



S S P X

Letter from the Superior General to the friends and benefactors of the Society of Saint Pius X

The purity of the heart

*ONLY THE PURITY OF THE HEART
WILL KEEP THE PURITY OF FAITH WITHIN US.*

My dear faithful, friends and benefactors,

In the historical context within which we are living, Almighty God has called the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X to a very special battle for the faith. It is a question of keeping the faith, of professing it, loving it and transmitting it. To do this, it is important to understand the profound reasons for this fight, its demands, and where it must lead us, so that we can draw all the consequences for our souls.

Faith, the untouchable cornerstone

Here on this earth, faith is the anticipation of the vision of God that we will have in eternity, and to which it will yield its place. Faith is the supernatural knowledge of God and all that concerns Him, without possibility of error. For this reason, it is an integral whole, which we receive from the goodness of God, who communicates to us the knowledge that He has of Himself. In this perspective, it is clear that faith is *par excellence* the expression of truth: supernatural truth granted to souls, without the slightest possibility of error.

Faith is very different from the personal opinion or perception of someone who would choose his version of "truth" over another, basing his decision on his own judgement or personal experience. Such a "truth" corresponds rather to the "faith" of a liberal mind, devoid of all supernatural elements and reduced to the level of a fundamentally debatable personal option. On the contrary, faith is the knowledge of another order, essentially supernatural, in which we have an absolute guarantee that we are not mistaken, because the slightest error would be incompatible with divine truth. In fact, a "truth" that contained even the slightest hint of error would simply cease to be divine – and would simply cease to be the truth. For example, a Christ, who was both true God and true man, both King and Prophet, but not the Redeemer, would not be the true Christ of our faith. Nor would he be a "diminished" Christ – which would be impossible to exist – but simply something else. A single error irretrievably corrupts the whole edifice of faith and dogma, just as a few drops of poison are enough to render a large quantity of water unfit for human consumption.



The combat of the faith in the Catholic Church and in the Society

This premise is essential to understand why, throughout its history, the Church's primary concern has always been to defend the faith, even if it means disputing with and condemning others, and suffering persecution due to its defence of Catholic dogmas. The slightest compromise in this area would have been a betrayal of Our Blessed Lord, His mission and a betrayal of souls.

In truth, man is made to know God and, in particular, to know Him through Our Lord Jesus Christ: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). Without this knowledge of God, which faith alone brings, it is impossible to please Him and to go to Him. It is impossible to know Him and therefore to contemplate Him, nor is it possible to find our own happiness in Him, in loving Him and serving Him, because we can neither give our heart nor consecrate our human will to someone whom we do not know. Preserving the faith is literally a matter of life and death. A spiritual life here on earth is impossible without the adherence of our entire intelligence to divine truth in its entirety. It is this possession of Our Blessed Lord Himself, the incarnate truth, made knowable by faith, which is the condition and primary cause of the Christian life, which is the beginning of eternal life.

We must never forget that when the Society of Saint Pius X as a whole, or when each one of us in our daily lives, is called to profess the faith and to defend it publicly, it is not a question of putting forward a personal opinion or a nuance that would seem more appropriate. It is simply a profession of faith that is absolutely necessary so that souls may know Our Blessed Lord, as He is, and so that they can build their whole existence, in time and in eternity, around this same knowledge and in accordance with it. Alas, this Christian life has become very rare today, because faith itself, which alone makes it possible, is disappearing.

Therefore, what must we do to ensure that this life, proper to "the just man who liveth by faith" bears all its fruit in us? What must we do so that we do not limit ourselves to a purely formal adherence to the faith, but find our happiness in the possession of the truth? We must let the faith produce its distinctive effect in us, namely the purification of our heart. In this way all obstacles to the perfect adhesion of our soul to Our Blessed Lord, who is both the truth sought by the mind and the supreme good sought by the heart, will be destroyed.

True faith purifies the heart

A faith that is not superficial nor barren makes a profound transformation of a soul. Firstly by producing purity in the soul. This is logical and easy to understand, because he who lives by faith, models his own life according to the higher ideal. Consequently, he distances himself from everything inferior that could be an obstacle to his transformation. In other words, a true and authentic faith, accompanied by charity, draws a soul upwards, and in doing so, it distances it from everything earthly or worldly. It elevates the soul above everything that is impure.

