



ON PRAYER ***August 29th 1881***

Before the retreat, I think it is good to speak to you about what is not only the source of strength in a retreat but in our entire life: the great means of prayer. The saints all had different personalities, some more austere than others, some more given to works of zeal, some more contemplative – but all of them resembled each other in that they were given to prayer and they gave considerable time to it. Whichever saint you take, you have a man or woman of prayer, a state of union with God and a life with the presence of God as foundation. This is their great teaching. We wonder how some who were so busy with so much work, like St Augustine for example, managed to give such long hours to prayer. I would also say that they worked as they prayed and in their work they did not cease being in the presence of God.

For us, poor creatures who cannot always be attentive to God, St Francis de Sales said it was a grace that could be obtained from God by prayer and by trying to place oneself often before God. But you have to work at it for a long time and, even with great perseverance, you don't necessarily arrive at this continual presence of God...

There is no saint who was not a person of prayer. There is also no saint who is not humble: these two things go together and cannot be separated. To place no trust in self, to be empty of self-esteem... is great progress in virtue and in the life of prayer...

God is infinite Goodness that likes to pour itself out in self-giving. God is infinite loving mercy whose nature is to give himself to the creatures he has brought into existence. And it is this love that explains how, after Creation, [we have] the grace of the Incarnation, of the Redemption and of the Church, the gifts that are in the Church and that are poured forth in our souls, the sacraments, Baptism that makes us children of God, Penance which purifies us, the Eucharist that nourishes us, Confirmation that gives us the Holy Spirit. And none of these gifts is given us without prayer. The Church always prays her all-powerful Spouse when she administers the sacraments.

[Love is] not only God's capacity of self-giving but the very being of God. God gives himself as the sun spreads its light. Can the sun not be hot, not give its light and warmth? Such is the gift of God... But, in his infinite wisdom, God put one condition to giving us his gifts that, we ask. Can creatures be so stupid as not to ask for the gifts they so desperately need? All will be granted provided we ask. I assert this on account of the definition of God: God is infinite goodness. (*un bien infini*), who will never become poor from giving. God loves to give himself (*il aime à se répandre*), it is the nature of God's being to give and God's joy is in giving self as much as possible. Let each one place herself under the gaze of God, as if she were the only one to ask for God's limitless riches, the gifts that God gives us through his Church; God is just waiting for the prayer of our lips, the pleading of our heart, to give everything to us.

What is the task for the retreat? It is certainly to hear the Word of God, to reflect on the truths of our faith, but it is above all to pray. The work of the retreat is to ask God, as the

retreat advances and you hear the Word of God, that the word be impressed on your soul and bear fruit. Pray everywhere, in this place and in that, wherever you are, pray without interruption. You know how many times Our Lord recommended this in the Gospel. Prayer is not just supplication, adoration, thanksgiving; every act of love, of praise, of glorifying God, is prayer...

Consider how precious is the time of prayer that we spend in the chapel and let us try to use it well. If distraction comes, try to push it away, if prayer is easy; try to unite your soul to God in adoration and intercession. It is during the great mystery of the Mass that we offer ourselves with Our Lord [in the greatest prayer]...

Then, when we are in the active life, in our work and daily occupations, let us try to make prayer animate our activities. Let us not live in ourselves, worrying about what others think of us, how we are esteemed. All of that draws us away from the spirit of prayer.

Do not let the things we have to use, distract us from God. Let us not be attached to things in such a way that they distract us from God. Some hold to places, to consolations, to work, to persons, to their students...We are like glue, always ready to stick somewhere... Our help is in God alone. God wants us to know that he is the sole object (goal) of our soul and wants us to have a confidence in him beyond all confidence, a repose of soul above all other rest.
