

JESUS CHRIST LIVING IN US -- THE THREE
CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS PRESENCE: HE IS SILENT,
A MYSTERY, INTANGIBLE

5 December 1875

My dear Daughters,

In speaking to you the other day, there was something I failed to exhaust as much as I desired. I want to return to it today; but as it is a bit difficult to speak on this, I ask you to give me your full attention and to help me with your prayers.

I think I already told you that one of the lines on which prayer is founded is this: "If the branch does not remain one with the vine, it does not bear fruit; and it is good for nothing but to be thrown into the fire." When one is fully aware and taken up by the need to live so united with Our Lord, counting on Him alone, one needs to have faith. This is one of the things which should take up a great part of our time of prayer. We must often return to this unquestionable truth that Christ lives in us. He is present in a silent, mysterious, and intangible way. Note well these three qualities of His presence, in short, He dwells there.

You know well, my Sisters, that God's almighty power makes Him present everywhere. He is, then, in the very depths of our being, more intimately present to us than we are to ourselves; and this is one truth which helps tremendously in keeping oneself in God's presence.

You know, too, that by grace, our soul is the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity; that with love, the spirit of Jesus Christ is given to us in a way that, if in Holy Communion, we receive the Body, the Blood, the soul of Jesus Christ, His whole divine Person, we also have in our daily life, the communication of His spirit, so holy, so life-giving, and so fruitful, which makes itself present to us. But what is this presence like? This is where the three words that I just mentioned to you come in.

He is present firstly, in a silent way. Pay close attention to this. Our Lord is there, but silently so. If then, we excite ourselves interiorly, if we agitate ourselves, if we run our own life and all this noise within which we can produce just as cleverly as we produce exterior noise, we will not hear His voice. He is in us, He wants to speak to us, His Spirit wants to make Himself heard in ours; but we will not hear Him if

we do not know how to be silent, because His word is very gentle, hidden, very silent, very secretive and soft. Only those who live in silence and recollection can hear it.

I also said that Our Lord is present in an intangible way, because you feel Him no more than you hear Him; and yet He is in you. Even at the moment of Holy Communion, when Our Lord is fully present, you do not feel Him. When the priest puts the sacred host on your lips, you certainly feel that you receive something which is like a veil hiding the Body of Jesus Christ within its external appearance. You feel it, since you swallow the sacred species, but once Our Lord is within you, you do not feel Him, because His presence is intangible.

Here I must tell you that we have to get used to not feeling these things of the soul in a sensible manner. I make use of a simple expression, do I not? It is because there are many things which are felt so sensibly in the soul: its desires, its fears, its anguish, its dislikes, all its particular actions, its sorrows, its joys; on the other hand, Our Lord does not make Himself felt in this way; He is intangible. In the first answer of the catechism, my Sisters, is found: "God is a pure spirit which goes beyond our senses." God who is present in us

transcends our spirit. This is one of the truths which, above all, must be absorbed in faith and in prayer.

Where do joys and afflictions in prayer come from? Ordinarily, from the fact that one hardly does not feel it at all. This attitude is something small, my dear Daughters. In fact, I would say it is nothing; however, I cannot say that because God allows it, God who wants to make our spirit grow more and more on this attention to His divine presence, precisely through these.

The feeling that we possess Jesus Christ within us, which gives us the assurance that it is good to talk to Him, that we feel His presence there, is what I would call an experience of God in the depths of our very person. It is God's mercy, which we should not consider as nothing, because it is a way in which our spirit can live in faith and understand what faith does in us. How true it is that a soul which, never in life, has been touched by God in this way, which has never felt interiorly that God is there, that God speaks to him, that God calls him, that God loves him, that God asks something from him, has great difficulty in entering into the spiritual life. You will all agree that there was a time in your life, some

moments, at least, in your youth, when you have experienced God.

It is God's great love, my dear Daughters, which makes Him come down thus to our level of being and existing, which is so imperfect, and to our feelings; for we must never forget that God is a pure spirit -- He is far beyond our senses; consequently, even if we will never feel Him by our human senses, we can nevertheless possess Him; that not feeling anything in Communion is receiving just as much as when feelings are very alive, even to the point of tears; that Our Lord's presence is not less fruitful, less enriching, or of less value to the soul when this presence is not felt as when it is sensibly felt.

