

# LISTENING TO OUR LORD

BY CEILE DÉ

## WHAT IS IT TO BE A SAINT?

THE MOST wonderful thing about the Saints after their dissimilarity is their similarity, which is a golden chain binding them all together. In the Calendar of Saints we find all sorts and conditions of men: all trades and professions, from the tramp to the king, from the former wanton to the virgin, from the child to the centenarian. Some particular virtue is exemplified in the life of each, just as some particular vice or tendency to vice had to be overcome by nearly all of them. But, when all is said and done, the bedrock principle underlying each life is an intense, personal love of God, showing itself outwardly in sanctity of life and in zeal to bring souls to Him.

To get to heaven we must each be a saint. We must carry out God's wishes in our behalf—as a general rule. We may occasionally, through human weakness, do the imperfect thing or even commit faults, but the general trend of our life and being must be towards God. This is to be an ordinary saint and merit heaven. But to follow our Leader with distinction, to merit the great title “*insignis*” we must give more than that: we must not remain a “private” always. Most people love their country, but it is only the choice few who give their wealth, their time, their health, their life for its benefit. Many can be found who serve their employer faithfully enough; but how few devote themselves and their energy wholeheartedly to his service. How few sink self out of sight in order to promote his interests. Similarly with the things of God. To be a saint of the “distinguished class is to live and move and have our being in God.

He is one who makes Christ his friend, confidant and companion; who walks arm-in-arm with Christ through life; who makes God's opinions his opinions, God's laws his laws, God's judgments his judgments, God's will his will. A saint will say, on every occasion, What has God said about this?” “What would God wish about this?” Self gets no foothold. It may and does strive to thrust in its head, as the old Adam never dies easily in anyone, but it is thrust out again, more often than not. A saint acts every hour and moment of his life on the maxim: “Not my will but Thine be done, O Lord.” Nor does he wait for that will to be thrust upon him. He goes before to meet it, and goes joyously, no matter what his private feelings are in the matter.

Is this easy? By no means. Try it for a while, and see what daily, hourly repressing of self it implies, what stabs to self-love and self-esteem, what patience and sweetness with others. It means we must close our eyes to half of what goes on around us, realising that “It is wise and kind to be somewhat blind.” We must turn a deaf ear to seventy-five per cent of what we hear, and to a hundred per cent of the gossip and uncharitableness of small minds. We must take snubs and slights silently and, if possible, gallantly—that is, with thankfulness. To do this latter is to be far, indeed, on the road to sanctity. How often even holy people resent our casual forgetfulness of them, not to mention the deliberate slighting of them! How often do they assume an air of injured aloofness for some fancied slight! And if they in the green wood do this, what about you and me in the dry? It needs great sanctity not to retaliate with snub for snub, neglect for neglect, indifference for indifference. But those in love with our beloved Lord will find it easy, for they will refuse to hurt Him.

We have been listening all our life to the Gospel—“do good for evil, pray for those who calumniate you”—but how little do ordinary good people live up to it! They are quite satisfied to leave the wrong-doer severely alone, if they do not discuss his misdemeanours with their cronies. Is this being a saint? A thousand times no! What would a great saint do? We know, from reading his life, that he would watch for a chance to repay the unkindness with kindness. He would ask God to forgive the wrong-doer and bless him with His choicest blessings. Not merely would he repeat these things with his lips, but he would wish them sincerely from his heart, though the human side of his heart were ready to tear the person to pieces. He would not have to leave his gift at the altar and go back and be reconciled, because he never willingly in his lighter nature harboured any ill-feeling against his enemy. He accepted wrong and injustice as his due. O, loving Lord, how easy it is to say this: how hard to do! How many lifetimes it will take to teach some of us to practise it! Grant, O Lord, that I, the weakest of your little ones, may have risen to it before You stand on the Shore to welcome me!

