

SOL JUSTITIAE ET SANITAS IN PENNIS EJUS

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POPE LEO XIII once called the Heart of Christ 'a new Labarum, a battle standard in our war not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, the rulers of the world of this darkness'. It might look like a Mazdean symbol, the winged sun disc that the prophet Malachias sings about: 'the Sun of Justice shall arise with healing in his wings.'

Surely our world is sick; healing is to be found in the Heart of Christ. Nervous breakdowns are all too common. They follow the formula: $\frac{P + S}{R}$ where P stands for predisposition, S for stress and

R

R for resistance. The predisposition is our character which is an integration of habits on temperament. Now the temperament part of character is inherited. It is physical, or if you prefer, chemical, glandular. Medical science is learning to manage it more and more, but whether any complete cure will ever be found for a difficult temperament, other than getting a new set of grandparents, yet remains to be seen. We must still carry the major part of the cross of our temperament. Habits are more tractable, at least the habits that are yet to come; but old habits add their steady pressure to the temperamental cross on top of which falls the weight of some stress, some external happening, some heart-breaking loss or dismal failure under which the soul may break. However, in comparison with the predisposition the stress is not infrequently as the straw that breaks the camel's back. Now if the predisposition cannot be completely obliterated and if, in this world, all stress cannot be warded off, it behoves us to concentrate on the building up of our resistance, our strength of soul. It may not be possible in a given case to build up a resistance equal to the combined weight put upon it, in which case we break. Let no one despise our weakness, for no one can measure our burden; but the strength of a great love can sustain the imponderable.

We all have our ups and downs. The more temperamental we are the wider the swing of our pendulum between elation and depression; we might even say between presumption and despair. Despair is the more common. There are more downish than upish

people in the world. Resistance must be built up in hope. Hope balances over the abyss on a paradoxical tension, a simultaneous awareness of our worth and our worthlessness. We are too apt to feel: 'I am great, and they don't appreciate me.' 'I am badly treated because they are jealous of me.' Devotion to the Sacred Heart brings us the balance, for it leads us to see that we are little and at the same time very much loved, to say: 'I am nothing, and my personality is infinitely precious.' To be one's own nothing in an absurd world is horror and selfish isolation. To be God's nothing is joy and peace and love and security of which the fruit is emotional maturity and a sharing in Christ's solicitude for the world's weal.

The entire tenor of that best-seller of Sands, *The Way of Divine Love*, is towards the establishment of this twofold deep conviction and ground of sanity. Christ wants us to believe in his merciful love, than which we find nothing more difficult, for mercy (*miser cordia*) is the incomprehensible, deep love of the heart for a miserable object. 'Many believe in me, but few believe in my love, and fewer still believe in my mercy' is what he said to Josefa Menendez.

She was a simple woman, born in Madrid on February 4th, 1890. Her life's story is quickly told. On her father's death she supported her mother and sisters most efficiently by dressmaking. Only on her thirtieth birthday did she enter the Society of the Sacred Heart as a coadjutrix sister in the house of Poitiers in the South of France where she died about three years later (December 29th, 1923). During those three years she was the recipient of what may perhaps come to be considered as the greatest revelations of the love of the Sacred Heart since those received by St Margaret Alacoque in the seventeenth century. Our Lord spoke to her in simple language. There is no mistaking the message, nor, if we can believe it, its therapeutic character.

'Why do you love me, Josefa?' he said to her, when on her deathbed she had made her religious profession.

'Lord, because you are so good', she answered.

'And I love you because you are so miserable and so little, and because you have given your littleness to me.'¹

That was the *finale*. He had trained her to it slowly as one trains a

¹ All the quotations that follow are from *Un Llamamiento al Amor*, published privately in Saragossa by The Society of The Sacred Heart.

child, neither 'rejected' nor 'over-protected' but in the wisest discipline of love.

'What are you afraid of? I know what you are, but I repeat again: your misery makes no difference to me. When a child is learning to walk, its mother takes it by the hand; then she lets it go alone, but she follows it stretching out her arms so that it won't fall. Don't be afraid. I know what you are like. Because you are miserable, I want to use you. I make up for what you lack. Let me work in you.' (May 29th, 1921.)

'My little one, misery of my heart, begin my work clinging tight to the hand of my mother. Doesn't that give you courage?' (August 6th, 1922.)

On May 25th, 1923, when he appeared 'most beautiful, but above all so fatherly' (*tan padre*), he said:

'Don't be afraid. I watch over you, I guide you, I love you. . . . When you say that word: "Father", my heart obliges itself to take care of you. Don't you know how parents rejoice when their little son begins to speak and pronounces the tender name of father? . . . Well, if this happens to an earthly father or mother what will be the delight of him who is at once Father, Mother, Creator, Saviour, and Husband?' (May 25th, 1923.)

She knew she was loved:

'My daughter whom I love as the apple of my eye, hide me in your heart.' (September 6th, 1922.)

'You can't understand how much I love you.' (July 14th, 1923.)

'Ah! how I love you, and how I love souls! Even though you are so small and so worthless, I make use of you for their sake. By uniting you to my merits and to my heart, I can use your littleness.' (March 14th, 1923.)

But if there is no doubt of his love, there is also no doubt of her nothingness.

'"Misery", "Nothing". That is your name. "Little" is something, but you are nothing.

'Since he said this with so much love', she writes, 'I poured out my heart to him and I said: "Yes, it is true, Lord, that I am nothing. But I would like to be even less, because Nothing does not resist nor offend, because it does not exist, but I resist and offend you."'

