



Chapter Instruction – February 24th, 1882

PRIVILEGE AND HONOR OF CHASTITY

A GIFT FROM GOD

Mother Marie Eugenie of Jesus

As I was praying the Office, I noticed this beautiful invitation, very consoling for those who belong to God through the vow of chastity: The Lord, the King of virgins, come, let us adore him.

God takes glory in being the King of virgins, and the Church invites us to worship him under this title. It's not for all the Orders of the saints that God claims our homage in this way. We say: The King of apostles, the King of martyrs, the King of confessors. But holy women have a different invitatory. It is not with the same hymns that the Church honors them. However, it must be said that, when they are consecrated to God through the religious life, they recover to a great extent, in humility and in the practice of the virtues attached to chastity, the honor, the glory and the privileges of virgins.

This remark has inspired me to speak to you about the vow of chastity. We have a very fine rule on this subject, but it seems to me that there is still much to be said to interpret it according to the spirit of our Institute. So, I'd like to show you how this virtue was given to us, how it should be kept, and what virtues are linked to it. I have often noticed that many nuns do not understand that such and such a prescription of the Rule is precisely aimed at safeguarding this perfect chastity in which the brides of Jesus Christ must live.

And first of all, my sisters, how did we receive this gift, this honor of chastity? We didn't give it to ourselves. There is an age when little children can turn to the good or to the bad, when they can hear words that defile them or words that give them respect for virtue, so that natural feelings unite with supernatural feelings to form in them a repugnance, an invincible horror for evil in that form. If the slightest stain reaches the soul, contrition is easier on this side, because the soul distances itself from anything that might wound the virtue of chastity.

Who gave us this? God has given it to us. The first thing we have to do when we come back to this virtue is to thank God for keeping it in us.

I was reading with some astonishment, and I understand it better now, that if God has shown so much love for sinners, and in particular for Saint Madeleine, it's because those who are saved by innocence are a drop in the bucket of the number of the chosen, and that the great mass is saved by penance.

How grateful to God those souls who have been established in innocence by a very special grace must be! How grateful they must also be to the earthly instruments God has employed! This is a reason for great gratitude to our parents and mistresses, for they have done all they could to keep all evil influences away from us. They looked after us, but their eyes were not enough: we needed the eyes of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin.

When you were little, you went to church and knelt before the altars. Did you ever understand that, from the depths of the tabernacle, Jesus Christ acted on your soul, giving you the taste and love of the whitest and purest lilies? Have you ever understood that the holy Host drew you to itself in its purity, that the Blessed Virgin spread over you a fold of her virginal mantle, and guarded you for her Son's wedding feast for all eternity? Why this preference? Others, next to you, were good and innocent, had virtues, perhaps were better than you. Why did God call you? Why this choice, this love? Because he has loved you from all eternity: I have loved you with an eternal love.

Believe me, Sisters, this thought must be placed with great care at the beginning of all that can be said about virginity and chastity. As humility is the guardian of this virtue, it is with humility that we must begin. So, it's with faith, gratitude and love that we must say: "My God, how good you are! How many people, how many means you have used to keep me all yours! Now I understand it, I see it: it's by an extraordinary grace that you've saved and preserved me. Now it's up to me to do my best to attain all the perfection, all the splendor, that this virtue in which you have established me must have, so to speak, without me even knowing it." Since I can't say it all at once, I'll stop here, and continue another day.