A holy Passionist says: “A saint is a chalice of charity.” A fine definition when one remembers that charity is twofold: the love of God and of one’s neighbour. The great lesson of Our Lord’s life is love and kindness. All during His public life He hammered into the hard reluctant ears of the Jews the lesson: “Little children love one another.” By this shall all men know that you are My Disciples if you have love for one another.” And it would seem as if He set no store by love of God without love of the neighbour, for what father accepts the love lavished on him if his dear ones are disliked and ill-treated? We cannot love God while showing coldness and contempt for others who probably are far dearer to Him than we. If we want God to love us, we must be kind to His friends, even if they are our enemies. If we love God, we shall love all He loves, no matter what our private opinion may be regarding them. To exclude anyone from our love is to exclude God.

If sanctity can be reduced to a phrase, it is: Become another Christ an *alter Christus*. This means adopting His view about things, His charity to all, His forgiveness of all, even of His bitter slanderous enemies; His kindness towards all, excluding no one; His humility, His thoughtfulness for others, His tact, His simplicity, His poverty, His love of suffering and of humiliations, His peace and His efforts to spread peace, His hatred of riches, power, swank, high places and officialdom.

Easy to do? No! impossible without a deep, personal love of Christ. If love for Him makes us “take up the harp of life and smite the chords with might,” it will “smite the chord of self,” and make it pass in music out of sight.” Self is the obstacle to be overcome by love, and love alone.

### **CHRIST, MY FRIEND.**

WHAT GOD wants is love: “Love, and do what you please.” Why? Because where love is the Beloved is never wilfully ignored, never injured, His interests never neglected. If we love Him, we shall serve and obey Him. We shall do what He wishes rather than what we ourselves wish. And, when His will clashes with ours, we shall sacrifice our own will. In proportion to the love will be the sacrifice, and, conversely, in proportion to the sacrifice will be the love. They mutually help and increase each other. The sacrifice of itself is no pleasure to God except as a proof of the love. A mother considers as priceless the birthday gift of a pair of gloves bought by her child out of her saved-up pennies not because of the value of the gift, but because of the great love implied by the child’s daily renunciation of sweets, etc., so as to have the necessary money for the gift. The child puts the mother first and herself—nowhere. If we could put God first and self nowhere, God would have proof that we love Him first, not self.

What does it mean to put God first? How can I keep thinking of God when I have duties to attend to and a day’s work to fit in despite interruptions and obstacles? Why, the day is not long enough for all I have to do without my trying to put God in as an extra.” That’s just it. It is not an “extra” God wants to be, but part and parcel of your life in an unobtrusive, inaggressive way. Make Him your Friend and Companion as you go about your work; talk to Him about it; consult Him as to the advisability of doing so-and-so. Appeal to Him for help and guidance when you pass His Home in the Blessed Sacrament, His crucifix or His picture. Many ordinary people, rushing through the city on foot or in motors, never tire of saluting Him as they pass church after church: how much more thought and love should He get from those specially devoted to Him.

Alas! do I not often rush by the chapel without giving Him a thought, much less a glance or loving word? Am I going to be outdone by others—I on whom He has showered His choicest graces and blessings? Am I going to be His friend only at stated intervals, and when I feel inclined, while all the rest of the day forgetting the Sacred Bond that is between us? Is this real, devoted love? I may say my prescribed prayers, do all the prescribed duties, and do it all only in the manner of a galvanized corpse—a robot; the glow, the elixir of eternal life, the vital flame does not permeate my life. I am an engine devoid of electricity. I am living a respectable life, outwardly all I should be, but oh! the difference between me and *those* others who have a real friendship for Christ! Love that moves the sun and moon and all the stars would make my life as radiantly beautiful as theirs if only I could make myself really love our dear Lord.

God is no Shylock, demanding His pound of flesh. Poor God! asking so little, content with so little—getting so little!

But the little He does ask He wants good; that is, done through love; not through fear or duty or routine. An earthly spouse does not expect his beloved to be thinking of Him all day while he is out; but is there an hour of the day when a loving wife is not working, directly or indirectly, for her husband and his interests, and therefore thinking of him? While absorbed in the affairs of his house and his family, she is as surely working for him and thinking of him, as he is for her while devoting himself to his business on the farm or in the city. Is there not co-operation there, mutual understanding, confidence and love?