Let us take an example that was dear to Saint Thomas Aquinas: a metal becomes impure if it is alloyed with a less noble metal. Silver does not become impure when alloyed with gold, because it increases its value; however, silver becomes impure when alloyed with lead. In the same way, the soul, which has a greater dignity than all temporal and corporeal creatures, is rendered impure if it submits to them through a disordered love or attachment. However, it is purified from this impurity by the opposite movement, when it tends towards that which is above it, i.e. towards God. It is obvious that this movement depends on faith, which alone makes it possible. In order to approach God, we must know Him, and in order to know Him, we must believe in Him. And this is why the first principle of the purification of the heart is faith – and if this faith finds its perfection in an authentic charity, it causes a perfect purification of the heart.



Thus, faith first of all excludes the impurity that is directly opposed to it: the impurity of error in the mind. However, if it is allowed to act, and if it is allowed to transform the soul profoundly, it ends up destroying all moral impurity and all obstacles to the perfect union between the soul and Our Blessed Lord. This means that after purifying the intelligence, it also makes the heart pure and therefore free. This is what is meant by the expression “the just man liveth by faith”.

A pure soul radiates its faith and bears witness to it

“If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be luminous” (Matt. 6:22). This is how Our Blessed Lord expressed and taught this fundamental truth. In other words, the first profession of faith that He expects from every soul is that of a luminous life, which is the visible reflection of what the eye of the intellect contemplates in faith. This is what makes the life of a soul so valuable, and what makes it profoundly apostolic, capable of drawing others forward. For this light cannot be hidden – and the deeper the world sinks into the darkness of sin, the more this light shines brightly.

When a soul lives deeply united to Our Lord Jesus Christ, and when all its movements are inspired by the desire to please Him and to conform everything to Him, in reproducing His virtues, and in accomplishing everything out of love for Him, its life shines so brightly that it is truly a light for the world. This is why, from time immemorial, but even more so today, the world cannot remain insensitive to the testimony of purity: either it is deeply edified by it, or it is enraged by the implicit reproach it receives from it. This testimony, like all expressions of truth, is divisive.

Faith without purity of heart is in danger

We must never lose sight of this very close link between faith and purity. We cannot truly know God without being purified by this knowledge, and at the same time, we cannot claim to know Him without purity. In reality, there is a sort of double-purity at play, or rather, purity plays a double role in the spiritual life and in the life of faith. On the one hand, purity of heart is the effect of faith, and on the other hand, purity disposes the soul to the knowledge and vision of God. We could even say that purity is both the cause and the consequence. This is a bit like the moon, which is capable of both receiving light and spreading light by reflection.

It follows from this, that the best guarantee for preserving faith is first of all in the constant effort to cultivate purity, and in the love for this virtue. All other efforts would be in vain, if they were not crowned by this result.

Habitually, the devil (a fine psychologist and a connoisseur of the human soul, with its weaknesses and tendencies) does not tempt a good Christian directly with apostasy. That would be simply grotesque. Rather, he tries to work on him slowly, making him absorb the spirit of the world, gradually weakening him by a life of compromise with the world, and a life which is increasingly alien to the demands of the faith, and which in some way manages to prevent the purification of his heart. Thus his faith remains ineffective, weak and emptied – not of its dogmatic content, but of its strength – and deprived of its capacity to transform a soul and to generate and keep life in it.

This is the tragedy of many Catholics who have lost their faith without realising it, and without wanting to. There was no act of apostasy as such, but they let themselves be carried away by the prevailing winds of this world. What was lacking in these souls? They had the faith, they most probably had access to the sacraments, and perhaps they even had several good Catholic habits... but their hearts were probably not purified, or not sufficiently safeguarded. It is a tragedy that we must humbly admit could also be ours one day.



It is also the tragedy which, applied in a community, was the cause of several crises in the history of the Catholic Church – ending in schism and heresy. Entire nations were ready to abandon the Catholic faith and the Catholic Church, because their faith had gradually been weakened. In some cases, it had even become insignificant and it no longer exerted any real influence on their hearts. It had become superficial, perhaps enlightening the minds, but without any profound transformation of the souls, nor making its impact on their lives. Modernism itself found its origin and its success in a desire to be reconciled at all costs with a world indifferent to God, a world with its own mentality, principles and spirit. The modernists wanted to continue to believe, but on the condition that they could live in harmony with modern society and follow its intellectual and moral evolution. To achieve this, they preferred to modify the faith and its demands – which modified its action in the soul – rather than accepting the faith as God gave it to us, and letting the faith bear all its fruits in the soul. The result of this, which is where the Church finds itself today, shows clearly how the disintegration of the faith accompanies the breakdown of Catholic morality.

So all this comes down to a problem of purity, in the deepest sense of the word. But what happens to a soul weakened by this?

Blinded and enslaved

When a soul gradually allows itself to be contaminated and dominated by the spirit of the world and by impurity, its spiritual faculties are compromised, with sometimes irreparable repercussions.

