shame and bitterness caused by sin.

Again you have inclinations; you want to talk, you wish to be loved or to prove yourself right. These are occasions for giving generously to God. Every time you accept what is asked of you, you are practising generosity.

There are Saints who in their lifetime had the means of doing good, and these never refused an alms to the poor. There were others who worried, because having given everything away they had nothing left to give. That is why St. Edward gave away even his precious ring, the symbol of his royalty.

We have no wordly goods to give away, but we have ourselves, all that we are, all that we desire, all that we may dispose of; we have our body with all its sufferings God sends. One day it is this suffering, another day it is that, and in the end we may be asked to give our very life. Let us give it joyously. Our Lord gave His life for us.

If we act in this way as each occasion arises we shall easily acquire patience. To be patient means to bear things and to suffer. You never heard anyone

say of a person surrounded with every satisfaction and pleasure, "Oh, how patient she is." The only person we think of as patient is one who suffers and bears everything well. To learn this virtue it is necessary for us to share in the sufferings of Christ. If patience is the "opus perfectum", then we must practise it throughout life, and we shall find our exemplar and our strength in Jesus Christ Crucified. How wonderful was Our Lord's patience. You see Him patient in the midst of torment on the way to Calvary, passing on His way to death amidst the insults of the infuriated crowd, and meeting His Mother whose sorrow made His own greater. You see Him falling under the weight of the Cross and leaving the impression of His Sacred Body on the stone which is less hard than the hearts of men.

Every time Sisters that you have anything to give, to bear or to suffer, study well your Divine Model.

All the Saints will tell you that the supreme wisdom, the wisdom of the Cross, consists in death to self, self-abnegation, and the knowledge that one is nothing. This is the wisdom we need to learn Sisters, and as an encouragement I will tell you that a generous soul always becomes a patient one.

An ardent soul, desirous of giving, makes many an effort. There may be setbacks, and first movements, but as these are overcome, and she gives all is asked of her, she arrives finally at the donation to God of her health, her life, her sufferings, her cares and her death.

We die every day, and St. Gregory says: "The

He knocks, when He warns us by illness and suffering that death is nigh". Are there many souls who say with pleasure this moment approaching, and souls who say "Alleluia" whenever Our Lord knocks, and destroys something of their mortal frame, something which is perhaps an obstacle to union with Him? How many have only words of gratitude and love on their lips?

I have seen however that this is so at the death of some of our Sisters, and it is one of the results of meditation on the Passion of Our Lord. It was by meditating in this way on all the sufferings of the Passion that a nun dying as a Saint should have learnt to give all with patience and sweetness. "I can no longer see", she said, "I am no longer able to move. I am reduced to the helplessness of a new-born babe. I give all this helplessness willingly to God."

Our sentiments should be like that when we feel more than usually weak, worn out and helpless; but in order to arrive at such virtue we must often contemplate Our Lord's patience in the midst of suffering.

Contemplate for example His patience when He received many insults and blows; or dwell upon His being led from Pilate to Herod who treated Him as a fool; or see Him presented to the cruel crowd who preferred Barabbas. Follow Our Lord when He was led to Calvary in the midst of so much ignominy, and think of His patience in the painful suffering of the Crucifixion. What greater suffering could there be than that of the nails when they were driven into Our Lord's hands and feet, or when bleeding and immobile on the Cross, forsaken by His Father,

and insulted by men He drew His Last breath?

In Catholic days and in Catholic countries it was quite an ordinary thing to find simple souls drawing strength from the Passion of Christ in order to bear great sufferings.

I remember seeing in Lorraine poor people afflicted with wounds and maladies and living in extreme want. When one sympathized with them, they said quite simply: "But Our Lord suffered much more than this." That is the answer we too should make whenever we are afflicted with some pain or annoyance, or some repugnance which needs overcoming. "Our Lord suffered much more". If the suffering should become more severe, we may still console ourselves by thinking of the gall and vinegar which was given to Our Lord on the Cross. No matter how little care may be taken of us, the bed on which we suffer is not a very hard cross. I have heard some of our Sisters say when dying.