How much more is not this the case with God? Who else but God will ever understand clearly and perfectly our nature, our work, our motives, and the calls on our time? The river of love that flows between our soul and God is the only river of love that incurs no risk of being choked up with misunderstandings, suspicion, doubt. There will and can be none on His side, for He reads the heart as we read an open book. If anything comes between our soul and God, it is we ourselves who put it there owing to our fallen nature. God cannot be disloyal; God cannot be suspicious; God cannot doubt our love or our motives, for all things are naked and open to His Eyes.

Is the river of love between my soul and Christ flowing freely, crystal-clear, unpolluted by my love of myself? Have I other loves but His, other interests but His, other confidants but Him? Do I turn to Jesus, my Friend and Partner in all the circumstances of my life, from my rising to my setting? How foolish I am if I refrain from consulting Infinite Love and Infinite Wisdom Who walks beside me all day long, Who spreads His protecting Wings over me as I sleep, and Who eagerly watches my first conscious thought as I awake to see if it will speed to Him in love. How disappointed He is if my first thought is of myself, or if on awakening in the night I do not remember His hovering Presence protecting me by His power.

How easy you and I could make life for ourselves if we turned to the Partner at our side when things are not running smoothly, or we find it hard to hit it off with somebody, or our work is not turning out successfully, or a nurse or a patient is causing anxiety, or some dear one at home is ill; how much better to tell Jesus our Friend all about it than to look for a human friend to confide in. The human friend can do nothing to help us except to listen, and he won't do even that if you trouble him often; but Jesus our Friend is not only willing to help us, but is all-powerful and all-wise, He is only longing to show us what a loyal Partner he is, and all that He can do if we only trust in Him and ask Him. He has no desire to be a "Sleeping Partner" in the business. He is all anxiety to make the company a success both for life and for eternity. Am I going to allow Him?

### **ROLLING AWAY THE STONE.**

THOSE WHO are overtaken by trouble and found totally unprepared are foolish; but there is a more foolish class still—those who sit awaiting sorrow, who can think of nothing else, from dawn till dewy eve, but that trouble is looming down on them ever and always, out of the sunshine as out of the mist. As in all events of life, it is the golden mean that is the wise and safe thing—namely, to be prepared for both failure and success, joy and sorrow, to cultivate something like the sort of feeling we had as children when we played the game of "Close your eyes and see what God will send you." Trust in God as our Father and Friend would give this childlike feeling of restful confidence.

Great military strategists like Napoleon never planned for success without also mapping out their action in case of defeat. Strong minds never limit themselves to preparing for failure alone, or for success alone. To be an incurable optimist may have its defects, but to be an incurable pessimist poisons the very wells of life. Better be taken unawares now and again by sorrow than be of such a gloomy nature that you can recognise the joy that was with you, only when it has receded into the dim distance. Optimists may occasionally be "let down" by life, but pessimists always let themselves down, for they anticipate trouble even where it is not. It is no good to send joy to the trouble-lover, for he will treat it as grief, and even turn it into grief by his bilious outlook, just as some diseased persons turn their very food into poison. Self-poison, physical and mental, is not unknown. Such people think that nothing good or pleasant or lucky can ever fall to their lot or to the lot of anyone connected with them. According to them, their children are bound to fail at their exams., their crops to fail, their husband's business to fall off, their sick relative to die. If they settle on a day's outing, they know

it will rain. If they get a new range, a new maid or new milkman, the new is sure not to be as good as the old. Nothing good can happen to them. In reality it often does, but they fail to see it. Even if the sun is shining, they detect a sharp wind under it, or they say it is only a pet day and won't last. Somehow or other "tears must be told down for the charmed toy."

What's wrong with them is stupidity. They have got into a habit of expecting their every wish to be thwarted, and obstacles to be hurled in their path by some malign fate. Have they never met with a helping hand that rolled away the stone? They have. Dozens of times, but they had so settled down into the expectancy of trouble that they failed to see anything else. They have counted their disappointments not their gratifications. They have used the magnifying end of the telescope to view the thwarting of their desires, but the diminishing side to view the fulfilment. Even when nothing untoward has marred their progress, they are disappointed at not being frustrated, at having no cause of complaint. All you get from them is a grudging "It does not often happen to me to find the stone rolled away. What is behind this unusual occurrence? I wonder how it can have happened? Accident, of course, or perhaps to give me the trouble of finding out where the stone can have been put?"

