

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE AND HOLY COMMUNION

28th March 1884

My dear Daughters,

I feel urged to speak to you about the union, or rather the connection there is, between the Religious life and Holy Communion. At Communion Our Lord gives us His whole self. This is the most perfect, the most admirable union that could be dreamed of, the union of His body and blood and soul and Divinity with our soul. But this union lasts only a short time, while the Religious Life by self-denial and fidelity to grace tends towards a union that lasts much longer, since it is meant to last for all Eternity. Even in this world there is a union between Our Lord and His spouses that can be seen and felt, and developed by prayer and fidelity. Among us, Sisters, some are beginners; some are nearing their end. But no one has a minute to waste in this great and admirable and precious work that consists of emptying ourselves of self to make room for Our Lord to live in us. He can never lead and inspire us, not can we ever dedicate ourselves wholly to Him, as long as we live and act to a large extent for self.

Make no mistake about it Sisters when we enter Religion we have a great drawback: we judge everything as it affects us personally. We live for self, we think about self, we want what we like, we don't want what we don't like, whereas we ought to do just the contrary, and strive not to live for self, not to keep our own opinion but to go against our likes and dislikes. This may seem to you very hard, but Our Lord Himself teaches it both in the Gospel and when He speaks to souls He loves more especially.

For instance, He said to St. Catherine of Genoa: "I want" and "I don't want" are the things you must never say. If you dislike

something go on doing it till you overcome your repugnances and if you find pleasure in anything give it up, because I want to be your only pleasure.”

We read in the Gospel that Our Lord said: “If any man has a mind to come my way let him renounce self and take up his cross and follow me”. That was what He said to all Christians, but for Religious, there is a special way of understanding and carrying it out. Christians in the world can and ought to tend to union with Our Lord. When they attain to it, usually, it is by the Way of the Cross, because there are two ways to success, prayer and the cross. Our cross is not the same as that of the people in the world. It does not take the form of great misfortunes, whether public or private, that break our life and change our state, such as loss of family, or money. Our Cross does not change our state-in-life. It consists of the constant effort to go against our inclinations to deny and mortify ourselves and to work hard to rise to an ever greater perfection.

Human nature does not like this effort to mount ever higher, because human nature is lazy and would rather go downhill or stop. But to go to Our Lord one has to give up self, a bit here and a bit there, and get rid of the good opinion one has of oneself and that others may have, all which unnecessary luggage, useless rubbish, that must be left at the foot of the mountain. There are many other things to leave behind or throw away such as comfort and amusement. Amusement is a thing a nun must not see. All her pleasure must be in loving Jesus, in speaking about Him, in recalling all that can make her love Him more, in making this love grow in her heart and in the hearts of others. Talk about good and holy things that foster the love of God, prayer, perfection, regular observance, charity.

The means to this prayer, whether for us or for people in the world. They are sometimes more faithful to prayer than some nuns. I knew a married woman - true, she had no children - but she had her round of social duties and she was faithful to them and to all that her position required of her. And with all that she manage to find four hours a day for prayer. You, Sisters, have time set apart for your spiritual exercises. And if over and above that, you never wasted a free moment, if you often ask for grace, if you turn to Our Lady, to the Sacred Heart, if you make time in your day to remember the Passion and its lowliness and humiliations at this season, the Crib at another, and so on, how easy it will become to lead a life of prayer, to keep Our Lord before your eyes during your work and to call on Him continually. If on the contrary, you neglect all this you will hardly be able to climb that mountain and reach the union that is given us, though for a short time, at Holy Communion is the perfect model, that by something you must believe.

You are in a state of grace. You have received Absolution and Holy Communion; Our Lord is living deep down in your soul. In the presence of such a guest can you give way to wandering thoughts? If Our Lord were in the house so that you could go to Him and kneel at His feet and adore Him, would you find it in your heart to be bored or sad or discouraged?

Well, Our Lord is in the house as you know by faith, and if you are in a state of grace, I repeat, He is living in you. But just think: as well as being our joy and strength and the prop of our soul, He watches our fidelity, the degree of our love, so as that He does not like thoughts against charity, humility, patience, and still less thoughts against obedience. He who always obeyed wants to put obedience into us. With little courage we can strip ourselves of all that is merely seen and then we shall progressively possess Him

more and more and keep Him company within us more and more faithfully. This is the way we can prolong the precious moments of Holy Communion through the whole day by faith, prayer, purity of heart and holy presence.

The Religious Life is the means of freeing ourselves from exterior things and imperfections so that Our Lord may become more and more our Master, a Master who will be more and more attentively listened to. In proportion as He is more truly the Master, He will be more increasingly pleased by the home we offer, and will end by living there always and completing the union that He will make known to us in this world that which, if we are faithful will be our happiness in the world to come.
