

STUDY OF THE GOSPEL

14th June 1874

My dear Daughters,

We begin a long season of the year having no special feasts. We will of course meet feasts of the Blessed and of the Saints, but no great feast of Our Lord. In the Sunday Gospels, the Church especially presents to us the following of the public life of Our Lord and the listening to the lessons He has given to men during the three years of His ministry. This part of the liturgical year then must be looked upon as one specially consecrated to the study of the Gospel. We certainly study the Gospels, when we follow the various mysteries of Our Lord: Incarnation, Nativity, Passion, and finally Resurrection and the other glorious mysteries which we have recently celebrated. But in the Sunday Gospels which succeed Pentecost, the Church puts before us a series of parables which are like a collection of teachings, of evangelical lessons, from which we can grasp the spirit of the Gospel.

It is very important to be deeply impressed by this; for you see, Sisters, we can study many pious subjects for a lifetime, and still not possess the Gospel spirit. It is of utmost importance indeed to establish in us a manner of judging, of acting, of feeling, of willing which is in conformity with Our Lord Jesus Christ and which reflects what He has felt, what He has done and what He has wanted during His mortal life; or better still with what He would be, do, feel or will were He in our place.

That is what I call adopting the Gospel spirit; in such wise that the Gospel becomes the measure and the law of our judgments, of our thoughts and of our sentiments towards God, creatures, Sisters,

children; towards suffering, humiliations, obedience; towards our employments and the various events of this life which we must always judge in the light of the Gospel, asking ourselves what Our Lord would do or say in our stead.

You might tell me: "But that is perfection!" Is that not what we are tending to? Hence do I hold fast in recommending to you above all the practical study of the Gospel, for there are on this subject quite a number of illusions; there are so many ideas of our own on perfection. (St. Francis de Sales says it is a statue dressed up by us like the one Michol places in David's bed); for it is true each one manufactures a perfection of her own making and dresses it up as she sees fit. We do not realize this. Yet it strikes everyone else on the eye, so that those who live with us say: "What a pity that her perfection be clothed thus!" Let us clothe it in accordance with the Gospel if we want it properly dressed, with the spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ. To succeed in this we must study two things.

Firstly, examine how very little of self there is in all that comes from the Gospel, and notice the extent of detachment from self which the Gospel demands in every way, at all times: detachment from self in our self-love, in our self-will; detachment in our manner of seeing, in our personal judgments; detachment from what we deem just.

We often bring up the question of justice; but this is to be brought up only when it regards others. If we call on it to demand something for ourselves, it is an overturning; it is not what Our Lord has taught us to demand. You will not find anywhere in the Gospel that we should ask to be treated with justice. On the contrary, Our Lord tells us: "When you have done everything that was commanded you, say 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what it was our duty to do'" (Luke 17:10).

The second thing we must study in the Gospel relating to us, is the extent of adoration towards God, of purity of intention towards God, so that all the things we do be related to this adoration in spirit and in truth. Our Lord has come down to earth, says a Saint, in order to upset all the idols which the heart of man has created unto himself and to destroy all our false notions. As He Himself said to the Samaritan woman; I have come to abolish a purely external and sensual cult and to form adorers of my Father in spirit and in truth. (Jn.4:23). This adoration in spirit and in truth can be exercised in all the things I have just mentioned; and all good things spring from perfect submission to the will of God, from entire adoration of the will of God. The spirit of adoration furthermore makes us accept all the circumstances in which life places us and profit from them. We say to all that Providence disposes for us: “*Glory to God in the highest*”, thus praising God, glorifying Him, living Him, blessing Him, and fully entering into all the significance of this hymn of the angels.

Purity of intention makes us see God as the supreme purpose of our existence, directing all our actions to adore Him, glorify Him, serve Him. Thus little place remains for our personal satisfactions, for stopping at this or that: we have only God in view. All our troubles, all our sorrows, all our difficulties come from the fact that I, like you and everyone else being what we are relate something of our ego. We are heartbroken because something personal has gone away.

You will say: “But God does not ask us not to feel all these natural sentiments!” It is true, but He wills that because of a spirit of adoration, of generosity of self-abnegation, we may be able to direct all to Him, to the point of immolating our own life, what we most dearly hold on to, just as Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son Isaac on the mountain of Moriah.

If the Gospel were studied in this way, it would produce in the soul very profound, very holy interior fruits, purifying the soul, simplifying it, placing it in readiness to praise God, to adore and bless Him. And God must find on earth souls who always say: “Glory to God, we praise You, God, we bless You, we give You thanks!” Since there are so many others who say: “Why are things like that? If only they were otherwise... If only they could be thus...”, and a thousand other objections we hear and that we ourselves sometimes make.

As daughters of the Assumption let us return to this beautiful “Glory in the highest”, be of these souls of “goodwill” to whom God promises “his peace on earth”, of these souls who transform all into praise, into life, into adoration, into thanksgiving.

What separates us from God are not the years, it is imperfection, for, were we to leave this world with imperfections, how many years shall we be perhaps without seeing God? And in purgatory we shall not be better off than on earth; according to the Saints, even much worse off. If, on the contrary, we are united to God here on earth by hope and by the will, if already here below we are adoring angels, no matter how long our life were to last, it would surely lead us to the throne of God to adore Him, to love Him, to bless Him, to be united to Him, and fulfil His will for all eternity.