The pious women who went to Our Lord's tomb early on Holy Saturday morning wisely foresaw an obstacle to their plan to get at Our Lord's Body and embalm it. They knew of old the sort of heavy slab used to close up a tomb, and they knew that none of them could roll it away. There was a reasonable anticipation of trouble, not a forecast of one that did not exist. If the expectation of this great obstacle deterred them from carrying out their purpose, what immeasurable graces they would have lost! Mary Magdalen would have lost her precious moments with the Divine Gardener. She would not have seen His love-lit Eyes rest on hers; she would not have heard the tender accents of His "Mary." She would not have been the one to get His commission to go tell the Brethren that He had risen; she would not have been the first to render a service to the Risen Lord.

It is not good to worry much over the future. The wise person throws himself and his future, with its cares and responsibilities into the Arms of Christ, as did the Little Flower. Much planning for ourselves shows distrust of the loving Saviour. It proves we are still full of the worldly spirit of caution and self-seeking, that prudence of the serpent" which is so pernicious unless joined with "the simplicity of the dove." The Holy Women trusted that somehow something would enable them to move the stone -and see their Lord again. Arrived at the Tomb, they find that their trust is not misplaced. God has arranged it all, quietly and well—the stone is rolled away!

Is it not often so with us? We get an inspiration from God to undertake such and such a good work, but the devil of discouragement enters in, accompanied by the devil of human respect, and—we desist. We cannot go to daily Mass or evening devotions for fear our health might suffer, or the house be upset for want of our presence, whereas if we just go, leaving the result to God, we find that the obstacle never arises. We would like to take charge of our dead brother's or sister's children, having a rather empty house of our own; but we feel the responsibility would interfere with our leisure and peace, and perhaps prove too much for us. If we could dip into the future, we should probably see that not to have done so would have deprived us of many joys and blessings. And so on.

Many sides of Catholic Action appeal to us, but our habit of looking for the immovable "stone" throws us back on ourselves and our timidity or love of ease, and we do nothing. A charge is offered to us, a place in manning the wall or defending the breach, and we fail to accept it because of the difficulties we foresee, or think we foresee. In fact, this excess of foresight is often only another name for cowardice and spinelessness. However, better refuse at the start, than accept and then throw the work over on another, while we contemptibly take our ease. If everyone held back because of anticipated trouble, how would the world's work fare?

Is not the history of the Church as of the individual—a history of obstacles surmounted? The smooth road does not call for ability and skill; the smooth path does not develop character.

The founders of religious Orders were remarkable for the "stone" after "stone" they removed out of their way. The more they met with, the firmer they clenched their teeth, and doggedly pursued their way. In fact they considered obstacles as signs that their work was of God since the Evil One tried so hard to upset it. Very often they threw human

prudence to the winds, believing that our ways are not as God's, and that, when all human aid fails, God steps in.

Unnecessary prudence does not make for union of the soul with Jesus. We rely on ourselves, not on Him, and He loves to be asked to do things for us, and thereby prove His love, just as a mother loves a child to trust her and lean on her when things get beyond its own power. An independent child—a child who seeks the help of outsiders—is not the most beloved of its father and mother.

Our Lord is very human. He wants our trust. He loves each of us individually, personally. Our petty troubles and anxieties are as interesting to Him as the bigger woes of the world because He is our Father. A pin scratch on a beloved child may for a moment blot out a bad fair, a poor crop, or even a world war from a fond father's memory.

Prudence and foresight are all very well, but the greater love shows itself in a childlike confidence in God that He will let no hurt come to us unless it is for our good, and then it ceases to be a hurt.

If we were to give to acts of love of God and trust in His Fatherly Providence, the time we spend planning, arranging and re-arranging our poor little life and career, we should find, as did the Holy Women that God had smoothed away all unnecessary roughness from our path, and had already rolled away the "stone."

