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**HOW TO RISE ABOVE EARTHLY THINGS BY THE
VIRTUE OF HOPE**

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

My dear Daughters,

At the beginning of the year that may bring reasons for anxiety on account of political events and that will certainly bring us good things from God's mercy, I feel urged to speak to you about Christian hope.

Hope is a virtue, a theological virtue. Its roots are planted in our soul. It is one of those virtues that we can practise only because God gives us His grace. It links earth to heaven if it is practiced fully, and everyone would like to have a great and strong hope. But under the aspect that I want to speak about today it is rarely understood, I mean, its aspect as a virtue. Our first matter of hope is the expectation of eternal salvation. This expectation must be firm and trustful, and must rest on God alone. We must not lean on anything we have done or on anything we may do in the future, but solely on God's grace and on the infinite merits of our Lord's most Precious Blood. That and that alone is what makes our hope firm. That means that we have to strive with all our light to keep on the road of heaven, and that we must often pray for final perseverance. That is what concerns eternal salvation which is the chief matter of

hope. What we have to do is to expect everything from the Lord, to pray without ceasing for final perseverance, to keep our feet on the road to heaven with complete and absolute generosity, and never let discouragement spoil our hope. Then we shall have the right to say with David: “Dark be the valley about my path, hurt hear, I none while He is with me.” (Ps. 22:4).

Whatever our state may be, consolation, trial, temptation, we must expect everything from our Lord, and, as Father Deplace said, we must also give Him everything. That is the first thing to say about hope.

But there is another aspect that concerns our everyday life. It is this. In order to have a great hope we must not lean on temporal things. Look deep into your soul, and you will find that this is not as easy as it seems because every one of us, without exception, is inclined to lean on one thing or another. Holy Church in the Office of a Confessor, praises him for not seeking gold. This means that the saints did not find their life’s work on the material advantages of ownership and prosperity, but that they all built on the true foundation which is Christ our Lord. But gold is not the only thing we might want to possess. There are other things one might be tempted to lean on. One must look sincerely into one’s soul and see if one is detached, if one loves poverty which is the virtue which corresponds to hope. Take first outward poverty and its consequences. God may ask great privation of us. Our Lord had nowhere to lay His head. If we came to that by persecution it would be time to practise hope. We ought to be so indifferent to the things of time that we should have no attachment to any of the things that could be taken from us.

If we look at our everyday life, we will get a true view of our degree of detachment. Are we ready to be sent without any feeling of attachment to another house, perhaps to the antipodes, leaving all our goods and chattels behind? Have we learned the real lesson of detachment? Are we ready to put ourselves in God's hands as St. Francis of Assisi did when they took away even his clothes? Being so completely deprived of everything, he was able to say more truly that God was His Father. Those are the dispositions we must cultivate if we want to be souls of great hope, trusting God for everything like the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, holding to nothing here below, letting go even of necessities, and being always convinced that if we have lost only temporal things we have lost very little.

That is about temporal things. But I have something to add about spiritual things. There are people (not many among us) who lean for support on a creature; a confessor, a superior, a person who helps them. Others find support in certain interior consolations and lights, on their capacity, their work, on countless other things, and if these were taken from them, it would cause them anguish and despair.

Sisters, none of that is God. God is more than all that. Do not mistake the means for the end. The end is far more than the means. Thank God for giving them to you and if he takes them away be sure that in His goodness He will give you something better instead. Real hope and trust in God makes one like a trustful child with his Father.

Whatever happens this child is always trustful, he always goes to his father for everything he wants. Even if his father beats him, the child will come back and throw himself in his arms. He accepts everything and as long as he has his Father he feels that he lacks

nothing. Now this is what we must do if we want our trust to be perfect.

Hope that is firm and wholly detached wants only what God wants, and finds its rest neither in things nor persons, but only in Christ our Lord, who calls us to Eternal life and who will never fail us.

And now, a third result of hope is absolute conformity with God's will. Such trust as this gives not only submission but the certainty that whatever God wills is the best for us. "I was so happy in this in this house, I am sent to another house. It is God's will, God be praised... I had good sight and I spent my time working, drawing, and painting. Now I am blind. O, Jesus, thank you. I can be more recollected, more united to you." That was what Msgr. de Segur said when he lost his sight. Everyday he thanks God for two things: for being a priest, and for being blind. There you have a soul full of hope and trust whose great love made his great trial easy to bear.

You can apply what I have said about blindness to everything. Apply it to your health, your occupations, your affections, your honour and your pleasure. Look how high we can be lifted up by hope that throws us into the arms of a loving Father. Such hope, such full confidence in God is a grace and a consolation. But it is also virtue. In baptism we receive it passively, but we have much to do, many efforts to make, if it is to become pure and perfect. There is a saying, that Assumption nuns must rise above earthly things by faith, hope and love. Today we have talked about hope, another day we can talk about faith and charity. But each of these virtues requires work on our part. God gives us virtues on condition that we work to develop them and on condition that we give up everything that would prevent them from developing in us.