First of all, it is the intelligence that is obscured. It can no longer distinguish between what is truly good and what is evil and, as a result, it can no longer apply itself to seeking what is good and avoiding evil. It is in fact subjugated and enslaved to apparent goods that blind it spiritually. This has very serious repercussions on the exercise of prudence, which is supposed to guide the soul in the choice of the appropriate means to achieve moral perfection. Such a soul becomes incapable of listening, or of allowing itself to be advised, and thus becomes incapable of directing itself correctly: precipitous, incapable of reflection and lacking constancy, it condemns itself to unfortunate choices that risk conditioning its entire existence.

Secondly, the will, which is the faculty of the soul that makes it adhere to something that is good, is also seriously compromised by the impurity of the heart. The love of God is replaced by the love of self: despite the impression of being free, the soul becomes a slave to itself. This can push it to the point of despising God and religion, because they inevitably remind it of its errors. Things can go even further: for attachment to the present life and its apparent goods can create such disorder in the soul that it leads to loathing of all that is spiritual, and even to despair concerning eternal life. This is the origin of the hidden rage and despair that we find in many of our contemporaries. It is above all the silent and insidious origin of the loss of faith.

What should be done?

First and foremost, we must not become discouraged. It is a matter of life and death, but we must bear in mind that it is God's grace that makes it possible to fight this battle. It flows directly from faith and is strictly linked to it. It is not a marginal problem, but a battle which must have an absolute priority.

Having said that, it must also be acknowledged that not enough is said about purity and that there is a lack of understanding concerning this virtue. There is a false modesty that makes us reluctant to treat this subject as it deserves. Unfortunately, this virtue often evokes something extremely reserved and personal, which is only discussed in the context of a sacramental confession. This is a big mistake. Children and teenagers must be regularly spoken to about this virtue, obviously, in using terms appropriate to their age. This is the duty of all educators – the



clergy and lay people alike. Young people must be prepared for the important battles that they will be obliged to fight – and to do this, there are two things to remember...

Firstly, purity has a very strong attraction for delicate souls who have not yet been corrupted by the world, and who are still under the influence of grace. We must know how to take advantage of this. Human nature has been created to devote itself to high ideals, which draw it upwards, overcoming all obstacles. And since it is human nature, it does not change with the times nor due to modern technology. The more something costs them, the more it attracts the ardent soul of young people, aware that they are building their future. Well-educated and well-prepared, they will possess all the elements necessary to apply the prudence required in the pursuit of this ideal. Therefore, we have no right not to provide them with the knowledge, advice and examples they need.

Secondly, there are two opposing pitfalls to education concerning purity. We can easily fall victim to a dialectic between two errors, which we often think we can get around by finding a deceiving middle-ground. On the one hand, there is puritanism, i.e. a reduction of purity to a rigid code of external rules that must be applied. This is a rather obvious caricature, as there is a risk of evaluating purity, and all that goes with it, according to the yardstick of a formal rigidity. There is nothing more regrettably efficacious in educating young people in the cult of appearance – and distancing them from the essential. On the other hand, there is the liberal model, which will tend to despise all external rules in favour of a pseudo-freedom of the mind, which does not suffer any constraints. In the first case, one will tend to see evil everywhere – except where it primarily resides; and in the second case, one will tend not to see it anywhere! The greatest danger in rejecting these two extremes would be that of seeking a kind of happy-medium, or a compromise between rigidity and laxity. However we must rid ourselves of this dialectic as it does not bring a useful solution. Such a compromise cannot be a point of reference. It risks leading educators astray and discouraging them forever.

True purification of the heart is something else. It consists in the search for purity as a virtue, which flows directly from faith, which makes a profound transformation of a soul, drawing it upwards – towards what it was made for – and enabling it to strengthen itself, disposing it to pursue what is good, and thus to find its perfection. Purity is not only the result of a series of dangers that have been avoided. It is also the condition for knowing Our Blessed Lord as the Apostles knew Him, being subjugated by His person and inflamed by the desire to consecrate everything to Him: “and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Purity is the necessary condition for reading the Gospel, not like reading the dialogues of Plato or the fables of Aesop, but as the book that is still capable of converting and of changing a soul – and of changing the world. Purity is the condition necessary to be truly free.

Therefore, when the goal is clear and known in the light of faith, when the appropriate means to achieve it are also clear, when the soul understands that its perfection and its happiness depend on it, and when it is free from all obstacles, then it is capable of doing anything to achieve it!

May God bless you!

Menzingen, April 23rd, 2023
Good Shepherd Sunday

Don Davide Pagliarani
Superior General