### **HE MUST INCREASE: I DECREASE.**

GREAT SINNERS are those who put God out of their lives and enthrone themselves. Self is their pivot. God must go because he interferes with the gratification of their passions. Great saints are, therefore, those who reverse the process; they are those who make God their pivot to the complete exclusion of selfish interests. You and I come in somewhere between these two extremes. Where? How near are we to either?

To gain heaven and be with God for all eternity we must be on the road to sanctity, nearer to the great saints than to the great sinners. Great sinners can, and often do—by a miracle of grace—reach heaven, but I have no right to count on that miracle being performed for me. Moreover, if I have any love of God at all, I am not merely trying to be good for my own sake, but for His. I am not merely trying to be on the safe and winning side, but I am seeking to do His Will in all things rather than my own; to see Him increase and myself decrease.

How can I make God increase? In two ways: First, by putting His interests first in my own life, and, secondly, by striving to get others to put His interests first in their lives. How few of us are there who, unfailingly, put God's interests first! I don't do it. Do you? Even saints had to be on their guard to keep self out. Self is a pusher and a climber, absolutely devoid of modesty or shame. He will rush in where angels fear to tread. He is ingenious in burgling the house, of the soul.. Many devices and burglar alarms are necessary to keep him out. The smallest window of the soul left unlatched is detected by this daring intruder. And he very often enters not merely disguised, but disguised as an angel of light. Hence the saints found it a whole-time job to keep him out and to recognise him under each new disguise.

If it was no easy task for the saints, what must it be for you and me who are of ordinary clay, and who, alas! often betray the citadel to the enemy by leaving a door unbolted, or even by throwing open the gates and inviting him in. Do we not even scheme to get him inside as an honoured guest? Have you never given yourself or heard others (avowedly "good" people) give specious and high-sounding reasons for some perfectly selfish action—their health, dignity, duty, position—the Lord knows what, demanded this course of action. Did such people deceive you, much less God? And they must be very dense if they deceived themselves, but self has a very thick skin to protect it, though a child can see through it. If we are throwing pious dust in our own eyes, we shall readily see that self rules our thoughts, words and actions all the day long, or, at best, a good part of the day. Let us hold the mirror up to ourselves and we shall see how complacently we regard the work of our hands or of our brain. Do we not plume ourselves on our necessity in the scheme of things? Do we not try to hold the reins of power as long as ever we can, and, if we cannot do so directly, then we try by indirect means. Do we not scheme and angle for a word flattering to our talent for administration or organisation, building, teaching, housekeeping? How eagerly we snatch at any little molecule of praise, sucking it for hours, turning it round and round in our mouths like a lozenge, endeavouring to extract from it all the sweetness we can, and usually getting a thousand per cent more out of it than the speaker intended.

If the hospital, school or business is praised, we try to monopolize the praise. At least secretly, if not openly, we attribute it all to ourselves, and lay the flattering unction to our souls that we are not as other men, and that our fellow-workers are not at all included in the panegyric. All good happenings in our circle we try to claim as our doing. If a patient recovers, it was due to our assiduous care of him; if a pupil scores in the musical or literary world, it was due to our training, past or present; if a sinner is converted, our prayers worked the miracle, and our Argus-eyed neighbours begin to notice an added importance in our bearing and walk, a more decided upward tilt to the chin, a harder glitter in the eyes. This is not a whit exaggerated. You have seen it. I have seen it. We have only to turn the searchlight on our own depraved heart to see it there. God help us, what fools we are!

Self is a voracious fellow—a very glutton for praise. If no one offers it, he will give it to himself. See how often the words “ I, mine, me” are on the egotist’s lips. All this must cease in our life if we are to be God’s friend and familiar. Instead of thinking of self, planning for self, bolstering up self, should I not rather think of the hundreds of ways God’s wide world needs my co-operation. One who has God’s interests at heart rather than his own will remember that *every second sees forty infants die unbaptised* to be deprived for all eternity of the sight of God, and that he may prevent this by his prayers for the spread of the Faith and by a word in season to a pious boy or girl—not all of them have their minds fixed on “jobs.” He will realise how many are treading the primrose path to destruction, and will “constrain” Our Lord by his prayers and mortification to save them. God may be waiting only for one glance of love from him to do this. He will see that those under his influence do not defile their minds with filthy books, suggestive films, bad companions.

