



February 14, 1892

Preparing for Lent through Fidelity to the Three Vows

My dear Sisters,

We are in a time that should prepare us for Lent. In the ancient Religious Orders, austerities are already beginning. We are unable to imitate them in this; we already have much to do to maintain our health in the work that is our lot here below. It is therefore not through austerities, fasts, or mortifications that we can prepare ourselves for Lent; but I propose that you carefully examine what you might have to reproach yourselves for regarding the three vows.

I first take the vow of poverty because it's easy to stray from it a little; I know this and have experienced how difficult it is to always remain on the strictest and most absolute path of the vow of poverty. Yet it is a vow that binds us like the other two. We must be careful not to have any small property, any small savings. There is sometimes money given by the Sisters' families for their stamps; it is quite right that the people to whom we write give us stamps, but to make this a small property belonging to each Sister, to convert the stamps into money, is absolutely contrary to the vow of poverty. The vow requires, from the moment it is taken, that one no longer possesses anything and that one is as if dead to all property. If we need something, we ask the authority, those in charge of giving us what we need. It is said in the Rule of Saint Augustine: *All things must be perfectly held in common and distributed to each person according to their need.*¹

You understand: *depending on our need*, whether for health—and here we must pay close attention to the true needs of health—or when we need a breviary, a prayer book; but even for these books that we use, it is not appropriate for them to become our property.

Regarding obedience, it is also possible to have certain small things to reproach ourselves for that have led us astray.

As for chastity, I do not insult anyone, and I truly believe that in all that is modest, delicate, and faithful to guarding one's heart, no one has a single iota to reproach themselves for. However, I recommend one point where we must be vigilant, and that is in the detachment from all creatures in order to maintain the most perfect fidelity to Our Lord. One must have great delicacy and purity in one's love. Then one desires to see the things of God, to have a more intimate perception of them; this is a very permissible desire. And if there are times when God withdraws,

¹ Cf. Rule of Saint Augustine, Chapters: *On the love of God and Neighbor, on the Union of Hearts and the Community regarding Goods and: On the Care of the Things in Common.*

when He leaves the soul in abandonment and solitude, let it patiently await God's moment. Let it do all it can to withdraw and find God within itself. Let it be faithful to prayer. Let it not give in to the affections of creatures, but let it withdraw from them to find Lord. This desire to find Our Lord in the depths of your soul is a desire that I encourage, at the same time I recommend perseverance in prayer at times when you feel most abandoned by God and when you might be tempted to scatter your energies outwardly.