SR. Elizabeth who was full of suffering as to be incapable of the least movement said to me, "This makes me think of what I have always looked upon as the greatest suffering of the Crucifixion, - the immobility of the Cross". When suffering has become as severe as that indeed we may sigh and say, "I am suffering very much, but I accept it all from the hand of God". And believe me, Sisters, if you are to arrive at such a degree of patience at the end, then you must be patient in the hundred and one little vexations of life.

St. Vincent de Paul, having been disturbed six times for something completely unnecessary, answered we are told, as sweetly at the 6th, interruption as at the first. There is more than a small dose of virtue in this, and you, <sup>who</sup> have learnt to deal with children must meet with many like occasions. Either the children resist you, and refuse to obey, or your judgment of other your ideas of managing children or of the degree of severity necessary for certain characters may be absolutely opposed to the ideas of your Sisters. In such circumstances Patience must always have the upper hand. Do not forget that the greatest good is done to the children in general, when there is perfect harmony. That does not mean that everything will be perfectly arranged and organized, but what is necessary is that the children should never see anything between their Mistresses save union, and perfect charity. This pre-supposes patience, generosity in giving, and the sacrificing of one's ideas and views, in order to be always gentle & equable.

How many times I have heard people say, "I cannot put up with that".. But that is precisely what you have to give to God. He is asking you for that grain of sand, <sup>against</sup> which you are throwing yourself. I have known people for whom the noise of a piano was the grain of sand, but there are other grains too. As I do not wish to go into details, each one of you must examine herself and find out what she must accept or give, and in what way she can practise patience in order to follow Our Lord.

Learn to say with the peasants of Lorraine, "Our

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Lord has suffered more than this. What I suffer is nothing compared with His sufferings". This is the way in which to become holy - by the patience and suffering that lead to Heaven.

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VIRTUES THAT ARE THE BASIS OF THE  
RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

22. 4. 81.

My dear Daughters,

We are now in Eastertide, the time of the Resurrection. For a long time we have been meditation on Our Lord's sufferings which must be an habitual subject of meditation for all Christians and for all Religious. How happy one is to rise to the joy of Easter, and to think of the Resurrection, first Our Lord's and then our own, the great mystery of Faith. It is not possible to understand it: we must believe: believe that this corruptible flesh of ours, that will be eaten by worms in the grave, will rise again in glory; and we must say what the heretic converted by St. Gregory said on his death bed, taking a piece of the skin of his hand between his finger and thumb and declared in a loud voice: "I know that I shall rise in this flesh, I know that I shall see my God, that I shall see the beautiful, pure, shining and glorious flesh of Him who ransomed me in this same flesh that He will give back to me by His Almighty power". That is an act of Faith. You know, when we say the Rosary, at the Mystery of the Resurrection the fruit we ask for is Faith; and St. Paul said: "If Christ has not risen, then our preaching is groundless, and your faith too, is groundless." (I.Cor.XV.14). I might say that fact of the Resurrection is our belief. On it rests our Faith. I might say more about Faith, but I feel

urged to speak about the virtues that seem to me the basis of this resurrection.

It is not the virtues of the soul that I am going to speak about but the virtues that belong more especially to the body. They shone out most brilliantly in Our Lord, so it is a good thing to fix our eyes on them for a while. The virtue each of you has thought of at once is purity. We do well sometimes to adore the infinite purity that radiated from Our Lord's adorable body and shone out in all His actions. To this I add at once, modesty, since St. Augustine says: "Do not say your intention is pure, if your outward demeanour is not modest".

Picture Our Lord after His Resurrection. What adorable modesty in all His kindness. What shining purity radiated from Him and formed His beauty, His grace, His charm, that united to draw souls to Him. Then look at yourself and say: "This flesh of mine will rise again after death, this body of mine will have its resurrection. Therefore it must be clothed in that incomparable purity that is revealed in perfect modesty, peace, gentleness, in the perfect order in which man was created." What is against purity of the body is sin, sin of any kind, even the slightest venial sin. Some sins are not to be named in the assembly of saints, and their best antidote is the horror that they inspire and that bans them completely from our thoughts. But there are sins of the flesh that can be named in the assembly of saints: gluttony and sloth, of

greediness and laziness, two sins I consider very difficult to avoid all together.