These are a few of God’s interests of which a fervent soul can speak to the loving Heart of Jesus after Holy Communion, and, in his daily visits to Him. His prayers and good life may help to stem the tide of irreligion of every kind. He can teach those under his care to sweep their glance over the world’s evils as a seagull sweeps over the ocean, and to talk to God in their childish speech about them. What so moves a heart, divine as well as human, as the prayers of a trusting, innocent child? Was not Our Lord, if I may say so without irreverence, as wax in the hands of a child? Did they not sit on His Knees, hold Him with their grubby hands, climb on His Back, clamber all over Him as He sat by the roadside talking to them, and did they not link their fingers in His as He went home through the village? Was He not their own Jesus, their big Brother? He will not now turn a deaf ear to their petitions. God changes not. Oh, how much we deprive God of by not teaching children to pray to Him for the world, to ask Him for conversions, for the spread of the True Faith, in a word to ask Him to give—just what He is aching to give—grace to everyone so that they may be His for all eternity.

*Sitit sitiri:* He thirsts to be thirsted for. Can you and I not do something to slake that thirst instead of concentrating all our energies on our own puny satisfaction of body and mind? Can we not win souls for Him by humility, seeking the back seat instead of pushing ourselves forward, by closing our lips on the word of self-praise, the uncharitable word, the hurting word, by letting our neighbour claim the success we laboured for, by ignoring the snub and the slight and the coldness, by repaying evil with good, liking those who dislike us, or at least treating them decently, by keeping back the art reply and the stinging word, by repressing a smile at bumptiousness and vulgarity, letting policy and fulsome flattery pass unrebuked and if unseen, by yielding a comfortable or an honorable place to others, and without fussiness.

Can I not, for His sake, diminish my actual needs, instead of increasing them as I advance in life? Surely there are many of the so-called essentials I have heaped around me that I could cut out of my life so that His Kingdom may increase. I can easily begin with my importance in my own eyes. I can begin by thinking little of myself, making little of myself in word and action, by learning even slowly to be glad—yes, glad! like the Little Flower, when others make little of me, as they are sure to do. Humble thinking leads to humble acting. When I have succeeded in convincing myself that I am really nothing and can do nothing, then self will begin to fade out of my life, and I can work in the big wide needs of God for the spread of His Kingdom, making this the one absorbing thought of my mind, and using every spare moment to talk to Him of them. Then Christ will increase in me, and I in Him.

## HUMAN REFRIGERATORS.

GOD CREATED me with a wonderful capacity for enjoyment and happiness. He has filled the universe with a beauty that threw saints and poets into ecstasies, and He has given me senses, physical and mental, capable of absorbing all that beauty and using it to draw closer to Him the Creator. This happiness is only a foretaste and promise of that awaiting us in Heaven. He means us to be happy on earth while serving Him, and in that very service to find happiness. Who have served Him better than the saints, and who have been happier with a happiness undreamed of by worldlings? If this world is a vale of tears, it is none Of God's doing. It is our own, our neighbour's or the devil's. Fallen human nature is responsible for most of the trials of this world.

That God permits sorrows to fall to our lot is not the same thing as to say He wills it. It grieves Him to the Heart to see us wounding each other, but, since He has left us our free will to do right or wrong, He cannot interfere. To know that it pains Him to see us pain each other, we have only to read some of the innumerable sentences of Scripture in which He tries to teach us how tenderly He loves us, or—to use a saint's word—how madly and crazily He loves us. He tells us: “He who touches you, touches Me in the apple of My Eye,” “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” “My little children, love one another as I have loved you.” And is not our Redemption convincing proof enough for any doubter. What other allowed himself to go through the agonies of the Passion, ending up with Crucifixion, in order to do good to any human being? What other made himself into our food?

