

*5<sup>th</sup> September 1880*

## **WATCHFULNESS OVER ONE'S HEART**

(Continued)

### **Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus**

In speaking to you the last time on watchfulness over one's heart, I tried to make you understand that man here below was the only creature that could conceive the idea of goodness, of beauty, of power, of invisible holiness, of attaching oneself to it by a love of preference to all that is seen. I also recalled to you that here below, there are creatures who attach themselves to other creatures whom they believe to be ideally good, ideally beautiful, and which are not God; they attach themselves to them passionately to the extent of sacrificing themselves completely including their ideas, their opinions. I also said that there are creatures on earth who are attached to God whom they do not see, and have thus become this innumerable army of the saints that we venerate in heaven.

God created man in order to bestow grace on him immediately. Since the fall, man is born in a sinful state, ignorant, inclined to inferior things. The soul is wounded by sin and consequently, it is weak, less capable of attaching itself to invisible things than man before the fall.

If one compares the grace that Adam received, the grace that enlightened and sanctified him with the grace that restores us, which is more precious? In many passages of Scriptures, one sees that the grace which restores us is more precious than the grace which Adam received, because, in the final analysis, it is through this grace that we have Jesus Christ. That is why the Church says: "O happy fault which won for us such a Redeemer."

Certainly, the first man could expect Jesus Christ; he could hope for him. But what difference there is between an expectation, a hope and the very possession of Our Lord Jesus Christ who came on earth to give Himself to us. It is true that we are born sinners; but hardly are we born than baptism effaces original sin and infuses in us faith, hope, charity. Grace informs our soul and supernaturalizes it; we become temples of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity descends in us. Happy the soul if this first grace is preserved in her always! Happy is she if what makes God love the soul of a child and dwell in her heart is never lost; and if after the first light, the first dawn of grace, she remains faithful. Behold the true watchfulness over our heart.

I cannot help making you notice what a beautiful day it is to speak about watchfulness over the heart since it is the feast of the holy and immaculate Heart of Mary. Here is a heart always preserved by God, always sanctified, always increasing its treasure, always responding to grace by an ever greater love, and finally attaining the last degree of perfection by suffering, by sacrifice, by a very hard life which made the Blessed Virgin worthy to be called Queen of Martyrs. Mary arrived at the summit of all perfection, above all the Angels and the Saints by the purity and fidelity of her immaculate heart.

We ought to follow her on this way. When our spirit is roused, we learn to know God, to know Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, descended on earth in order to save us. He has left us His word, His mysteries and His sacraments to sanctify us, His Church which teaches us and leads us. But it happens that we sin, so Our Lord has prepared for the sinful soul the sacrament of Penance. Goodwill suffices for the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ to be poured out in our soul, giving it grace. Then we are nourished

by the very flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We receive Our Lord who comes to take possession of our heart by His flesh, by His blood, by His sacrifice; because the sacrifice of the Mass where the blood of Our Lord is shed is the same sacrifice as that of Calvary.

For us, religious, there is still something more. One day, God called us to Him to be consecrated to Him, and we can say: "I have the happiness of belonging to God, to be a virgin; I am consecrated to God, I have chosen Him, I have left all for Him." We must now see what obligations result from this.

Let us take for instance St. Catherine of sienna. They do not want her to belong to Jesus Christ; her parents opposed her becoming a religious. Well, she is happy to be everybody's servant, she is happy to remain hidden under the stairs; and when they no longer want to leave her in this solitude, she is happy to do all the work of the house, provided she is not obliged to accept an earthly marriage. She dwells in the interior cell that she has made for herself in the depths of her heart and she always finds the divine Spouse therein.

God has done much for us. In the natural order, He made us half-angels and half-creatures of the earth. There is something of an angel in us: the possibility of knowing God, of honouring and glorifying Him. All that comes from above, all that prompts us to say: "We bless You, Lord, we adore You, we praise You, we give You thanks," as it is said in the "Gloria", all this is proper to the angels, all this is not the prerogative of inferior creatures; and that is why we ask ceaselessly to be united with the Angels in order to sing with them: "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus."

As there is something of an angel in us, there is equally something of an inferior creature; and as all human temptations can come our way, we have to keep what is angelic and not to allow the least place to what is of our animal nature. I do not speak of ugly matters. But it is

proper to the animal to love its master or all other creatures to which give it its food, to love because it finds sympathy; this is not proper to the angel. The natural attraction which inclines us towards ourselves, this attraction is not supernatural, it is not divine, it does not even belong to the higher part of our nature.

A man said that in charity, which is the most noble of sentiments, there are two things: to love and to be loved. To love, to devote oneself to others, to wish their good, to wish it to all, one never goes to excess in this point; but to be loved, it is from there that all imperfections, all miseries come. As few persons in their relations with creatures content themselves to love without seeking anything for themselves and only because God has placed them in His image, we must guard our heart toward creatures, in such a way that they do not preoccupy us, they do not absorb our interest and we do not seek in them a selfish pleasure.

But we must above all guard our heart towards ourselves. A creature who is not yet near God loves most herself. In one way or the other, she falls back continually on herself, with regard to her health, her pleasure, her affections, her different quests. However, if we want to keep our heart for God, to imitate the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, it is necessary that nothing in our heart be for us. St. Francis of Sales said: "If I knew that in my heart there would be a single fibre which were not for God, I would uproot it right away, even though it would be stained by blood." See by that how all the fibres of the heart ought to be for God.

We must guard our heart with regard to creatures, with regard to oneself and with regard to everything which can capture it on earth. It is said that St. Dositheus was attached to a knife. This seems extraordinary for such a mortified saint; but it is claimed that he could

only advance in perfection when he had given up this knife. See how one can hold on to a little thing.

Madame Louise de France, who perhaps will be canonized some day...