Since Trappists whose food is of the coarsest with nothing to please the taste often accuse themselves of greediness, we ourselves may well look to see if we never do acts of greediness. It is hard to escape them. Certain forms of good may be attractive or repugnant to us, and very much so sometimes. Well, to go against this attraction or this repugnance, to be ruled by reason, taking what is required to keep our strength up and resisting what is merely pleasure, is a constant act of virtue, one of those acts of virtue that keep our flesh very pure in God's sight. The Fathers of the Desert long ago used to say that those who would not overcome themselves in the matter of food were not strong in the things one does not mention. And St . Philip Neri who was less severe said that those who could not mortify their mouth would never achieve anything in the spiritual life.

Now take laziness, another inclination hard to resist. Who is not lazy in one way or another? One is readier to do what is pleasant than what is not. If one has three letters to write one begins with the one that will give the least trouble. Laziness creeps in on many sides, in work carelessly done, in the use of time when one is not miserably about it, in rising, in going to bed. In short, Sisters, you can each make your own examination

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better than I.

Then there is a certain bodily pride. Even in the holiest states of perfection one meets people who---doubtless in a small degree---value the external advantages they may have. There is a certain satisfaction in being pleasant to look at. There is a certain pleasure, contrary to perfect purity of body and soul, in being liked by Sisters and children, in being preferred to others for some merely human and natural attractiveness, not for devotedness to souls nor for the example of true piety, but for something exterior such as amusing or likable qualities. That, Sisters is inferior. This pride of flesh has in it something out of keeping with the wonderful purity that clothed Our Lord and Our Lady and which they taught the Saints to imitate.

When we contemplate Our Lord after His Resurrection we see Him with all the qualities of a glorified body. He veils His glory because human eyes could not bear it, but His body is glorified and has all the brilliance of purity and of separation from creatures. That means a lot. Note well that during the forty days after the Resurrection Our Lord had few dealings with creatures. He would come to them and then He would leave them, and when He came it was always for a deed of faith or mercy: to make Bishops or Priests, to institute Sacraments, to found His Church. He had not yet ascended to heaven but He withdrew in prayer, in

His glory, in His Holiness and purity, into a state that does not correspond with the life of sinners here below, but which corresponds very well with the Religious life. Bourdaloue speaks of this. A nun goes to her fellow creatures, and has more or less frequent dealings with them. But whenever she can, she must take them something Divine, something of God, and then withdraw into that separation from creatures which is her proper sphere.

Meditate on all this, and ask Our Lord to make the purity of your body. Your body is your companion and your servant in this life and it must one day in eternity share the joy of your soul and add to it. It is destined to shine with all the brightness that belongs to a Virgin, to a spouse of Christ, to a Queen, since a spouse of Christ is a queen. So, I say, keep this body in modesty, in peace, in penance and in union with Our Lord. It is a fact that all perfection is impossible without the spirit of penance which fights and overrules the natural inclinations of the flesh. Every time the natural inclinations of the flesh are felt, penance must separate us from them and enable us to atone for past weaknesses. But make no mistake about this. Your penance would be vain, if while crippling your body with strokes of the discipline and extenuating it by fasting, you sought to please your fellow-beings and gave way to self-seeking. You might do all possible bodily penances, but if you lacked the virtues I have just been speaking

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of and theholiness of purity that would make you pleasing to God, all your penances would be mere waste.

Penance then must be the servant of the other virtues and must always be present and on duty to give the soul the strength necessary in order to rise above what is merely natural, to rise even to Our Risen Saviour Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to union with Him.

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Interior Life: Source of Humility

15. 7. 81.

My dear Daughters,

We have a very beautiful Chapter on Humility in the Constitutions. But it does not follow that everyone finds it easy to do all that it requires of us. So today, I want to talk to you about the root and source of Humility.

Believe me, living with God is what gives the grace of true Humility. A soul who lives in the presence of God, under His eye, will always be a humble soul. All the creatures of this world try to attain some pre-eminence, some importance. I purposely say "the creatures of this world," because this tendency is found not only in human beings. That struck me as remarkable. His name was Negro, and because he was beautiful and well-shaped, and had a lovely long black tail he thought himself superior to other horses. When he was not in front, or at least near the front, he used to bite the horses that were in front of him. This shows that the urge to be first, the desire to be well-treated, is not a very elevated inclination. It is a craving that does not come from any nobility of mind or heart but from nature, and even an inferior kind of nature. It is what makes men of the world achieving success. Poor things! They do all this because they do not love in the presence of God, but thousands of miles away from Him. God is in His heaven, in His eternity, and as for

them, they do not know or think of Him - they do not live in His Presence. But take on the contrary the other extreme, a religious, who, if only she will pay attention to the fact, is always in the presence of God. It follows that she realizes on the one hand God's greatness and holiness and perfection, and on the other hand she recognizes her own misery and weakness.

