



1 September 1878

Advice for the Retreat

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

My dear Daughters,

I have nothing to recommend to you today except that you prepare yourselves well for the coming retreat, which will certainly bring you many graces. When you listen to the word of God, when you have more time for recollection and prayer, God will show to you what He wants of you, and if you are faithful, He will enable you to progress and he will enlighten you, too. He will grant you many graces from prayer, also the graces of recollection and of prayer itself.

We are all in a certain degree of prayer, of meditation; of the presence of God. But God wants us to rise higher. This rising is itself a gift of God, but God is infinitely good and is always ready to give it to us. If He grants us during this retreat the graces to remain more continually in His presence, what great gift will that be, dear Sisters! It is purely a gift of heaven; for we can do nothing, without the help of grace, to continue in the presence of God. If He grants us to conquer our dominant fault which still remains in us, or to make a firm resolution to change radically, these, too, would be precious fruits of the retreat!

Many saints have become remarkable in the practise of the virtue contrary to the fault which is theirs by nature. St. Vincent de Paul was by nature cold, dry, a little bit stiff; by grace he became the most charitable saint imaginable! It is said of St. Francis de Sales, that he was quite fiery, and for this reason he put all his effort of grace of gentleness. We continually see in the life of the saints that the persons, who by nature were indolent, carried away by the satisfactions of the senses, become the most mortified; that the proud were, above all, striving to become humble, and the same for other virtues.

Well then, dear Sisters, if during the course of this year, we are able to receive one of these graces; if all the persons we live with are able to see a remarkable change in our conduct, how pleased God will be and what progress shall we be making!

I will especially point out to you two points to be considered with great attention. First of all more prayer and recollection; that in the community prayers one may feel more attention and more union with God. Secondly, try to correct that fault in your character, in your life, in your

interior and exterior dispositions which seems imperfect, in order to acquire the virtue opposite to the fault that others see in you.

I hope you don't have the folly to think that the fault which others see in you is precisely the one you don't have. If we are striving for perfection we ought in this matter to be persuaded that others see better than we do.

However, some of you have really no apparent outstanding fault. You can be aided in this matter by the knowledge that you have of yourselves. All you have to do is look for the fault of which you accuse yourselves most often in confession. This is a good means to know the fault that you have to fight against and the virtue you have to acquire.

Above all, Sisters, enter the retreat with a great idea of what it is. Enter it with great confidence that God has lovingly prepared graces for you; with this love which makes you never doubt the goodness of God. Then don't be afraid, at the end of the retreat, to make strong resolutions. Don't make too many, only one if you wish, but it should be brave and generous.

Finally, enter the retreat saying to God: "My God, here is my heart, here is my life; already Yours by my religious profession (or if a novice, by the choice that You have made) and what is more consoling by the choice that You have made of me. You have deigned to choose me; I have pleased You to put a special sign on my heart, so that I can admit nothing there except Your love. You who have chosen me, achieve Your own work in me. I trust that You will give me what I have most need of to please You as long as I cooperate with Your grace; being neither lax, lazy, negligent, nor inattentive; on the contrary I wish to be fervent, industrious, exact, zealous, faithful in prayer, to obtain more love, more graces".

You have all heard that in a pilgrimage to Lourdes, the Blessed Virgin granted marvellous miracles due to continuity and fervour in prayer. Then, we who are a large community, can't we all unite in prayer during this retreat in order to come out of it more saintly if we are yet not so, or at least a little bit more advanced in sanctity? Can't we obtain that and believe that because the Blessed Virgin has enabled the paralytics to walk, she can also enable our souls to walk in the way of perfection, if we ask it earnestly and with fervour? You know that at Lourdes they pray without ceasing, either at night or during the day; they pray with arms outstretched, eyes raised to heaven. We shall not be able to do so in the same manner; but our days should be filled with prayer. You will listen to the word of God, you will have long times of prayer, you will recite the Divine Office, and on coming and going in the garden, you can still pray that the Blessed virgin obtain for you from God the most precious graces.

This is what I ask of you for the retreat. Set yourselves seriously to it by banishing all foreign thoughts and all distractions which can still remain in you at the time when the retreat begins.

