



## SANCTIFY ONE'S SUFFERINGS

*Sunday, June 27<sup>th</sup> 1875*

My dear Daughters,

Today I am going to talk to about something that does not concern all of you just now, but that you will all experience sooner or later. It is well to think about it beforehand so as to be prepared to meet it with the right dispositions that will help to sanctify you when the time comes.

I'm referring to sickness. One may be ailing and in bad health and be unable for a time to do any external activity, or one may even have to give up every kind of activity completely. Our great duty towards the Congregation then, when others are working for us, is to strive to become holy so as to serve our Sisters in the sight of God while they serve us in the sight of men.

But before becoming quite ill, many people suffer from poor health and are always ailing in one way or another. In this case the right thing to do is to be very real in our approach to God, very simple and direct with Him, handing one's whole self over to His will, taking this painful state from His hand in a spirit of trust and faith. As St. Gregory tells us: *"before God calls us to Himself and opens the door of eternity to us, He knocks gently and warns us by illness that we are nearing our end."*

So, we must get ready and it would not do to say: "I cannot work any longer or do anything useful... I am no good to anyone or for anything ... I would rather be gone..." For religious, indeed, it is not very hard to go to God. What is harder is to accommodate all our desires and acts, all our feelings and affections to God's good pleasure, to follow Our Lord very closely, to have His thoughts in our heart, so as to be able to truly say like St. Paul: *"I live now not I, but Christ lives in me"* (Gal. 2: 20), and to let Him live in us in our state of ill-health.

The masters of the spiritual life all say that God sends us this state to make us live more supernaturally. However, it always surprises me that St. Bernard is said to have preferred

unhealthy places for his monasteries because fever and constant suffering helped to make the monks holy and reminded them of eternity. Our case is different. Though we do not seek it, we often have poor health. For example, we may be unable to sleep at night so that we get up tired in the morning and find it hard to keep going, and we feel weak and wretched and so on.

How far do we offer all this to Our Lord so as to make it count for our purgatory by atoning for the imperfections of our life and purifying our souls? And how far do we take advantage of our state of suffering to come close to Our Crucified Lord and to become one with Him?

Almost all women have ill-health to bear at one time or another; and one of the things we must then cultivate is good humor. Yes! Good humor is more necessary when one is ill than when one is well. First because nature drags us in the opposite direction, and then because the good folk who look after us need our good humor to lighten the work and the trouble we give them.

Some of you did not hear what Father Picard told us about the Pope. Three or four years ago the Pope's life was in danger, he suffered severe pain, his legs were swollen, and even at night he needed nursing. Four servants slept near him, by turns, to be ready to go to him as soon as he called. One of them told Father Picard that the Pope never had anything but kind and pleasant words for them and joked about his "good doctors" as he called them. One of them, his "good doctor Carlo", the very one who related the incident to Father Picard, was on duty one night when the Pope was in great pain and called him. He could find nothing to soothe the patient who for a whole hour bore the pain without a murmur, with a smile on his lips.

Note that his suffering was great and his life in danger. The words and the works of the present Holy Father are brilliant and outstanding, yet this incident is perhaps more worthy of note than any of them. Let us try, like Pius IX, to have this patience, this gentleness, this delicacy, this even temper in the midst of suffering, manifested by faith-filled and amiable words.

Any religious who makes a point of doing this will not only give good example, but be of real use to the Congregation and win great merit in God's sight. That is why I wanted to say all this. Because though not everyone has to bear constant suffering, it is a thing that most of us at one point in our life, and we all need to think about it and prepare for it and get ready to bear it with a Christian spirit.