

## NOVEMBER

### **HOLY POVERTY, SELF DENIAL**

November 1: A Sister of Notre Dame must not limit her spirit of poverty by reducing it to mean “having what is necessary.” She must like occasionally to be in want of something necessary, and rejoice when she has to suffer some little privation.

2: Never forget that you are the poor of Christ. All that is given to you in the Convent, whether for food, clothing, or lodging, is the gift of charity. For, even should you have brought a fortune with you into religion, once you have pledged yourself to God by your vows you have sacrificed everything, utterly and entirely.

3: The practice of Holy Poverty, dear Sisters, enters into all you do: be careful to observe it even in the use of things entrusted to you for your charge. Say to yourself as you handle this or that: “What I am using belongs to God, not to me. I must bear in mind the good of the whole house, and act prudently and carefully even with regard to the smallest things.”

4: My dear Sisters, gaze frequently upon your Divine Spouse hanging upon the cross. When I look upon my God thus despoiled of all things, you cannot believe how ashamed it makes me feel. I look around and say to myself: “Where is Holy Poverty? We are well fed, well clothed, nothing is wanting among us. Alas, then, do we at all resemble our Master, Jesus Christ?”

5: A Sister of Notre Dame will not enjoy peace, joy and rest, until she has truly renounced the “flesh pots of Egypt.” Then, indeed, her Divine Spouse will nourish her with the Manna of the desert --- His divine and solid consolation. But to obtain this desirable Manna, the soul must be stripped of all things.

6: There is one virtue to which we do not pay sufficient attention, dear Sisters, and it is the mortification of our senses. Unless we are mortified we cannot meditate. Unless we are mortified we shall look in vain for fruit from our communions, for, in the spiritual life, mortification is the bread, and Holy Communion the furnace which transforms it into supernatural nourishment.

7: It is not enough to mortify yourself just once or twice. You must deny yourselves on every possible occasion and in everything. You ought to say constantly: “I ought not to look at such a thing.” “There is no need for me to listen to that.”

8: You will tell me, perhaps, that exterior mortification is no use unless accompanied by interior death to self. But I say to you in reply that when our exterior is well controlled, it is easier to control the interior movements of the soul.

9: To obtain from God the great graces we need we must practice mortification, particularly interior death to self.

10: Be mortified souls, dear Sisters. Through the good example she gives, a Sister who is really mortified is a treasure in a community.

11: My good Sisters, natural impulse and the interior life are directly opposed to each other. Do not think for a moment that the latter consists in sensible sweetness. Not at all. It implies mortification and the annihilation of self.

12: If you expect everyone to be always paying attention to your little wants, you will never acquire the spirit of our Institute. You are not yet sufficiently dead to self, but the old Adam in you is still alive.

13: Never refuse God anything He is pleased to ask of you. Great simplicity of heart with the good God, perfect detachment from ourselves, singleness of aim in doing good; then, total abandonment as regards success.

14: Do you want to know what helps a soul most towards perfection? Mortification. Do as St. Paul tells us he did: "...fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ."

15: Let us devote ourselves wholly and entirely to the duties of our state, my good Sisters. When we are at the point of death we shall no longer remember what we have suffered for God during our lives....I was infirm and helpless for twenty-three years --- well, today, I could hardly believe it, had I not my own memory to recall those days of suffering.

16: A Sister of Notre Dame must nourish her soul with the strong food of complete renunciation and continual death to self. Here she will find life. For her, if something costs, that is sufficient reason for embracing it. She ought not to know what is meant by repugnance to sacrifice.

17: A soul who perseveres courageously in a path wholly opposed to her natural inclinations, will, in a very short time, become an altogether new being, clothed throughout with Jesus Christ, and living only with Him, and for Him, and by Him.

18: A Sister of Notre Dame must be ever holding herself in check, ever acting against corrupt nature: thus, some remark is on the tip of her tongue, she is longing to speak - let her impose silence on heart and lips. She feels great dislike to doing some particular thing - let her make haste to do it, carefully and generously.

19: Mortification and the spirit of penance are indispensable to a Sister of Notre Dame, for they make her like Our Lord, Who came down to earth only to suffer and die upon the Cross. His faithful spouse must walk the way he trod: she must seek sufferings

of heart and will, which more than anything else put nature to death.

20: Our great penance should consist in interior renunciation of our will and judgment, and perfect submission to our Superiors, as representing God. This is not easy, but it is a holocaust very agreeable in God's sight, and one in which vanity and self-love have no share.

21: Let us ask Our Blessed Lady to give us her spirit, her strength and virtue, so that we may become good Sisters of Notre Dame.

22: Our Lord does not ask us to do great things to obtain Heaven, but He promises it to those who are faithful in little things; to those who do not let pass the least occasion of mortifying self.

23: If you fast like hermits in the desert, sleep on ashes, or discipline yourself to blood, it is no avail before God unless accompanied by interior mortification and directed by obedience. But without permission you can always discipline your self-will, and sleep on the hard bed of common life.

24: In our vocation there are many opportunities of mortification, especially in the practice of holy obedience. Our Superiors tell us to do something to which we have a natural repugnance. Instead of complaining, let us make an act of love of God, and do the work as if we liked it.

25: My good Sisters, let us try to excel in the spirit of interior mortification. Our Lord constantly asks this of us.

26: Contrary to the will of God, Saul spared King Agag, and punishment followed. We act in the same way very often in matters of mortification. We renounce ourselves in what does not cost us much but we do not kill Agag, and so long as we fail to do this we cannot advance in the spiritual life.

27: Let us draw profit from all, my good daughter. When you see your blunder, look at it very calmly, and show it to the good God in order that His goodness may repair it. Always do your best, then leave the rest to God.

28: Mortification is the sister of prayer. But we must not be content with denying ourselves only in certain little things; we must carry mortification further and work at destroying our predominant passion.

29: Is it not true, my dear daughters, that we are full of pride and self-love? Hardly are we touched but we kick like stags: we seek a thousand reasons to excuse ourselves, and are so sensitive that one never hears the end of it.

30: Above all, we must know how to suffer in silence, because when we go to

others for consolation, we are not following our Lord. Yet we are the spouses of Christ, of a God made Man, Who suffered from His birth to His death on the Cross, of a God whose life was one continual act of immolation.