

THE SOUL OF THE APOSTOLATE

PRESENCE OF GOD — O Lord, make me understand that only union with You, only love, can make my apostolate fruitful.

MEDITATION

I. Unless our life is one of intimacy with God and His Son Jesus, we cannot be His collaborators, docile instruments in His hands; unless we have an intense interior life, we cannot have the mind of Christ and be associated with His love and His work for the salvation of souls.

By means of prayer and the struggle against sin, by self-renunciation, and the practice of the virtues, the interior life progressively rids the soul of all that is defective, thus favoring in it the growth of grace and love, that is to say it vivifies the soul with divine life, since grace and love are a participation in the very life of God. It follows, therefore, that the more a soul cultivates the interior life, the nearer it will come to God, and having become like Him by grace and love, will be able to live in intimacy with Him, enjoy His friendship, penetrate His mysteries and participate in them. Who, then, will be better able to understand the great mystery of the Redemption and contribute his share to it, than one who by means of a fervent interior life, lives in intimate friendship with God?

The first degree of friendship with God, which consists in the absence of serious sin, does not suffice to fulfill the purposes of the apostolate. A deeper friendship is required, one which creates such uniformity of will, desire and affection that the apostle is enabled to act according to God's Heart; he is moved not by his own impulses, but by the impulse of grace, by God's will, and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. It is a very significant fact that Jesus made His apostles live for three years in intimacy with Him, treating them like dear friends, before sending them out to convert the world: "I will not now call you servants ... but I have called you friends" (*Jn 15,15*). Friends, not only because He shared the treasures of His divine life with them, but also because He wanted

them to be the collaborators, and in a certain sense, the successors of His mission as Redeemer.

Only if we are friends of God can we be apostles; God Himself invites us to this friendship, but we must correspond by living an intense interior life, one which makes our relations with God ever more intimate and richer in love.

2. Only friendship with God, and the charity which unites us to Him, can produce that supernatural strength which makes any form of the apostolate effective. The more a soul is united to God, the more it shares in the power of God Himself; and hence, its prayers, sacrifices, and works undertaken for the salvation of souls, are efficacious and attain their end.

But where will an apostle obtain this love which, uniting him to God, gives him such power? Undoubtedly from God Himself: "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (*Rom 5,5*). In a single moment, the moment of our justification, God infused charity into us without any cooperation on our part, but He does not preserve this gift, much less increase it, unless we remain united to Him by living an interior life. The purpose of the struggle against our passions, the practice of the virtues, recollection, prayer, the practice of the presence of God, and frequent reception of the Sacraments, is to foster union with God and the growth of charity. The interior life is a secret hearth where a soul in contact with God is inflamed with His love, and precisely because it is inflamed and forged by love, it becomes a docile instrument which God can use to diffuse love into the hearts of others. Therefore, it is very important to recall frequently this great principle: *the interior life is the soul of the apostolate*. A deep interior life will generate intense love and intimate union with God, and, therefore, from it will spring a fruitful apostolate, a true sharing in Christ's work of saving souls; on the other hand, a mediocre interior life can produce only a feeble love and union with God; hence, the resultant apostolate cannot have an efficacious influence on souls. Where there is little or no interior life, charity and friendship with God are in danger of being extinguished; and if this interior flame be extinguished, then the apostolate will be emptied of its substance and reduced to mere external activity which may make a

great noise, but will not bring forth any fruit. St. John of the Cross says, "It is to hammer vigorously and to accomplish little more than nothing, at times nothing at all; at times, indeed, it may even be to do harm" (J.C. SC, 29,3).

COLLOQUY

"Draw me, Lord, we will run!...

"O Jesus, I beg You to draw me into the fire of Your love and to unite me so closely to You that You may live and act in me. The more the fire of Your love consumes my heart, the more frequently shall I cry, 'Draw me!' and the more also will those souls who come in contact with mine run swiftly in the sweet odor of Your perfumes, my Beloved.

"We shall run—yes, we shall run together, for souls that are on fire can never remain inactive. Mary Magdalen sat at Your feet listening to Your sweet and burning words, but though appearing to give You nothing, she gave far more than Martha, who was 'troubled about many things.'

"O my Jesus, there is no need then to say: In drawing me, draw also the souls that I love. The words 'draw me' suffice. When a soul has been captivated by the odor of Your perfumes she cannot run alone: as a natural consequence of her attraction toward You, all those whom she loves are drawn in her train.

"As a torrent bears down to the depths of the sea whatsoever it meets on its way, so likewise, my Jesus, does the soul that plunges into the boundless ocean of Your love bring with it all its treasures! O Lord, my treasures, as You well know, are the souls it has pleased You to unite with mine, and which You Yourself have confided to me.

"The end cannot be reached without adopting the means, and since You, O Lord, have made me understand that it is through the Cross You will give me souls, the more crosses I encounter the stronger becomes my attraction to suffering" (T.C.J. St, 12 - 7).