

ON ESTABLISHING GOD'S LIFE IN US

15 February 1884

My dear Daughters,

Last time when I spoke of work I was thinking of active, external work with hands and head, the work that occupies our time and fills our exterior life.

You may have noticed in Church History that a man who has built a church is said to have done a great work; one who has founded a monastery is said to have done a good work. We have a great work to do, a great foundation to make, and that is, God's Life in our souls, that work of every day and every moment. When I told you that of ourselves we cannot do much, I quoted Our Lord who says to us in our weakness: "You are to be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect". (Mt. 5: 48).

Have you asked yourself what God's nature is? What He is in Himself, what is the goodness that is His being? You are called to imitate this perfection, you have to do this great work of developing in yourself the perfection, that, according to our way of understanding, constitutes God's very being. If you look at God's being you will better understand the imitation that Our Lord wants of you.

God is infinite goodness who loves to communicate Himself. That is the fundamental fact, the true idea of God: infinite good diffusing itself

God is infinite goodness. That is above all doubtless, a great motive of love, a great motive of joy for us. But it is also a motive for sounding the depths of our soul to see if there is nothing in it other than goodness, whether in thoughts, words or deeds; nothing

but goodness in its hidden recesses where there should be no bitterness, no stiffness, nor anything arising from evil. That is our great work, and it is hard work making ourselves good, very hard to get one's soul wholly good.

There would be many other things to say, but for today I stop there. If you examine attentively you will find that many people are interested to know whether other people are good. They notice any lack of goodness in others; they like living with people who are good: that is the tendency of our poor human nature. And yet there is nothing we can do to make others good. You might try in a hundred cases to change your neighbour's feelings and dispositions. You can't do it. With all the thinking in the world you will not succeed. Scarcely can anyone who directs another make any difference. But with ourselves it is quite different. We have the power to bring about a real change. Look at your soul, your thoughts and feelings and banish everything that is not in conformity with God's goodness. Let us be wholly good; see that our sentiments, and words and deeds be prompted by real true goodness, like God's goodness.

Another point. As God is infinite goodness so He is essential act. In Him there is no distinction between act and being, and potentiality; as there is in creatures: no distinction between faculty and operation: no faculties that wake from the sleep of potentiality to act and then return to inaction. He has no faculties. In God there is nothing that is not God, nothing that is not divine essence, divine nature. As He is, so He acts. As He is absolute and substantial being, so is He act always in operation, pure act, essential act. "My Father has never ceased working" said Our Lord (Jn. 5: 17).

We must consider God in this second way, so as to learn to work continuously on our souls. That is what made me choose, to begin

with, the example of church builders, because I want you to see this work on our souls as something to be built up a work of building within ourselves: all the virtues have to be created, built up and added one upon another, and this is an action that must never cease. For it is true that the best way to define God is to say these two things about Him: He is infinite good, and, He is pure act, a living, constant and eternal act.
