



CONTEMPLATION, CONSIDERED as the HUNDRFOLD

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Speaking to you about the sufferings of St Catherine of Siena, I did not return to an idea which should often be present to us because it gives strength in face of our fear concerning both future and present trials. It is the promise Our Lord made of the hundredfold even in the midst of persecution.

We must always remember that, if the martyrs endured terrible sufferings with such great courage, it was because they were prepared by mortification, detachment and prayer, and had within themselves the force that the hundredfold promised by the Gospel gives. What is this hundredfold? I do not believe I am mistaken when I say that it was an ardent love for Jesus Christ. I believe that, in the midst of persecution, Our Lord communicates to us a much more ardent love than he gives at any other moment. And he makes love grow through persecution

...You understand that a person in such distress [of persecution] can say to Our Lord: "My God, I have only you." Indeed, she is deprived of all, she is no longer free, she can do nothing, and she has no other human or worldly pleasure. As for her body, all is pain; for her soul, abandon is her strength. You can understand how the love of God increases rapidly in a soul that is in such a state because, having lost all the rest, she has place only for the love of God.

In a certain measure, this is what fervent religious do. They seek to get rid of self-love; they seek detachment from human satisfactions; by poverty, obedience, suffering, regularity, charity and the gift of self. They seek to strip themselves so they can say to God: "I have handed myself over without reserve and until death. You are my sole treasure." In this way, love grows, develops, enflames the soul and gives it both strength and supreme joy which are the hundredfold promised in the midst of persecution.

I will willingly look at another side of the question, that is, the contemplation of truth. We have said that Catherine, nourished by the truth, is a great model for the Religious of the Assumption.

There are two ways of understanding the things of God. The first is to know them often through instruction, study; the second is to see them in a higher more supernatural light that it pleases God to give us. It is not given to all but God wants to give it [this understanding] to those who desire to receive it. God is especially disposed to give this knowledge to religious. It is the light of contemplation

There are two kinds of contemplation: acquired contemplation and infused contemplation. What is the acquired contemplation that all religious may hope to attain? It is a loving gaze to which are joined ardor of the will and joy of heart. Here, we need to be precise in our terms. I say that there is both light and vision; then, the

entire will is drawn and, at the same time, the heart reposes with love. Why do I call this contemplation acquired? Because it is gained by long meditation of the truth and divine things, by the care that the soul takes and the habit it forms, even outside prayer and meditation, to focus on divine things, and to take its joy in them, to love them with all one's heart and to dwell on one or the other [divine thing] according to one's grace and light.

I want to be specific because one cannot be too precise in treating this question. God made Man; there is a subject of contemplation. An infinite and all powerful God, possessing all the perfections that you know belong to God, reduced to the state of a little child, as we shall see at Christmas, is present in one's thought. When a person has meditated at length on the conditions of this abasement, when she has considered what God is and what a one day old child is, how Our Lord has done all that and why He came from heaven to earth as the Church sings: "He did not abhor the virgin's womb;" the will goes towards God in love. That person desires Him alone, wants only Him. To know Him, to love Him, there is the object of her will on earth. She shuns every other thought and with ardent love attaches herself to God, resting in Him alone.

This type of acquired contemplation is also the hundredfold: To stay with a single thought, with one love alone and with total simplicity, the help of God is necessary. God does not automatically give this help and it is not necessary. When before the Blessed Sacrament, or at the foot of the Cross, before a great truth, of this eternity where we are destined to possess God, the soul stops, does not want to see or hear any other thing, is drawn with extreme ardor of will, an extreme fidelity of love which leads her to exclude everything else, she enters on a way where the truth that she contemplates is a hundredfold.

If the love of God, burning as a brazier in the depths of the soul, is a hundredfold, believe me, my sisters, the contemplation of divine things, communion with something divine, whether it is the Child Jesus, the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus crucified, the glory of the Trinity or the eternity that is prepared for us, or any other usual subject of your meditation - believe me, to be entirely and fully intent upon this prayer, focused on one of these truths with ardent love, is also a hundredfold. It is at times like this that tears [of consolation] flow when you are thus near to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

...When Our Lord chooses souls and calls them to be with him in the religious life, He has plans that follow this way. I do not mean to say that he gives everyone lights such as these; but He has a plan to make all interior persons, to dwell more in their will, their intelligence and their heart, more than in the other souls of the world. ...Why do so few of us receive these lights and graces? It is that we don't desire them enough, we don't prepare ourselves well enough, and we don't lift our minds, our hearts, and our wills above the earth.

It is from this viewpoint that infused contemplation is not necessarily given to everyone, that it is good to speak about it as something to desire, something that we can hope for and for which we deprive our eyes, our ears and our minds of the earthly lights which are not necessary to the service of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of the reasons for interior mortification to which, a director I know, said there are no

limits. Exterior mortification has limits imposed by rules of wisdom and prudence; but interior mortification can be practiced in all the fullness of one's generosity, love and fidelity and dispose us to enter into the way of perfection to which God calls each one of us in greater or lesser degree.

...Have you noticed how people in the world can make a big affair of the smallest things? We can do the same, talking to ourselves, going back over little annoyances and hurts. But that is not fitting to our state of life. We have to leave all that, leave the inferior part of our being with its little contradictions, attachments, pleasures in success, to rise above them.

Think about how happy we are that God came down to us that God has given himself to us...