It is a fatalistic sort of philosophy to attribute everything that happens to the “will of God”—sickness and death brought on by violation of the laws of nature, failure and downfall induced by inattention to one's work or by the lack of the business instinct, and, lastly, the anxiety, misery and hopelessness caused by the sins of others. It is splendid to accept these things patiently and to offer them to God in atonement for our sins, but to say of everything: “It is the will of God,” meaning that “God sent these things and He knows best,” seems rank heresy and an insult to the merciful Providence of our heavenly Father. The truth is that He permitted these evils, and He will turn the evil to our good, clean up the wreck and make it whole if we bear it patiently and for love of Him. God is the healer, man the destroyer. God is the physician, man or man's carelessness the disease. If people do us evil, God can transmute it into good, but the evil-doers will have to render Him a strict account.

Anyone who lessens our happiness and joy in life is doing us a great evil. To blot out the sunshine from a life, wantonly or carelessly, is to injure what is very dear to God. Human wet blankets or moral refrigerators—call them what you will—should be given a bright little isle of their own to inhabit, where their close proximity to each other might have a curative and salutary effect. No one has a right to move about cloaked in a mantle of icy aloofness, freezing all the unfortunates who meet with him. When God created icebergs He placed them far from human habitations. Occasionally they may break loose, pursue their devastating career down the ocean and sink a Titanic. To be sunk by a human iceberg is no whit pleasanter.

We owe each other a debt—that of charity and friendliness. God created us dependent on each other for everything. The cheerful presence and friendly bearing, even without the helping hand, are not among the least of life's necessities. To meet persons casually who are repellent, and even glowering, darkens the sun a little for the time being, unless one have a strong sense of humour and laugh in one's beard at the absurd figure such people cut. But to live with such selfish, depressing people is often more than human nature can stand. You meet them at a time of relaxation, expansion, gaiety—they force you to close up like a clam, and they freeze back on your heart the pleasant or joyful words you were going to utter. If you make a joke, it does not meet with their approval, and, looking up suddenly, you catch the steely glint of disapproval in their cold blue eye. You feel you've no right to be there or anywhere, and that a halter should be offered you in pity.

This is not by any means advocating that bright, breezy, jolly chattering manner of a stereotyped nature, that often has a worse effect on nerves tired and jangled after a hard day's work. Nothing is more irritating or even maddening if you want that restful quiet that is balm to hurt minds. Dignity of manner and speech has its uses, but a little of it goes a long way, like mustard. There is no use in hiding the real man behind a cocoon of pompous platitudes and hackneyed

sentiments. With these people the cocoon makes the man.. No one with an attractive personality ever allowed himself to be hedged round with the divinity of kings. Soft collars have long since replaced starched ones. The fumes of power can be more deleterious than those of alcohol. Ninety per cent of us like a person to be as God created him—simple, artless, natural, unaffected, unspoiled by the supposed demands of dignity, reputation and office. This naturalness attracts souls, makes them happy, and happiness makes them want to give God of their best.

Who will ever give us a satisfying picture of the beautiful Face of Christ, the charming, attractive manner of Christ as He gathered the little ones around Him, and they swarmed all over Him like bees? How tenderly He looked at them and spoke to them. How lovingly He caressed them. How understandingly He listened to their childish prattle and entered into their little games. Did He act the heavy Father, weighted down with dignity and responsibility—He Who held the whole wide world in the hollow of His Hand?

Again, what a compassionate glance of love and pity He must have given the Magdalen to have won her forever to His Side away from a long life of sin. That one glance was sufficient to cast seven devils out of her. Here was no mighty prophet conveying in a thunderous glance all the outraged dignity of offended majesty. He did not use those wonderful, liquid Eyes of His to strike terror into people, to make them cringe and crumple up before Him. No! The bruised reed lie did not break. The smoking flax He did not quench. Gentle hands are always the accompaniment of gentle eyes; The woman taken in adultery, waiting for the Pharisees (the worse sinners') stones, looked up into the Master's Eyes, and, reading what they plainly said, took heart of grace to "go now and sin no more."

