

# Letters to a Saint

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- 1 In my prayer, in the letters I write to you, and when I talk to Don Pedro, I unburden myself of everything that worries me, and then I feel so much lighter and ready to take whatever Our Lord may lay on my shoulders.

### **WITH HER FEET ON THE GROUND:**

*Holiness in ordinary life*

- 2 I can see that those very crosses are giving me greater awareness of God's presence, and every day I spend less time thinking about myself. That makes me very happy.
- 3 Only in the oratory do I see my great big defects very clearly, and then I make an act of humility and don't worry any more.
- 4 That's our Way, isn't it? Our feet on the ground, but always (every so often) looking at Heaven, so that afterwards we can see more clearly what's going on around us.
- 5 But I don't get discouraged or scared; I only ask for your prayers that I may never fail to do what God wants in anything, big or small.
- 6 Personally I've been fairly disorganized about doing the norms, but now that the house is better organized I've made resolutions that it won't happen again.

- 7 I made a deep confession, covering the whole year, and I made some resolutions which I want to fulfil with God's help and yours. I put myself in Our Lord's presence exactly as I saw myself, and exactly as I saw how things are going; and I asked God for help to find the points where I fall short.
- 8 If I told you that I experienced spiritual consolations, I wouldn't be telling the truth; but I can assure you that without ups or downs, I find God almost constantly in everything, all too naturally! I think I am very serene.
- 9 The certainty of having God with me on my journey makes everything a source of happiness, makes it so easy for me to do things I didn't use to like doing that I just do them without any effort.
- 10 The basic resolution from the retreat was to let the others govern. To cancel myself out, little by little, so that they have more and more sense of responsibility.
- 11 Awareness of God's presence works wonders. How one notices it! I want to get back soon and be useful.

## **ALWAYS CLOSE:**

### *In love with God*

- 12 I was almost grateful to Our Lord for that little pain because I had something to offer up to him, and I think if nobody notices it pleases him more.
- 13 Although I can see that I do everything with lots of defects (especially vanity and self-love), I realize that Our Lord is helping me so much that I'm sure that if he really wants, I will manage to please him truly.
- 14 Today I prayed very much for you, with all my soul, and afterwards for myself. I don't think that's selfish, because if Our Lord grants me the grace of being better (more mortified, humbler, etc...) he will grant me all the other things he knows I want: vocations, solutions to the Work's problems, etc. and the things my mother and brothers need (especially for them to be better people).
- 15 We now have Our Lord in the house. What a difference that makes! What's more, he's so close to my room that I necessarily have to think about him constantly. Every day I want to prove to him more what I feel for him and how grateful I am for all his huge love.
- 16 Every night when I examine my conscience I see that I've left out something from the plan of life. As I write it now I feel really sorry for having done this because as you know

for sure, it's nothing but lack of awareness of God's presence, and a lot of disorderliness.

17 I want you to be able to have confidence in me, and Our Lord to be happy with me.

18 I also have a lot of self-love and I try to stop it from showing, but I don't always manage.

19 It's very difficult to find mortifications. Before I used to be able to find them at meals, but not now. I've got a healthy appetite but it doesn't matter to me what I eat, how much or how little, hot or cold. I can't explain it, but that's how it is. Our Lord continues to feed me on baby-food, as you told me before.

20 I am deeply grateful to him for it, and what I want to do is store up all these graces, so that if the time comes when I find everything really difficult, I'll still be able to be as happy as I am now.

21 Father, I'm very happy and I want to behave very well so that Our Lord may always help me like that and, at the same time, humble me so that my self-love and vanity, which put up such a fight, don't appear again.

22 I try to be closer to the Tabernacle every day.

- 23 When I do the examination of conscience at night and see so many shortcomings (in the norms, presence of God, outbursts of temper or vanity) I make acts of humility and stay perfectly happy.
- 24 My prayer is simply giving thanks and praying for people and things, and I almost forget about myself.
- 25 The rest of the day my presence of God consists of putting my head into the things I have to do (because otherwise nothing works out well, I have to really concentrate hard because I'm not at all quick or clever at thinking).
- 26 Pray a lot for me not to be so taken up by the material side of my work and to keep living through every day with more love for God.
- 27 When I have many material worries I get a bit carried away.
- 28 I don't get discouraged.
- 29 But I don't yet have the solid interior life which is the only thing that lasts, and which I need to teach others how to have.
- 30 I don't think I've ever felt so many things all at once: desires to be humble, good, and hard-working.

