

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES.

ADDRESS OF BISHOP JAAKKO GUMMERUS TO
THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NURSES, IN
THE CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS, HELSINGFORS.

"LOVE IS OF GOD."

Those who participated in the beautiful service in the Church of St. Nicholas, Helsingfors, which was a prelude to the International Congress of Nurses, and listened to the Address given by the Bishop of the Diocese, will not soon forget its inspiration, the theme which ran through it all being the love of God, a subject peculiarly suited to the Christmas season. Many of our readers, we know, are desirous to possess this Address, and we have pleasure in publishing it *verbatim* in this issue.

(TEXT: I COR. 13 3—8.)

You have come from all parts of the world to our far north, which now receives you with all the concentrated fulness of light and warmth, which it has during its short, but beautiful summer. It is our desire that you may also feel how our hearts and minds are opened to welcome you. You come to us as representatives and servants of a great work of humanity and love, as soldiers in a noble army fighting against the life-destroying powers of sickness and death. We all, who are standing outside your ranks, have at some period of our life obtained help and aid through you, either personally or for some dearly-loved one, at whose sick-bed we stood with trembling heart, and are indebted in deep gratitude to you.

When visiting a hospital we see the heaped accumulation of suffering within its walls, it makes us feel anxiety and sorrow, but these feelings are at the same time outweighed by rejoicing and thankfulness, as we see there also the work of compassion and love, combined with skill and training, in its brightest form. We call you "Sisters," and there is pure tenderness as well as honour and esteem in this name. We see you all in those we have come across, and what one of you has done for us we regard as done by you all. You are in our thoughts united in one large and noble Sisterhood, representative of the highest womanhood. How have you achieved this position? Not merely by your skill, not merely by your unwearied toil, not only by the blessed results of your endeavours, valuable as all these may be. We often enough see you struggle in vain against the terrible foe, sickness and death, and still, in such situations, you gain our affection the more. It is not because in a figurative sense, you have bestowed all your goods to feed the poor, and have given your body to be burned, that you have won our hearts, but because you have partaken of that greatest of gifts—love. It is because you have shown, or as far as you have shown, those noble traits of character which are described by the Apostle in that Song of Songs, of which we have read a passage to-day—of that love which suffereth long, and is kind; which envieth not; which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, beareth, hopeth, and endureth all things and never faileth. We have seen so much of this love inspiring and supporting your work, that we have seen the great ideal, which stands before you.

And you have come to this holy place not to take part in a mere ceremony, not only to listen to song and music, but because, before plunging in the manifold practical questions which fill the programme of these days, you desire an uplifting of your hearts and a concentration of your minds upon this high ideal, which is the soul and spirit of your work and the real uniting force in your world-wide sisterhood. Such an uniting force it is, because this love has common origin, of no merely human, but godly nature. As says the Apostle: Love is of God; and everyone that

loveth is begotten of God; and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love (1 John iv, 7, 8). If you are not all ready to join a confession in such outspoken words, there surely is not one of you, who is not aware that the power of real love and compassion does not depend on ourselves and cannot be developed by purpose or decision of our own will; it must be set on fire by a spark, coming from a source which is higher than our individual life. Our lifework must be placed in connection with some great purpose of the human world as a whole; it must be anchored in the deepest ground of our own nature. What gives us this aspect of our work and this anchorage. Only religion. Only the communion with the Eternal. Our soul cries with Augustine: "My heart is restless until it finds rest in Thee."

And the Eternal, who is love and the source of love, gave us his beloved Son, who emptied himself, taking the form of a servant (Phil. ii, 7); who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. xx, 28); who seeing the multitude had compassion on them and healed their sick (Matt. xiv, 14); who taught us in words and example the law of self-sacrifice, that he who seeks to find his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life shall find it (Matt. x, 39); who gave us an insight into the meaning and blessing of suffering, which we need, lest we fall into desperation, when we are dealing with so much suffering in the world. The Divine Fire is burning here. That fire kindles the fire in our poor and cold hearts; and it does it, first of all, if we humbly and gratefully accept the mercy and love of the Heavenly Father, which He was sent to bring us. This gift pours into our hearts the joy, and peace, which we need to be capable of blessed and successful work, not the peace of calm resignation or rigid duty, but the peace of God, which at the same time is love and makes us the more sensitive to the sufferings of other people, being "the only clue to the mysteries of life."

None of us can boast of having enough or the fulness of this love. All of us must be deeply humiliated before that ideal, as it meet us in Jesus Christ. But in humiliating ourselves we are uplifted by His grace. May we seek this source of power in prayer and devotion, desiring to be what we ought to be.

The calling of nurse is a profession like other professions. But the religious aspect of life means, that a profession shall be sanctified to a *vocation*, a lifework given from God, in which we serve Him and carry out His will. Not every profession can in the same degree be thus sanctified to a divine vocation; not every profession can satisfy the whole personality and develop all the possibilities which are slumbering in the soul. There are in our time of industrialism and mechanical work professions so empty and standardised, that not even the religious aspect can give them the character of a positive lifework. A profession of this kind is only a means of livelihood, and the vocation must be found somewhere else beside it. But in this respect the profession of a nurse stands on the highest possible level. Profession and vocation can fully correspond with each other. When she devotes herself to the service of suffering humanity, all the strength, all the insight and interest, all the human sympathy and the divinely inspired love she is capable of are required of her. It is a service of man to man with all the heart in the service. This service cannot be done with calm calculation of how much it is worth while doing. Here you must give your life to win your life. In doing so you are fellow-workers in that great Kingdom of God, which unites all races and nations unto one body and spirit. *Amen.*

Nothing could have been a more beautiful opening to the Meeting and Congress of the International Council of Nurses than the service at which this Address was given.

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