

(From Mo. Marguerite Guillot Conferences to the Novices)

ON THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE (ALL SAINTS) Oct 1866

My dear Sisters, today is the vigil of All Saints Day, and I am going to tell you about one custom established here. On the vigil of the Feast, after the Rosary, we say (each one individually) the *Veni Creator* to ask the Holy Spirit to send to each of us a saint who will be our protector during the coming year, and the first one who comes to our mind when we awaken after midnight, we regard as our protector for the year.

Enter well, my Sisters, into the spirit of the Church and prepare yourselves as best you can to celebrate the Feast of all the Saints. If we were faithful to embrace this spirit, the Feasts, which are linked to one another, would provide us with the thoughts and means of advancing in virtue -- with motives for working to correct our faults. Each of these Feasts would serve as a preparation for the celebration of the following one. For how many lessons we can find in this feast! Unfortunately, we neglect to profit from them and we let pass the graces that present themselves. We are satisfied with the little round of prayers, devotions, and good works and we fall asleep in this routine, when we should advance courageously and make new progress every day.

However, we know that we have to win a place in heaven. We know that we are destined to spend eternity in the company of the angels and saints. Our laxity should not let us say to ourselves: "I will be content with the last place in heaven." Only laziness can lead us to speak this way. Authentic humility would refute it, for if we were humble, we would recognize that even the last place is more than we deserve, certainly, but our love for God should make us desire to possess Him as much as possible, and the higher we will be; so therefore we should desire a very high place. But in order to obtain it, we must work, we must practice virtue and we have within us all the means to do so. Is not our life already the beginning of what we shall be doing during all eternity? Therefore our merits and glory in the next life will depend on our fidelity in fulfilling our present duties well.

Let us think very seriously about all these things. Eternity may perhaps begin very soon for us... Soon, perhaps we shall be asked to give an account of our actions, and what a terrible account shall we have to render if we are asked in proportion to the sublimity of our vocation? Can we in justice say that we have worked to reach a high place in heaven, a place very near to Him with whom we live one earth?

Today let us stir up our zeal in the practice of virtue by meditation on what the Saints have done. The Saints had the same nature as ours, the same vicious inclinations, the same

faults; they had to undergo the same temptations and the same struggles but they had the energy, and to die to all that was contrary, not only to the law of God, but to His love. They fought relentlessly against the world and against themselves, and often without anyone perceiving it, or suspecting the sacrifices and renunciations that they made.

How beautiful it is, dear Sisters, to know how to hide the acts of virtue that one performs! How beautiful it is, but also how rare! It is the fruit of hidden virtue, and the more interior a soul is, the more it possesses the secret of this virtue which God alone sees and which He will reward most bountifully in heaven.

More than many others we need to be interior for, being obliged by our mode of life to do many things, if we are not interior we will let ourselves be carried away by natural activity and we will waste our time, our graces, and our merits without doing anything good for the glory of our Lord.

Let us strive to become interior, and above all let us attack our faults, particularly our dominant fault, and the root of all the others.

Then let us examine our nature, our tendencies to see all that has to be reformed in order to free ourselves from the sensual life. In order to arrive at a knowledge of ourselves, let us compare what we do and the way in which we do it, to what the Saints did and especially to how they did it, for all the saints did not have extraordinary and difficult things to accomplish but they put as much perfection as possible in the most simple and common things.

Let us look especially at the examples left by the Saints who, like ourselves, belonged to the religious by fidelity to their Rule, in a humble and hidden life such as ours must be.

Let us take, on their Feast Day, the resolution to make the sacrifice that our Lord ask of us with more insistence, to correct the fault that He reproaches us for the most, and to practice the virtue in which we are most deficient.
