

THE GOSPEL
IS THE PRICE OF HEAVEN

4. 5. 86.

My dear Daughters,

Our Mother spoke of St. M. Aloysia who was dying, of her fidelity, her sufferings, her religious spirit, her cheerfulness and generosity, and added: "You can understand how that relieves me of all anxiety on her account". And she went on: "We can, ask ourselves if we accept our sufferings, great and small, in the same spirit? do we value them as a grace? are our dispositions all charity and goodwill towards God, all obedience and fidelity to the Rule, all submission, humility, patience in all circumstances? Are we intent on reproducing the spirit of the Gospel in our lives? As daughters of the Assumption, we are called to a very close union with the Divine Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in a spirit of faith and prayer and love for the Church, and this spirit must be drawn from authentic sources. It is customary in all Religious Orders as among us to make an examination from time to time, at least once a month, as though we were about to appear before God, and in this examination we should see how far we are striving to observe Our Rule, how far we live by the Gospel spirit which is a supernatural spirit that puts up with everything, that turns everything into charity, and that changes the hard things of this life into money with which to buy

the good things of eternal life. We must have the conviction that what buys heaven is hardship and sufferings. This is not the rule for nuns only.

Some nuns are perhaps not convinced enough of this. Do you imagine that people in the world do not have to suffer to get to Heaven? You may answer that they have consolations and pleasures and satisfactions. That maybe. But sooner or later come trials, losses, great sufferings, and what is that buys Heaven for them. We nuns need to convince ourselves more than other people do of this truth. We have chosen a state of perfection, and since we aim at a higher place in Heaven, nearer to Our Lord than people of the world, we must use our sufferings as steps to go upwards more perfect love and closer union with Him for Eternity.

Our sorrow is deep when God calls those we love to their reward. But even in this heartache we know that everything here below passes away and only Eternity is abiding: virtue, like seeds of grace sown in our souls, will one day, provided we cultivate them, yield a harvest of glory for God.

So, my dear Daughters, what really matters is to make our life holy. To long for death before producing the flowers and fruit of virtue would be unforgivable childishness in a nun. No! we must learn rather to turn to profit the time that still remains to us. Cultivate the garden of your soul with care and love, so that when the Divine Gardener comes He may find you full.

My dear Daughters,

Our vocation is to follow our Lord as closely as possible, and so the study of His words and His thoughts and feelings towards the people He came in contact with, is of great importance to us.

To start with, take the Apostles. They were faithful and devoted friends of His. Though they were still weak and capable of momentary falls, still they were His servants and special friends, and it was by them that the Kingdom of God was to be established on earth. Notice how everything He said to them was directed towards establishing the truth in them. We must do the same with our friends and with the people we come in contact and more intimate with. Our talk must always be directed towards higher things. We must always try to give truth and the love of God, so as to lift souls to more excellent ways. We have a wonderful example of this in Our Lord's discourse after the Last Supper.

Our Lord had enemies. And though He never treated anyone as an enemy, there were people who had the misfortune to be in opposition to Him and who betrayed Him. With His words and ways with them for example with Judas. How calm and gentle Our Lord was! and how to the very end He did all He could to reclaim this wretched Apostle.

taking Our Lord as your model and trying to imitate Him. Look at His attitude towards His Apostles, towards those who contradicted His teaching, and those who betrayed Him, towards His Apostles, towards His enemies and even His executioners, to whom He handed Himself over wholly. Then look at what He is towards the different characters among His followers: Martha, Mary, Magdalene, Our Lady, the Apostles. And then say "that is what I must be like in my dealings with others; I must try to have the same spirit so as to lead others to God, and drop all that is rely my poor human characteristics and egotism. We are in this world for one thing only, namely, to serve and glorify God, and not for any self-seeking nor for our own advantage. So everything we do and say must go towards building up the Kingdom of God.