- 31 I rely on your help, on my sisters' help, on everything.
- 32 My prayer gets stuck time after time on one idea. At present it's a word, "fainting", but not in the sense of losing strength but just the opposite. I read it in one of the offertory prayers of the Mass and I think it's what happens to me when I have a strong sense of God's presence, and I'm so happy that I can hardly bear it physically. I think you can understand me, can't you?
- 33 This is going to be almost my only resolution from the retreat: to help them, to teach them.
- 34 This time, I tried to see my failures to respond to the very great graces that Our Lord has given me since I became one of his daughters in the Work. And that's enough to fill me with heartfelt sorrow and produce many resolutions.
- 35 My two basic shortcomings are: not putting all the effort I could into the norms of the plan of life. Most of the time I don't put an effort into the prayer, into the Mass or into Holy Communion. And the other shortcoming is not having put enough effort into helping my sisters to progress, have interior life, etc. I'm more concerned with bringing new vocations than with looking after the people who already have a vocation. I understand that I bear a lot of responsibility in this field, and I'll put my whole soul into trying to ensure it doesn't happen any more.

- 36 I've told you in other letters about my inner conversation with God, my prayer, etc.: when I make a bit of an effort, Our Lord makes it easy for me and I just surrender myself entirely.
- 37 I'm not aware of ever failing to be sincere.
- 38 The rest of the day I have an almost constant awareness of his presence, which seems so real that I never feel alone.
- 39 I love what I'm doing (although, as I always tell you, if I was asked to do something else I'd love that just as much).
- 40 I think I told you in other letters that I do offer small mortifications; that there's nothing – in the field of meals, curiosity, little discomforts, cold water, heroic minutes – that I don't do, and relatively easily. What I do struggle to do is put more of my heart into things, because perhaps my charity doesn't go very deep.
- 41 When I talk to you I wish I could give you the happiness of seeing that I've grown on the inside (which is ultimately what matters) as well as growing in age; but I think I'm still just the same on that score. Disastrous, isn't it!
- 42 Today we're doing the day of recollection in the annual course, and after a careful, detailed examination of conscience, in Our Lord's presence, I'm writing to you,



Father, so that, as usual, you can continue getting to know me in depth, helping me and praying for me.

43 Admittedly, all the things that occupy my mind are Our Lord's concerns, the things he's placed in my hands through you, Father, and my sisters; but I can't detach myself from them.

44 I never lay aside all that, all the things that affect me from moment to moment, in order to spend a while centered totally on God. Perhaps I'm not explaining it very well, but pray for me; you know what I mean. Pray for this daughter of yours to receive the grace she hasn't yet learned to make use of, because I can also tell that Our Lord is giving it to me, and that's why he's asking me for this.

45 I'm doing my retreat, and as always, during these days of silence one seems to be closer to Our Lord, although what really happens is that because one isn't thinking of other things, one can hear him more clearly.

46 Every year when I do the retreat I make the same resolution: to put more effort into my mental prayer, Holy Communion, etc., making a greater contribution on my side. This year I've concluded that it's presumptuous to think that achieving that goal depends on me, on my efforts, so I propose to ask God for it as a gift.

47 Once again I place myself in your hands.

- 48 The faith of children and the doctrine of theologians, the right kind of theologians.
- 49 Knowing that I don't deserve anything.
- 50 I hope that Our Blessed Lady will help me and that I'll see her straight away.

### **A HUGE HEART:**

#### *Apostolic joy*

- 51 My crosses are my worries about the others, when I see my sisters struggling, and realize that the girls are not coming along very fast, and feel there's nothing I can do about it. But I try to receive them all with joy and do what I can, and I hand the rest over to Our Lord to take care of.
- 52 In my particular exam I focus especially on cheerfulness and presence of God and ask Our Lord to help me have them. Pray for me.
- 53 Every time someone makes up her mind [to follow our path] it makes me so happy – happier than anything else!
- 54 After our prayer I took a copy of *The Way* downstairs and we read the chapter on "Our Lady". That's how your daughters in Abando spent Sunday afternoon.

- 55 Father, I'm ambitious – I'd like all the girls who come here to have a vocation and be as happy as we are, or at least to adopt our way of being. I think that if we put everything into praying for them, we'll achieve that.
- 56 Father, it makes me sad that I'm not doing the prayer very well. Pray that Our Lord will teach me to – I'm sure he'll take more notice of you than of your daughter Guadalupe.
- 57 Wherever I am, I put everything I have into it, and Our Lord looks after the rest.
- 58 Sometimes it really makes me suffer a lot to see how far some of them are from God. You often come across twenty-year-olds who think they've lost the faith. It's almost never true, thank God, but they need to realize that.
- 59 With so much thinking about the others I've stopped thinking about myself. The result is that sometimes I can't even go to confession properly or do the confidence well.
- 60 I do the norms as well as I can (though sometimes I don't finish the rosary and the reading). I keep to the timetable, I try to be orderly, I control my temper, and do small mortifications (the heroic minute, the way I sit at meals, doing what I ought at every moment, controlling my imagination).

