



## Marie Eugénie - Notes N.227/01

### **Big Retreat<sup>1</sup> January 1867**

I entered into retreat the 2<sup>nd</sup> in the evening with a lively desire to sanctify this year and to give God as I begin it:

- my heart to tend towards Him without any mixture of myself in what I want to seek in Him and which is Him alone, his love and a true dedication to his service;
- my mind by a peaceful knowledge of my own powerlessness and by a continual<sup>2</sup> attention to receive all simply from the hand of God without any added discussion nor natural thoughts concerning obedience, nor to the conduct of my life.
- My will in trying to make it strong in doing the will of God and sacrificing all stiffness and self-will as soon as I perceive them.
- My body keeping it at the disposition of God for the Rule, obedience, fatigue, suffering, prescribed or proposed mortifications and all the contradictions that I have to suffer. I want this to be my [New Year's] gift to Our Lord.

The first thoughts which have touched me have been:

1° that faith transmits to us the thoughts of God himself, in such a way that when human thoughts come to trouble us, we only have to climb higher and take refuge in those of God.

2° that hope which lifts our will above itself so that it desires God alone, must also strengthen our heart to hope firmly to possess him and to await from him all the specific means to lead us to this end. I saw the infidelity which my dejection entails, and now with my whole will I want to hope constantly to possess God in my heart in the most intimate way, even in this world.

Next I examined my soul and my life and I feel the need for a complete renewal of myself. It will soon be half a century that I have been on earth. What will remain from this long time, even if I take only my religious life? How many worthless occupations and preoccupations; how many movements, works, words, thoughts which will not rise from the dead and are leaving no traces for the good! Then how many faults, scandals, irregularities, bad examples which can weigh down the future of the Congregation! What bad use of the most diverse things, of graces, of trials, of helps, of temptations, of natural gifts, of tendencies to some virtues, of lights on so many points, of tendencies which I have had to fight, of friends, of the troublesome, of Superiors, of inferiors, of affairs, of so many meetings, of all that God has given for the work, and of all that I could have merited through contradictions. Why am I committed to the service of Our Lord? Can I imagine that it is to build houses, organise foundations etc.? No certainly that is not the main thing. I belong to Jesus Christ to fight the devil, the world and the flesh, to love Our Lord, and to make

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<sup>1</sup> This retreat took place after all the difficulties with the ecclesiastical superior a propos of the presentation of the Constitutions in Rome. ("Affaire Véron" 1866) Cf. N. 253, N.256/03.

<sup>2</sup> First draft: "disposition" crossed out

him loved and known. Everything else is only the means, and I must not take the means for the work itself.

I want to set myself to make a holy year in which the only thing I try for is to live with Jesus and to imitate Him; to detach myself from externals so that I can live more in the depths of my soul where God lives (and exterior activity makes me lose this awareness). So these will be my resolutions:

1. To lessen my active life by freeing myself from details, leaving them to others and not letting myself be caught up by things which don't have a real value for God and for the Congregation.
2. To put in its place a life of regularity and of application to prayer. In order to do this demand of myself great exactitude on three points – getting up, the day Offices recited in choir and punctuality for meals – say Matins and Lauds in the evening.
3. To guard my soul in calm, submission, patience, supernatural spirit, love and trust. To manage this, no longer allow those hurts in me which leave nothing but ruins, and no longer permit myself to consent to those rebellions of the soul which produce them. If they come, I will not listen to them, and I will take refuge in the Heart of Jesus Christ as I would do for a bad thought. To ask pardon often of God for consenting to suchlike things in the past and wipe out the traces as soon as possible.
4. To have the courage to make myself at last be constantly obedient without bargaining, without relaxing, without excuses. Sacrifice myself immediately<sup>3</sup> in what costs me, make up for my cowardice, my stiffness, my reasoning. May this year be finally a year of humble and perfect obedience, of abandonment of my own judgment, of sacrifice.
5. To conquer myself; to want to conquer myself in patience, and by the mortifications I am permitted. To suffer, if that is necessary, to be regular, not to complain, not to listen to people who complain to me or<sup>4</sup> who push me to be soft. Fight against my bad habits, letting things go, the natural life, avoid unnecessary conversations. Remain quiet without being condescending, - the fewer my words, the more peace I will have. Often ask the help of God because I can do nothing. Try to have a joyful and kindly humility. Efface unnecessary impressions from outside so as to keep my soul for God. +<sup>5</sup> let the least number of things enter into my soul, only think about useful things when they are there to be done. Move towards death, leaving, annihilating myself, so as to come via death and the suffering which surrounds it to the <sup>6</sup>+ eternal possession of God. Use my time well for the Congregation and for souls. Use the time to strip myself of many things so as to be poor and be able to leave everything.

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<sup>3</sup> “immediately” added later

<sup>4</sup> “who complain to me” added later

<sup>5</sup> This cross marks the following phrase written lengthwise in the margin of the same page.

<sup>6</sup> This end of the note is written lengthwise and at the top of the preceding page.