

FERVOUR

23rd May 1886

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 with fervour? The religious life is a state we choose 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 characterizes 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 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 do that straight away. But 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 a 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 bolenti” 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 every one of you is saying: “I do not want to be tepid, I want to be fervent, so 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 grant us a share in these same graces, though of course in a lesser degree. May she obtain for us the grace to follow her, since we are her daughters, and never fall into tepidity or carelessness.
