



ON THE
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS THE INFINITE GOOD
22 July 1883

You have often read this passage in the Gospel: *Eternal life consists in knowing you and the one you have sent*, (John 17: 3). I believe I have told you that I find support in this word because it is fundamental and one can never return to it too often. To know God as Catholic theology teaches, we should know Him as “Infinite good that tends to give itself,” *Bonum infinitum diffusivum sui*. These four Latin words suffice to define God!

It is strange that piety does not always lead us to think of God as good, as infinite goodness and kindness, as the ‘supreme good’ giving of self and pouring self out continually on all the beings God has created out of love. This is why we can pray in the Act of Love: “My God, I love you with all my heart and above all things, because you are infinitely good and infinitely lovable.” It is this goodness, this loveable ness, which is the reason for the preference that we give to God above all other things; a preference that should shine out in our lives, in our conduct and thoughts. Thus, any piety that is sad or discouraged does not render to God the homage that He expects, the homage of complete faith in his goodness, ceaselessly pouring itself out on the world.

This was true even before the Incarnation. Grace was given to us, as to the angels, from the first moment of Creation. This divine Goodness has also been given to humanity after the Incarnation and the Redemption in the numberless graces we have received. And all that comes from the very being of God who enjoys giving himself and gives ceaselessly – *diffusivum sui*. God gives his gifts if we do not put obstacles and if, with pure faith and attachment to Jesus Christ, we have the sincere desire to receive them.

This truth, once understood, gives a character to our piety that I want to stress today. It’s a character of continual praise. Indeed, how can we not praise, bless, adore, glorify and thank before this infinite goodness constantly pouring itself out? This is what has made me say that the *Gloria* is the right prayer for us and that it expresses the feeling that is habitually ours with regard to God.

Things come that cost us. This is inevitable ever since sin came into the world, and our life has a side of penitence, of reparation and expiation for all the sins committed since the first human being, and for those committed today in the world – even by us; and also because we should follow Jesus in his way of reparation, of sorrow and sacrifice. But the first place in our life is always the belief that God, the infinite Good, seeks to give himself and, whatever our situation or difficulties, we should always praise, bless and glorify and thank God.

I am convinced that a person who is always praising God will progress more rapidly in the love of God than any other. Because, believing that God is good, we love and trust Him and want, everywhere and at every minute, to praise God. It is in God that we take the most pleasure. I know that there are other forms of piety, but perhaps I have this weakness of not understanding very well any form that is not dominated by the spirit of praise. And, if some people find themselves blocked in their devotion, it seems to me that it is for lack of this

spirit which establishes us in the truth of our relationship with God, with the Blessed Trinity, without even yet mentioning Our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, when we go to Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, how would we not praise and bless and glorify him, even in our suffering, when we see what he suffered for us? How could we refrain from praising his humility, his generosity and the prodigality of his suffering for us? How would we not thank him for his love expressed in this way, by the choice he made of each one of us, for all that he did for us during his mortal life?

When Our Lord answered the Pharisee: “Why do you call me good; God alone is good?” (Luke 18: 19), it was surely not to say that he was not good. He who is the manifestation of God’s goodness, wanted to make us understand that, if as a man, he was so good, it was because he was God. There are creatures that are good, in whom we see a reflection of the goodness of God, but total goodness, infinite goodness, is found in God alone and in Jesus Christ because he is God.

...When you meditate on the Sorrowful mysteries, when you make the Way of the Cross, why not stop and say: “My God, I praise you, I admire you, I bless you for this humility, patience, generosity in the sufferings and sacrifices you have endured for me! I adore you, Lord, I bless you, and I want to give you thanks for the rest of my life.” Thus, none of the sufferings of Jesus will be without its effect in your soul. ...What makes souls grow cold, freezes them, as it were, and makes them incapable of praise and blessing, is usually something making them suffer. Look at Our Lord, when he enters on the Way of the Cross, how he praises His Father. What love he shows! With him and following him, we ought also to render thanks...

There is nothing simpler than what I have just said. I have not spoken of any extraordinary way. This is what is asked of any Christian, to love God above all because God is infinitely good; and, in all circumstances, to praise, bless and glorify God, and always to give thanks

In your prayer and contemplation, I exhort you to cultivate this true piety in order to be great hearted in your spirituality and to find consolation in the difficulties of life. For, isn’t it consoling to spend your life having infinite goodness, absolutely surpassing all limits, before you? Isn’t it heartening to know that this infinite goodness is always seeking to give itself and does indeed give itself at every moment, because God in his eternity is present in time at each instant of our poor lives? And if, a moment ago, you did not accept God’s grace, did not remain under God’s action, you can profit of the present moment.

Don’t be like those people who say: “My God, yesterday or twenty minutes ago, I did something wrong...What to do? It’s so simple: open your heart and like St. Paul: Forgetting what is past, tend towards the supreme goal of your vocation in Jesus Christ,” (Phil. 3: 13, 14) ... Yesterday is past. If you committed some faults, an act of contrition repairs all. Tomorrow has not yet come. Profit of the present moment, since God always gives grace, and say: “My God, what does it matter what I’ve done up until now, I want to do perfectly all that I have to do from now on. What I’ll do tomorrow doesn’t matter because it may not ever arrive for me.”

... St. Francis de Sales says that we should have an attitude of benevolence towards God. Isn’t it amazing that a poor human being can wish God well? St. Francis says it in this sense:

that we wish to see God better known, better loved and glorified, that we desire for God all the good imaginable. St. Francis also speaks of a “love of jubilation,” because we rejoice in God and not in ourselves, in all that God is, all that God loves above all – infinite holiness. We rejoice that God is always infinitely perfect, holy, admirable, good, and adorable in all his perfections. For God’s perfections are his being, his essence, his very self.

So, St. Francis declares that, even though we have miseries in this world, even when we are sad, we can rejoice in God who lacks nothing, for whom we were made and towards whom we are going. This is the spirit that fits the Assumption. It was certainly the devotion of the Blessed Virgin. By her Assumption, she entered into possession of this eternal joy that awaits us too. I’m not saying that life will always be joyful, but that, knowing and loving God in faith, we can already love, bless, praise and thank God with all the citizens of Heaven. This will give you joy on earth.
