



## On RECOLLECTION *12 October 1883.*

Saint Alphonse of Liguori, when he was already old, composed his treaty on the *Great Means of Prayer*. By prayer, he says, we obtain all the virtues. And he recommends prayer as the remedy for every malady. Recollection is the foundation of prayer and it is of this that I want to speak to you today. Recollection, which is absolutely necessary for prayer, has faith as its base. It is on the truths of faith that we base our recollection.

In the natural order, the omnipresence of God is the first truth of our faith: we are in God like a sponge is in the sea. God is everywhere, in us and outside us, in each of the beings that He has created. God fills all with his immensity. It is in God that *we live, that we move and have our being*, (Acts: 17-28 28). Many prayerful people sanctify themselves simply by remaining under God's gaze. In the constant presence of God, they find the joy, help and strength which enable them to conquer temptations and endure all that one can suffer for God.

Mother Therese Emmanuel remembers as I do an old confessor of the faith, Father Carier, who had suffered torture. He told us: "In those moments, you don't need two devotions, [just one] there is no other means of holding on than not leaving the presence of God for an instant." Staying in the presence of God is the way of passing through persecution and even martyrdom.

There is something more to add to this fundamental truth of the natural order. It is the order of grace. By Baptism, we have become children of God. A new presence of God has been established in us: the Blessed and adorable Trinity has come into our souls... The Blessed Trinity has come to remain in us: *We shall come and make in him our dwelling*. We shall come, not as a passing grace, but 'We shall abide there,' (John 14:23). This is the result of Baptism: a creature has become a child of God, possessing within the Holy and Blessed Trinity. How many of the baptized really think about this?

Baptism has made of us another Jesus Christ, putting in us a resemblance to the Son of God. We have been buried in the death of Christ. As in baptism by immersion –the baptized person descended and disappeared under the water– we have to cease being just ourselves; we have become images of Jesus Christ in whom God should be well pleased. God is no longer just present in us as God is everywhere; but present and making himself known and loved, loving his creature with particular affection, with a parental affection.

We do not meditate on these great truths enough, and as they say in English, we do not realize them. That is, they do not penetrate our spirit, minds and our conduct with a realism that gives us strength. How many baptized people live without thinking that the Blessed Trinity abides in them! Sometimes we are like them, letting our work and our duties fill our lives. We do not avert to the fact that God dwells in us, that God has chosen us to reproduce the resemblance of the beloved Son.

After Baptism comes Confirmation. By Confirmation, the Holy Spirit makes us his Temple. By a new love, the Spirit guides us, enlightens us, leads us, and comes to be for us what the Spirit was for our Lord Jesus Christ. He was led by the Spirit into the desert. "What spirit guided him?" asks St. Gregory. "It could only be his 'own' spirit. In the desert, he could encounter the evil spirit, but that spirit did not have the right to guide him." The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert to suffer trial and temptation and also to be a model for us. The Holy Spirit must enlighten us, guide us, and fill our hearts with love. This is a good reason for recollection.

But to be led by the Holy Spirit, we have to turn within and listen. The Holy Spirit is within you, but if you are listening only to the birds that are singing, you will not hear the Spirit. If the Spirit is not the first consulted when you have something to do, if you listen only to your own spirit, to what pleases or displeases you, you will not be led by the Holy Spirit. Our Lord, the Holy of Holies let himself be led by the Spirit always and everywhere. He was the beloved Son, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit always guided him.

That's not all. There is also Holy Communion, when something even more intimate happens in us. Already the image of the divine Son is imprinted in us, already the Holy Spirit should lead us, but here Jesus Christ himself comes to us under the sacramental veil. When we have eaten the host, the humanity of Our Lord is no longer present, but didn't he come to us in order to remain: To transform our souls, to form his image in us. Hasn't he come so that, having Jesus in your soul, he leaves a mark of a closer union. His real presence lasts only a moment, but doesn't it have an effect on all of our life? ... The other sacraments tended towards this resemblance. How much more should happen in us at Communion!

We should be other Christ's. Jesus said himself: *I have placed you so that you will produce much fruit* (John 15:16) ... *I have nourished them so that they may have life* (Ibid. 10:10)... And how many other words from the Gospel! The sad thing is that we don't reflect on this; when we are not recollected, we leave all these wonderful graces without effect in our hearts. For other graces, you can say: 'Who knows if I have the spirit of prayer or the prayer of quiet?' You don't know and I don't know either. But of the excellent graces I have talked about, we can be assured.

So it is important to enter within oneself, to enter there with simplicity and faith, to enter frequently with our Lord Jesus Christ, letting yourself be led by his Holy Spirit, listening to Him, handing over to him the direction of your mind, your heart, your life. Entering into this interior cell where Jesus comes so often, stay at his feet, knowing that something of Him always remains, like the perfume left in the rooms of so many saints after his visit. St. Teresa says that, after a vision, something which transforms us always remains. No vision, however, can have the effect of Holy Communion which is greater than all the extraordinary graces. There our Lord becomes our food, gives himself entirely to us, and dwells in all his reality in our souls.

Seek to recollect yourselves in these truths, to form the habit of interior recollection, to enter into the depths of your heart where Jesus Christ dwells. He is there by his grace, by his resemblance, by the love that he brings and the love that he asks. He will no longer call you his *servants, but friends* (Ibid 15:15) ... He has *desired with a great desire* to share this Passover with you (Luke 22:15).

Enter within and adore. Try, by recollection and submission, to form with Jesus a livelier and intimate union... Counting on these truths of the faith and profiting from them, don't be like people who have received so much and live as if something else on this earth were more important...

Here are many things to meditate; they will certainly be for you a force for holiness.

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