- 61 My prayer is not very intense. I have great faith, trust and love (but can hardly ever feel it).
- 62 What makes me suffer the most is a lack of self-giving or perseverance in people of the Work. But even that doesn't affect my state of mind.
- 63 I hope this letter reaches you before 2 October, so that you'll know for sure that day that I'm praying very specially for whatever you are asking Our Lord for, and thanking him for what you are thanking him for.
- 64 I'm continually placing myself in God's hands, the Father's hands, and my sisters' hands, saying simply that I want to serve, in whatever way they tell me. I'm more enthusiastic every day about the jobs I'm given to do, no matter what they are.
- 65 We've organized catechism classes, little schools for poor children, circles and classes for working women, sewing workshops, etc., and we now have nearly 100 St Raphael girls working. I could tell you some wonderful stories. One of the girls who came today belongs to a very well-known family and at the beginning of the year she was just a hair-brained child, but today she appeared with a big bouquet of flowers and asking, turning quite pink, if she could put it near the Tabernacle. Lots of them spend some time in mental prayer, and almost all of them drop in to say hello

to Our Lord when they arrive and on their way out. Those are the sorts of little details that make us so happy!

66 Here I am, I want to serve with all my soul.

**DESIRE TO SERVE:**

*Working for God*

67 How many ugly corners I have! And I want to get rid of them so much that when I realize something and say it to Nisa, I think I'll never do it again, and within a minute I've fallen again. Thank goodness Nisa notices and helps me very much indeed, always correcting me. I'm so grateful to her!

68 I'm happy, and praying to Our Lord to make me less thick-skulled (I'm a bit slow) because sometimes, with the best will in the world, I don't obey properly. There's nothing I can do about it! But because I want to be as useful as possible, I want to learn to think more and that's what I'm praying for. If he doesn't grant it to me, I'll be just as happy.

69 In my spiritual life one of these things that I take so deeply into myself has had a very bad effect. For a long period I had had an almost palpable awareness of God's presence, so that the effects of my times of prayer sometimes lasted for hours; and from the time I took on this concern for finding residents I've changed. I don't worry about my feelings, what I want is to behave well and follow the right path in everything. So my doubt is whether I'm making enough of

an effort to do the prayer well, and the plan of life in general.

- 70 In the past few days I missed out some of the norms of piety, what with moving to a different centre and doing a different job I lost track of things, but I'm already making resolutions so that it won't happen again.
- 71 We worked extremely hard, setting up the oratory and moving everything around, but I was happy to find that that's how I rest the most, working physically and not having to think about everything there is for me to deal with.
- 72 Pray very much for me; I think this year we need to give a big push in spiritual terms and I have to be the first to do it.
- 73 Up till now I've prayed for, and tried to achieve, the virtues that are indispensable in the Work (piety, work, cheerfulness, apostolate, spirit of sacrifice, etc.), and that's what I've also prayed for and tried to develop in everyone. Now I see a need to go deeper; that there ought to be contemplative souls in this Region by now, who desire and pray for things that are more elevated spiritually. Who are able to appreciate them.
- 74 Pray for me to receive from God the grace to guide them and encourage them to follow those paths, and have the ambition to follow them; and the humility and patience to

understand, too, that maybe God does not want that for me, even though I desire it with all my soul.

- 75 I'm writing to you at the end of a retreat, after thinking yet again about what's going badly, and really wanting to put it right. My resolutions are to love and help my sisters more (because, together with you, they are the people I love the most in the world), beginning with the ones in my house; and, in order to do that, to have recourse to Our Lady all the time.
- 76 If they announce a competitive examination for Work Training at the place where I'm teaching at the moment, I'll apply for it, and I'm equally ready to drop it all whenever I'm asked to.
- 77 I just want to tell you that, as with everything else, this new step in my professional work is in your hands... (nothing ties me down, thank God).
- 78 I'm happy to think how united the families of everyone in the Work are becoming in so many ways.
- 79 Pray a bit that Our Lord, who can do everything, manages to write straight even with me.

**HERE I AM:**  
*Path and mission*

- 80** How happy it makes me to tell you “Here I am,” now at the head of things, and tomorrow in the last place of all, always happy, because I’m serving Our Lord. Every day I trust more in his help and less in my own efforts.
- 81** Father, I may have thousands of defects but I do have very great faith in my vocation and in God’s help, I assure you, and I’m always ready to do whatever I’m asked, very happily. Sometimes things turn out wrong, as you know, but I put my whole self into it.
- 82** This morning Don Pedro came to Zurbaran and told me I can do the Fidelity, I’m so happy! Pray very much that Our Lord will always be happy with me, and that I may learn to love him with my whole soul. I don’t know what to say, I’m really happy, filled with peace, and I owe it all to you and the Work, so I want to spend everything God has given me (health, cheerfulness, etc.) just in working very very hard.
- 83** I only know that wherever you want me to be, I’m ready to obey, think, and work as much as I’m able to.
- 84** I talk about the things I do or think and I wait for the other person to tell me where I have to go on the attack, and if it’s on something different from what I thought, I see that I was wrong and don’t worry about it any further.