It is this attractive personality of this Man-God that has in all ages drawn to His Sacred Heart countless maidens in the first flush of their girlhood, boys in the lustihood of their young powers—unopened buds of Spring—mature men and women with rank and position and experience of life's sweets and bitters—all ready to give Him their all in exchange for a glance from those tender Eyes, a smile from those gracious Lips, a place in that unchanging Divine Heart, yesterday, today, and the same for ever.

### **REPROVING UNDER FEELING.**

THERE is scarcely anyone who has not one person or more under him to whom at times he has to point out faults of action or speech. Most people can say sometime somewhere: "I also am a man of authority, having under me servants." The great big round world can be divided roughly into those exercising some authority and those with none. Fortunately the big majority of the latter class are children who take correction, like all things else, for granted, as part of the make-up of this mysterious world.

To reprove effectively needs tact; and the surprising thing is how few possess tact. A person corrects tactfully who makes the subordinate ashamed of what he has said or done, without at the same time making him lose his self-respect. Some apparently believe that correction, to do good, should raise blisters on the soul, humble the delinquent to the dust and leave him grovelling there hopelessly. They never realise that their searing, humiliating speeches not only do no good to the recipient, but rouse his worst passions. It would surprise them intensely to be told that anger and resentment are the feelings they aroused, not a desire to correct the fault and do better in future. This happens especially when they have acted on second-hand information. They may be well-meaning people, but how utterly devoid of the divine gift of tact! They allow their feelings to get the upper-hand of them, and they reprove when swayed by these feelings.

Listening to them one would think that the offence was against themselves, that their personal dignity was outraged, their honour dragged in the mire. Led by feeling, they magnify the fault till it develops horns and a tail, and all the while they, according to their character, either work themselves up into a rage or look on you with cold, icy scorn from the heights of their impeccable sanctity. Who can blame the delinquent for feeling that it is not God's Voice that speaks, but the voice of self-love—nay, more, the cruel desire to humiliate. There are even persons who take, or seem to take, a positive pleasure in taunting and wounding, even to turning the knife in the wound. Such prove, of course, by their actions that they are totally unfit to have the guidance of others. They cater for self, not for God. It would seem as if they wanted their subordinates to be perfect in word and act so that they themselves might shine, as it were, by reflected light, or as the

perfect leader of the band, or the moral cement that kept the whole fabric together. If it were God's glory alone that they sought, they would weigh well and consider how much ought to be said and how, and where, and when. To reprove an old man before a young, a man of some standing before lesser fry is to be ignorant of the right place. To reprove a sick man, a depressed man or a sorrowing man, one already carrying a cross heavy enough for his strength, is to be ignorant of the right time.

To make mountains out of molehills, sins out of mere indiscretions or lapses of judgment, to make the delinquent feel that he is a worm, and no man, by using towards him ponderous sentences of vituperation, is merely to harden his heart.

Christ was up against big crimes, base treachery, ingratitude—Judas betrayed Him for the price of an ass—Peter cursed and swore that he knew him not just after having received the gift of His Body and Blood—the disciples, all leaving Him, fled—the Jews, whose sick and infirm He had cured, whose dead He had raised to life, jeered and mocked Him on the Cross—and yet He called out to His Eternal Father with His last breath:

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” He made Peter, the renegade, Head of His Church. His big loving Heart could have forgiven even Judas, had he turned to Him for mercy and forgiveness. To the woman taken in adultery He merely said—having routed her accusers by writing their secret sins on the ground—“Hath no man condemned thee?” and on her replying, “No man, Lord,” He said, with infinite compassion and mercy, “Neither will I. Go now and sin no more.” And all this, though in every case the sin was a personal insult to Himself.

His Arms are ever open to receive the sinner, even the big sinner who has persistently despised His Commandments and wiped Him completely out of his life. How He must dislike to see His follower who did eat sweet meats with Him humiliated to the dust, and treated with obloquy and vituperation, harshness and scorn. What glory it must give Him if this follower bears the humiliation with peace and content, and without any ill-will towards those who have meted it out to him! What a glorious reward the disciple will receive from His Hand on the day of universal reckoning

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