That seems to me the best way to reach true Humility is to live under the eye of the perfect Being, holy, beautiful, adorable, in comparison with whom we are so inferior, so be smirched by our past and present faults. That makes us see that the last and the lowest place, the humblest of all is the most suitable for us.

But there is something else. To lead an interior life is one and the same thing as leading a life of faith, in which unseen realities become all-important. St. Paul says: "Visible things will pass away". (1 Cor. IV.18). Flowers that we admire today will fade and be thrown away tomorrow. All human life is passing away. What we see with our eyes is something God shows us to raise us to Himself; it is like a tent, pitched here today, and gone tomorrow, whereas the life of faith lets transitory things go and attaches us to realities that our eyes cannot see; it shows us that God is present everywhere, and teaches us to

live according to the Gospel and the mysteries of Our Lord's life and the example of the Saints.

The example of Our Lord and the saints were visible but they teach us about invisible things, and the Blessed Trinity, the grace of Baptism and other Sacraments, the invisible mystery of the Holy Spirit poured into human hearts and bearing the fruit of all virtues. All this gives us a mentality, a habit of judging diametrically opposed to the way we naturally judge things. For instance, Our Lord teaches that "he who humbles himself shall be exalted" (Mt. XXIII, 12) and He invites us to think and do things that are quite contrary to natural human inclinations and views. The life of faith enable us to tend towards things that we hope for but do not yet possess, and despise what is merely transitory. "here is something in this life of hope and love that draws us to Humility. And Humility leads to eternal Glory and the happiness that God does not give to the proud of heart but reserves for humble souls.

There is more. This gift of an interior life of faith after convincing our mind that earthly things are vain and empty and giving us contempt for them speaks to our heart, and gives us preference for what is everlasting. "he souls then become attached to what is eternal and loves God truly above all things, God whom she does not see or feel, whom she has felt sometimes but when she

cannot always feel, because God is a pure spirit that our senses cannot recognize: we do not need to see Him in order to believe in Him and love Him. That is the true state of religious. She wants to live for what is eternal, she wants perfect virtues and excellent things, she wants Our Lord Jesus Christ. And she wants Him in her whole life. She wants the gift of Himself that He deigns to give in and by the Sacraments, above all by the Blessed Eucharist which is outstandingly the mystery of Humility.

There is no other way to Our Lord. How could we be united to Him if we were not willing to share His life? And where can Our Lord be found if not in the life of Humility, the hidden life of His childhood, in His public life, on the Cross, in the Blessed Eucharist? And what connection could there be between one who is master of Humility and one who retains any pride at all? When a soul is penetrated with these truths, love, will make her want perfect things and seek them in Humility, and Humility is the love of God even to the point of self-contempt. The soul knows God and loves Him, and seeks Him in self-contempt.

The interior life in truth is the source of Humility. Look at each point of the Rule. You will realize that they will become easy only if you consider them from the point of view of faith and hope and the expectation of an infinite reward.

The conclusion is perhaps that a soul's progress is to be measured by its Humility. If we want to know where we are, we only have to examine how we live all the recommendations about Humility, what we feel about the practices of Humility. Our Rule is not the only one that legislates for perfect humility. St. Benedict gives a whole Chapter to it and all the virtues contained in it.

For example, he has no special Chapter on Religious Modesty. But he says that the monk who practises exterior modesty, who is calm and recollected and who lives in God's presence is in a given degree of Humility. And the Saint adds that such perfect Charity casts out fear and he is one with His Lord.

So, Sisters, in our prayer and when we approach God, we must seek true Humility, a Humility that will make us speak little about ourselves, and think little about ourselves. May this Humility inspire us with a wholesome fear of the movement that pride sometimes stirs up in us and help us to quell them and fill our souls, on the contrary, with the dispositions of Our Lord and the Saints.

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