- 85 I'd like to be so completely united to you through the person in charge that in the prayer that's almost the only thing I ask for.
- 86 From time to time there are moments (when I least expect it) when I simply can't contain everything I feel, and I'm so happy that just remembering it afterwards gives me strength for the rest of the time when I don't feel anything at all.
- 87 Help me a lot, tell me everything I do wrong, point-blank; maybe that's the only good thing about me so far, that I've always taken it very well and been happy when people correct me (even though I'm sad that I've done things wrong), and I love the person who corrects me even more than before, and am really grateful to them.
- 88 You can tell that Our Lord is doing the same with us as he did with the Apostles, when they came back full of wonder at all they'd accomplished.
- 89 I see more and more defects in myself. Now I am putting my best efforts into the norms, and I'm starting to manage them. The prayer is usually a struggle not to get distracted, but there I am, and I know that I'm pleasing Our Lord like that.

- 90 In front of the Tabernacle, I saw our way so clearly, so straight, so right for everyone who learns about it, has a heart, and wants to get close to God, that I understood with utter certainty that the only thing necessary in order to put down roots is to get to know the Work in depth.
- 91 I left the oratory wanting to encompass the whole world. The apostolate thrills me, even though I usually find it very difficult too (I assure you) and sometimes I'd find it easier to carry trunks.
- 92 Yes, Father, I love God very much. More every day, more strongly and surely. Though, generally, I don't feel anything, but I notice it in the way I react to things. So I need to feel it from time to time, so that I will see that the only thing that matters is to make an effort to maintain it, so that God himself will purify my life.
- 93 I want so much to serve him! – materially, by working as much as my body is capable of; and spiritually, by giving myself totally and helping my sisters and all the people I do apostolate with, to give their utmost!
- 94 That's the only thing that makes me suffer, my incapacity (because of my lack of... I don't know what, I can't judge myself and don't want to) to be more effective.
- 95 What hurts me is to see how little we love Our Lord, and I feel just as guilty as them, because I sincerely believe that if

God didn't help me enormously, in their circumstances I'd be the same as them.

96 Pray a lot for me; I feel small, much too small for this work, but I'm resolved to do it all by obeying.

97 I can only be filled with wonder and thank God, through you, and at the same time ask you not to forget us, and to pray a lot for this daughter of yours who has more heart than head, to continue to be useful for as long as you think I should in this great apostolate.

98 It makes one sad to see the frivolous surroundings they live in, even the most devout and pious ones, so that they feel empty inside, and unhappy.

99 When I look inside myself it sometimes makes me feel sad (it's the only thing that does). You know me; I'm just a small creature, strong, cheerful, sometimes with a big heart but sometimes quite insensitive.

100 The only thing necessary is personal holiness.

101 I realize I'm still missing a lot. I fulfil the norms, I want to serve, I swallow my bad temper (which is strong), I'm always happy, but from that to being a contemplative soul and a saint, there's still a long way to go.

102 Fidelity, felicity, loyalty. I've tried to live that way ever since I joined the Work (over fifteen years ago now), with all my strength.

103 You know, Father, that humanly speaking I'm a clumsy clot, but with God's help and the Work's there's nothing that scares me.

104 I asked Our Lord once again to grant me the human and divine loyalty that we learn to live by in the Work from the very first day, which as time goes by gets stronger and firmer. Yes, Father, that's how I experience it.

105 I'm writing to you while doing my prayer. I look at Our Lord, remember you, and see myself on the inside. All are in agreement. I am at peace, with secure trust in Our Lord and in the Father (which for me also means the Work and my sisters, I can't separate them). And without even trying to I start giving thanks and making petitions.

106 Thank you for everything, Father; here I am, as always. I work, do apostolate, and pray as well as I can. I want to do it better, and if you remember to pray for me, perhaps I'll manage.

107 It's 19 years today since I wrote to you for the first time asking to be admitted to the Work, and I think I said almost the same things. And I hope to repeat it as a sort of refrain all my life long.

## AFTERWORD

**108** I'm keeping in mind everything I know needs praying for, and what I imagine does. Help me to behave well in whatever God may want for me now.

**109** "Give me a big heart, O God." God enlarged her heart so that her love for God and other people grew greater day by day, until she achieved the destiny she had always pursued.