It would have been a consolation to have followed the Apostles after Pentecost. They were so holy, so generous, so full of God. And what ardour they had to make God known and loved by creatures: and what sort of creatures! sinners, ignorant and bad people. The Apostles united charity and zeal to get people to accept the truth. That is how St. Peter and St. John and St. Bartholomew and the other Apostles won so many souls to Christ and evangelized so many countries. They were so like Him in their speech and actions and ways. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, they became other Christs. We too are called to follow

Our Lord and to be like Him. We have to strive to be transformed into His likeness in our ordinary life and occupations and in our dealings with people around us, so that every word we say will do the work of charity and peace and will be kind and loving and supernatural, because we shall be full of God.

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23. 5. 86.

My dear Daughters,

Today, I have a general recommendation to make that can be applied to your whole life: be fervent. Indeed, what would the Religious Life without fervour? The religious life is a state we chose freely. It sets us apart from the ordinary conditions of life in order to give us more freedom to practise the Evangelical Counsels. By entering Religion we promised God to love Him more generously, more constantly, more faithfully, and by making our Vows, which is considered an act of perfect love and is like a second Baptism we were purified from the stains of our past life.

However, the Religious Life does not free us from tepidity and that is an evil against which we must be on our guard. Being tepid means letting oneself go easily into venial sins and imperfections, and not putting enough generosity into one's duty. Now fervour is just the contrary, and I want to show you what characterises it in thought and deed.

First, in thought, fervour is simply a great love for God that prefers God to self and to all things and makes the soul try constantly to show Him her love. It makes one flee with horror from anything that could offend Him, and fight against all venial sins and all that might displease (Him) the Beloved. When one loves God thus

above all things no preoccupation or suffering can turn one away from Him.. That is one mark of fervour in thought. And I add another: take everything that happens from the hand of God; ignore secondary causes, look only at God who directs everything, and trust yourself wholly only in His hands for whatever He may want. I do not say that one always does that straight away. But if anything of the kind worries you persistently try to find peace in prayer and to fit in with the Will of God, as St. Francis of Sales used to say, "tacher de s'angoisser", until you can submit peacefully to the plans of Providence.

God often mingles crosses with the graces He prepares for us because it is by the cross that one comes to Eternal Salvation. It is an act of love and also an act of wisdom to prefer God's guidance to any other, and to believe that if He sends us suffering, He has prepared it for us in a supremely wise and excellent way. If you love God you will love what He wants, and your heart will have a leaning towards all His preferences and will say in all circumstances: "Yes, my God, whatever you want, as you want it, and when you want it". To receive everything in this way from God's hands and to purify our intention so as always to obey Him and choose what pleases Him: that is the way to be always and in all things fervent and holy.

So far for thoughts. Now for our actions. It is quite simple. Do all that the Rule and obedience requires, generously and whatever it may cost. That is what the Catechism means by "knowing God, loving Him and serving Him". If you know Him, you leave everything, and yourself to His Providence if you love Him, you trust Him; and if you will to serve Him, you do so by every act of your life and with all possible perfection, because that is what our all holy and all perfect God deserves.

Examine Sisters, how far you carry this out and how much your mind and heart and soul are occupied with the Will of God and with the adoration of His rights. See too if love is the mainspring of all you do, and if it purifies your intention. And then look at your actions to find out if you do your best to keep the Rule and to obey as faithful servant of God ought to.

Whenever you have met a nun who did all this you must have said to yourself: "What a fervent Religious! She overcomes difficulties, (for there are always difficulties in obeying and keeping the Rule), but she overcomes them "corde magno et animo bloenti" with a great heart that knows how to will. She loves God and because she loves Him she wants to be fervent in all she does".

I hope Sisters, that everyone of you is saying: "I do not want to be tepid, I want to be fervent, as I must love God. I must give Him a

constant proof of my love by living up to the Highest principles and inspirations of my better self. That is how I can always try to serve Him and accept all His Providence sends". This is so easy enough to understand, but it is not so easy always to carry it out. So during the month of the Rosary, we must put ourselves in the hands of Mary. She always clung close to God's will and her love for Him was superabundant. She did what pleased Him with all possible obedience and fidelity and perfection. Ask her to get us a share in these same graces, though of course in a lesser degree. May she often obtain for us the grace to follow her, since we are her daughters, and never fall into tepidity or carelessness.

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