This insignificance of hers, she was to keep always in mind:

'Don't forget that if I love you so much, it is because of your littleness, not your merits.' (October 17th, 1920.)

'I want you not to doubt of my love, and not to forget what I have repeated to you so often: that you are no more than a miserable little creature.' (December 12th, 1922.)

And yet she was not to dwell on it, to turn round and round on it as on a centre, luxuriating on the importance of her unimportance:

I begged him to help me, because I am such a little thing. He knows it. 'Don't look at your littleness, Josefa. Look at the infinite strength of my heart that is sustaining you. I am your strength and the repairer of your wretchedness. I will give you strength to suffer all that I want you to suffer.' (November 28th, 1921.)

'Let yourself be led. My eyes are fixed on you; fix yours on me and let go of yourself.' (January 26th, 1921.)

Self-forgetfulness is preferable to self-contempt, though in order to reach it one may perhaps have to begin with a little of the less attractive brand of humility.

'Don't preoccupy yourself, Josefa, about what you can and what you can't do, for you know perfectly well that you can do nothing. I am the one who can and who will. I will do it all, even what seems impossible to you. . . . It is enough that you give me freedom, that of your own will you let me work. This is the only thing I cannot supply, for each soul's will is its own.' (June 16th, 1923.)

Our Lady gave excellent advice along these lines:

'Don't torment yourself so, my child. It is good to suffer in silence, but without anxiety. Love much, but don't be wanting to look at yourself to find out whether you love or not. If you fall, don't afflict yourself too much. We are at your side, he and I, to pick you up. I am your mother. I will never leave you.' (December 6th, 1920.)

Josefa asked pardon, and we note the matter-of-fact manner of our Lady's reply:

'Yes, you are right. There are times when you are very ungrateful. Do you know why? Because you look at yourself more than at Jesus. Show him your love by doing what he asks without thinking whether it costs or not. If he tells you to speak, speak; if to be silent, be silent. If he tells you to love, love. If he is

taking care of you, what does anything else matter?' (December 26th, 1922.)

That way lies sanity.

Some people are put off by the number of visions, the preponderance of the extraordinary in this book; but as a matter of fact all that Josefa *saw* and *heard*, we *know*; what she felt, we have. The extraordinary appearances were only to bring home to her, and through her to the rest of us, the stupendous mystery in which all Christians participate, and which is neither ordinary nor extraordinary because it is unique. We are members of Christ; the Holy Trinity dwells within us. We are precious in God's sight as members of his Son. Our Lord wants to live and act and speak in us, to use us in his great work of love for the salvation of souls. He uses his mystical body pretty much the same way as he used his own physical body when in excruciating agony he hung upon the cross (*eodem fere modo*, says the Holy Father in his encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*).

This truth was brought home to Josefa vividly, sometimes naively (as when she saw as many souls saved as she had folded handkerchiefs for that intention), sometimes terribly. Souls were not always saved so cheaply (as when her collaboration with the Saviour involved a descent into hell).

The devil puts in his appearance also, that devil whose existence the modern world for the most part rejects, since it can explain neurotic symptoms without positing any malign intelligence in the background to pull the wires. The very ambiguity of the symptoms may supply the devil with the precise *incognito* which he desires in dealing with modern Pelagian man. But the tactic of *incognito* being less effective with one of Josefa's simplicity, he had recourse to his open Manichaean strategy, trying to frighten her into despair, to terrify her with a show of power, an aping of God.

'Who is powerful, Josefa, he or I?' our Lord said, reassuring her. And again:

'He can torment you, but he cannot harm you.' (December 4th, 1921.)

There were times when she was as one possessed, but she had none of the hall-marks of the genuine psychopath. Her common sense, her understanding charity, her tactful service, above all her humble obedience far more than her burnt flesh and her scorched clothing bore out our Lord's promise when superiors

asked for a sign: 'I will give a sign in you.' (September 20th, 1920.)

Many have experienced the therapeutic effect of the words of Christ spoken to the little Spanish Sister for the good of souls. In all submission to any future judgment of the Church I think it safe to say that in these pages our Lord appears to have unveiled to us his heart, the Sun of Justice, and that there is healing in his wings.



RELATIONSHIP¹

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YOU may have wondered why this title consisted of the word relationship in the singular, instead of relationships, in the plural. There is a significance in it. The baby is born into one relationship, that with the mother, and ends up, if all goes well, in one relationship, that with God. All that happens in between is a development from this first simple relationship and at the same time a preparing for the very different sort of simple relationship in which we all hope to end, and for which this life on earth is a preparation. It is intended today to examine the psychological development of relationship in this life in the light of its function in preparation us for the final relationship in the life to come, with special reference to the position of young students in their last few years at school.

The relationship of the blessed is a simple relationship, but it is different from the simple relationship between child and mother, as it contains within itself, not potentially, but actually, relationships with all the members of the mystical body. The blessed in heaven love God with one simple, vital, act, but the simplicity is that of richness and comprehension. In the first place they are caught up into the life of the Blessed Trinity, the life of the three Persons who are one God. In the second place the love of the blessed extends to all God's friends, but not apart from or separate from or additionally to their love of God. In their one vital act of love towards God, in their union with God, is included their love towards and their union with all God's friends.

¹ The substance of an address given on April 10th, 1958, at The National Conference of Religious Assistants and Chaplains of The Young Christian Students.