

« Credo » of Marie Eugenie

LETTER OF MARIE EUGENIE TO FATHER LACORDAIRE cf. Origines 1 – Part II. Chapter XI

1... I am going to speak to you very simply. It is rare I find, that Christianity is taught as I understand it. Why be surprised to find that persons, once arrived in the ways of mystical prayer are not disinterested since usually they have been taught from the beginning, ways quite contrary to disinterestedness? I will say here how I understand matters. I have to admit that I have never had to do with a person so imperfect that I have allowed myself to settle for leading her by the sole fear of not saving her soul and by a constant preoccupation with her own personal destiny in eternity.

2.It pains to me to hear this earth called a land of exile. I consider it a place of glory for God. Here He can receive from our free and suffering wills the only homage that He does not find in Himself. I believe that we have been placed here below so we can work for the coming of our heavenly Father's reign in ourselves and in others.

3.I believe that Jesus Christ delivered us from the past by His sacrifice so that freed, we might work for the fulfilment of the Divine Word. I believe that each one of us has a mission on earth. From the start, it should be understood that the heart of Christianity being the sacrifice of the One who, "proposito gaudio sustinuit crucem, confusione contempta", or as St. Gertrude said, "He has left His beatitude to come and seek labor", the final aim of such a religion is not just to seek our eternal beatitude but also to make us seek how God can use us for the spreading of His Gospel and for its fulfilment. This must be done courageously, using the means faith gives us, the poor and powerless means of Jesus Christ. We should be concerned only about doing all He has destined us to do, abandoning to Him whatever might be the success In time or eternity.

4.Can you imagine the beauty of a truly Christian society? God, lord of minds under the shadow of our faith, Lord of wills amid the anxieties of trials and tribulations, reigning everywhere, though invisible, adored even when He strikes. All the virtues which are God's very life, preferred to those needs which make up the natural life of man.

5.I am both simple and daring to speak in this way to you, but I cannot refrain before this thought. This reign of Christ is perhaps more beautiful to me, more dear to my soul than the tents of Israel of which the prophet speaks, more dear than the heavenly Jerusalem itself where one cannot belong to God without receiving his reward.

6.There are those today who say, "A lovely utopia!" I have to admit that this phrase scandalizes me, because Our Lord has said, "There will be but one flock and one shepherd. The Son of Man will draw all things to Himself." Moreover, who would dare doubt that the reign of Jesus Christ is the purpose of this world and that it is good to devote oneself to this cause which is to make Jesus Christ, liberator and sovereign of the world known, to teach that all belongs to Him, that He is present in our souls by the life of grace, desiring to achieve in each one of us the wonderful work of the reign of God. Each one of us enters into His plan either to pray, to suffer or to act. To refuse to give oneself to this end under any pretext would be to abandon the highest good in order to follow the way of egoism. I have to admit that for me, this is the beginning and end of all ChRistian education.

7.You will readily agree that the persons who have understood this are prepared to enter into the ways of prayer. But time, plus many concepts and teachings drawn from the Gospel would be required. Care must be taken to find the true Christian expressions lest anything be exaggerated. Persons thus formed and well advanced in the life of prayer, should have less difficulty than others in not seeking their own joy in prayer and in avoiding scruples at all times. They should be more ready to abandon themselves to God and to desire his hidden desires.

8.It is on this basis that the good M. Le Saint finds in us, is established. Neither he nor our superiors nor indeed anyone, is accustomed to this way of thinking. Although these ideas are entirely Christian, they have a note of novelty in the eyes of clergy and even upset them since the same ideas have often been professed with a mixture of exaggeration and error. These ideas have often come from people who have not always understood their perfect harmony with all that is most pure in mysticism.

9.That these ideas have only just appeared nowadays and are still rarely formulated, is easy to explain. There was no need and it is normal that Christian dogma becomes better and more fully understood as time develops human learning. In the saints of the first centuries, we find traces of Jewish dogma and ancient ideas concerning God. Christian action as we understand it today, was not possible in Roman society. It was necessary to withdraw, to expiate, to pray, to learn to suffer during a period when the faith was indebted to the "martyrs". Down through the ages the types of saints have changed. They will continue to change. It is for this reason that the Church will always have need of new religious orders.

10.Although I myself have not always understood these ideas with the clarity I have today, clarity which has come from the effort to put them into practice and even more, from contact with all kinds of contradictory ideas, these are the ones which have always been foremost in my Christian faith and especially in my religious vocation. It was on hearing them for the first time at Notre Dame that I felt urged to bring my grain of sand to the building and the drop of blood of my sacrifice to the combat. The most difficult part for me has been to harmonize everything else with these views... prayers, the interior life, action in the world, thoughts and feelings.

11.Also, since our role is to put doctrine into practice rather than in formulas, it suffices that the practical conclusions of these ideas have been highly approved by all with whom we have to deal. As long as the arrow's direction is approved and I am found to be aiming at the right target, I do not feel obliged to say where I have fixed my gaze in order to obtain success. My gaze is entirely fixed on Jesus Christ and the extension of His reign.