

On Corrections

31st August 1873

My dear Daughters,

I have made several recommendations to you in obedience. To avoid any mistake, I would like to come back to a very important point and which we must be concerned about: corrections.

I admit that it is difficult to make corrections, and in short, we do not make them. If you are fortunate enough so that you never see defects in your Sisters, that you find nothing in them that disedify you, that contradicts your tastes; if your charity is great enough so that you never perceive their lacks and imperfections, may God be praised! I don't ask you at all to open your eyes so as to notice what is bad; but if you are concerned with the conduct of your Sisters, if you see something which is against the Rule, then for love of them, you must tell them frankly what you notice.

We make corrections not out of annoyance, but out of charity. By this principle of loving one's Sisters as oneself, we wish them as we wish for ourselves - the greatest perfection, the greatest amount of virtue possible. I notice for my part that I have always profited enormously from the criticisms that others make about me whether outside or in the community.

The first thing that we do in such cases, is to go and examine at the feet of our Lord what could have caused these observations. We end up by discovering slowly -

because we don't like seeing these things in ourselves - that such and such a fault is the reason for such observations. This is the advantage of corrections: They show us what needs to be corrected in us. It is rare that we know ourselves so well!

I think I told you this story of Fr. d'Alzon. One of his penitents told him at the confessional: "Father, you are so lively"; "I, lively!", he cried. He was so struck with the idea that one could find him lively. That gives you an idea of what we can learn about ourselves. Fr. d'Alzon was only twenty nine years old; vivacity was the first thing that people noticed in him. He had it from the tip of his hair to the last nail of his shoes; nevertheless, he himself did not perceive it.

It is the same for us in a good number of things. We do not know ourselves as we really are. Also, the observations that are given to us are good, wherever they come from, however unkind they may be, and we have to try to profit from them.

Thus, if you notice a defect in the behaviour of your Sisters, see how useful it will be to correct them with the permission of the Superior. Do it out of zeal for the Rule, out of love for the observances. I have already quoted what St. Augustine said, in one of his homilies on the Gospel: "If you correct your brother, because his defect displeases you, you gain nothing; but if you correct him for his own good and to make him profit from it, according to the word of our Lord you will have gained your brother. "

Try to notice in the world, Sisters. It is big things that are matter for corrections: often it is a question of drawing back from mortal sin. Among us, it is not like this. The matter for corrections is regularity and religious observance; a lack of silence, modesty in our bearing - in a word, all these thousands of things that we notice and that a good, sincere and complete affection urges us to make known to our Sisters.

When someone says a disagreeable thing about us and we learn of it, we must draw something from it, and tell ourselves that we do not have such a virtue, such a quality. It was said of Fr. Olivaint that he looked upon the people who were not contented with him, as being charged by Our Lord to tell him: "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart;" And he made an effort to grow in humility and meekness.

Thus, we should not get angry or irritated when an observation is given to us. The little sensitivities of self-love disappear. We receive everything that comes to us as from the hands of God, as from the hand of a father who corrects a child whom he loves. God, who reaches to the bottom of the heart wants to correct us of our faults. After all, are we not like little three or four-year-old children before God? What is our feeble reason compared to His infinite Wisdom?

Take the habit then of seeing in all that happens to you, the action of Our Lord who guides you and sends you contradictions, trials, humiliations. Receive them with love from His hand, accept them as a token of the tenderness that your heavenly Father has for you. He takes His rod to correct you; do not be irritated like a child who, in his little rage

breaks the rod that strikes him. Accept all things in a spirit of humility, faith, meekness and patience. And, because we desire to know our defects, we are obliged out of love and charity, to render the same service to our Sisters, but never look at the actions of others only to see the faults that they commit.

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