There is a third thing I would like to draw your attention to. The presence of Jesus Christ in us is not only intangible and silent; it is also mysterious -- a mystery.

Where is Our Lord found? Where does He live? Where does He choose to dwell, even after Holy Communion? He is in our whole being, because it is our entire person that receives Him. But is He in our will? Is He in our heart? Is He in our

spirit? In a word, where is He? He is everywhere. He is present all at once in our whole existence, but in such a way that He depends on us for this presence to be either fruitful or almost useless. How is this possible?

I presume that before God, you enter deeply into yourself, that you are convinced that God is present in your will. The big secret for making our will one with Our Lord's is to give it to Him completely, to agree freely to be fully dependent in Him, and to go through this in such a way that it be no longer your will which runs your life, which guides you, but that of Our Lord Jesus Christ; that it be He who, living in your will and holding it absolutely open and flexible in His hands, leads it where He wishes.

It works the same way with your heart. You have the choice of having your heart live only through His or, even after receiving this infinite grace, of keeping your human heart in such a way that this same grace degrades and remains on the purely human level. Alas, this latter is what happens to most Christians! Three-fourths of the heart really receives Our Lord; but it rarely occurs to them that their will should be entirely one with Our Lord's, that their heart, their feelings, ought to be united with the heart and the feelings of Our Lord.

Let your whole being work this way; take your memory, your intelligence, even your body should receive from Our Lord, an imprint of purity, modesty, sweetness, goodness, all the characteristic perfections of Our Lord; and you will see how prayer lived in faith brings about the real union of the soul with God. The greatest mystics, the most enlightened spiritual writers, Saint Teresa among others, say that the true joy of the soul, ecstasy, is to have but one will with God, to count entirely on Him, in such a way that all, from our very first act, be completely as God would want it, with love and trust.

Notice, my Sisters, that rising above what is merely human does not depend on you, but rather, the act of having the final end of joy and ecstasy. You are all called to this perfection, which is very personal and profound, of uniting yourself intimately with Our Lord, in a way that your whole person depends on Him, as I have just told you.

When you pray, when you recite the Prayer of the Church throughout the day, or when you pray it in particular, bring yourself to this attitude, gently and without disputes,

sometimes in one form, at other times in another form. Likewise, for example, when you are at the Office, Our Lord prayed the psalms that you are praying; put yourself under His action, united to His prayer, to Him, desiring to receive what He asks, and continuing in this way, His life. You will reach this union which will be the grace of prayer in whatever you do.

For this, there needs to be much pruning. You understand that all we call our very own in our life which contributes to our misery, our sins, our imperfections, are an obstacle to this silent and direct union, to this so supernatural something, so spiritual, so holy, so perfect, so divine, which Our Lord wants to teach us.

Occasionally, read the Gospel with this attitude. You will then understand why Our Lord tells you: “Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.” We can do this through the grace of Jesus Christ. You will understand why He says that we must pray without ceasing; and so many other things which seem to be far beyond our human capacity and nature. You will understand that we must try not to let even the first impulses of anger appear, since, when someone strikes us on

the right cheek, we are asked to offer the left; when someone wants us to walk a thousand miles with him, when someone asks for a coat, Our Lord tells us to walk ten thousand miles and to give even our tunic.

Finally, Our Lord brings the Christian (for all this applies not only to religious) to a condition where he gives up earthly things, his imperfections, his sins, in order to be open to grace, ready to receive the mark of the perfect gift through which Our Lord dwells in us. Over and above the fact that we are temples of Jesus Christ, we are also dwelling places of the Holy Spirit -- this spirit of holiness, this spirit of perfection which is the spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which has been given to us through Confirmation and which dwells in us by grace.

Well, my Sisters, prayer consists in continually moving forward in faith. It consists in this emptying of what belongs solely to this life, and in renewing our life of grace, our Christian life, the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in us one day, like a robe of glory. Grace is the beginning of glory; prayer is the beginning of heaven.

You are all destined to this, my Sisters. Live it as strongly as you can; put into it all your affections in such a way that, whenever you have a few minutes, you will go back to the things which concern this great work of yours, things which concern also your great riches as it is actually your great happiness. Accept this work, so that at the end of your life, this can be your real joy, your eternal happiness, as it will also be your true glory.
