



21 July 1878

Recommendations on Obedience

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

My dear Daughters,

Today, I only have a few recommendations to give you on Obedience.

It is this virtue that should impel the Sisters to take up in a spirit of submission and respect all that concerns the officials of the House, whoever they be. Obedience is not to be practised only toward major Superiors; it should also be practised every day in all the details of life toward those who have responsibilities.

In a religious house, obedience is first shown to the Superior; but it is also practised toward each Sister who has a special responsibility in the community. Consequently, the house Sisters must obey the Bursar; the sick, the Infirmarian; those who help in a certain employment, the Sister in charge of the employment. It is there perhaps, where one fails most in obedience. This obedience has nothing to do with your interior life. It is perfectly certain that the Sister in charge of the Sacristy or the house-cleaning has nothing to say about your particular examen or your prayer; but when she tells you: "Sister, it is necessary to do this in this way...you must begin to sweep from the end of the cloister...", she has a certain authority that the Superior has delegated to her in these things, and it is not nice when on the side we say "Why does my officiere have me do that? She makes the work longer, more tiring. It would be much simpler to do it in such and such a manner."

If there is a difficulty, speak as much about it as you wish to your Superior. But for Sisters to criticise among themselves the authority with which the officials are charged, does not show good spirit. It is not in that manner that we find a religious spirit which presupposes renunciation of oneself to give one's will to God. You have made, or you are preparing to make a vow of obedience, and in order to be faithful to it, you must not hold to your will in little things any more than in great ones.

I would not like to upset your conscience and have you think that you are lacking in obedience when you are not doing all the orders of your officials with a desirable docility; but by lacking

in suppleness, you prove that you are not obedient souls, and consequently, in the eyes of God, you are not religious souls. For what really makes a religious is obedience. This is true to such an extent that if the other vows were to be suppressed, Religious Life would still go on in the one vow of Obedience. Evidently, obedience makes us poor because it does not permit us to dispose of anything; it makes us chaste, since chastity would be kept according to the Rule; as for obedience – nothing can replace it.

I say this especially to the young Sisters so that they will acquire the most loving spirit possible for this blessed virtue that Our Lord loved so much. When he came into this world, He came to obey. Look for the many circumstances during which Our Lord obeyed His heavenly Father, and do the same. Obey perfectly in the sight of your heavenly Father. St. Francis de Sales said that a novice should be like a ball of wax that one could mould in any fashion. St. Jane de Chantal goes farther. She said that the will of a novice should be as supple as a handkerchief that one could twist according to one's desire. Try, Sisters, to act in that manner, so that your will be transformed and become easily that which is desired of you. It is recommended to try in indifferent things to do more willingly the will of others rather than your own. If that is the perfection of obedience, it is also the perfection of charity. Then, that also helps the perfection of recollection because not having a will fixed on one thing or on another, one has no difficulty nor interior struggles. One always feels in the presence of God, one is united to God, one loves Him more, and one lives more and more in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Finally, one is at the same time happier, holier, and more recollected.

