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Renewing Ourselves in the Spirit of Our Lord

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

My dear Daughters,

I spoke to you last time of the supernatural spirit, the wine produced in Our Lord's vineyard. Today I would like to show you the necessity of renewing yourselves in the spirit of Our Lord.

It is an immense subject and I had the intention of speaking to you about it when I tried to explain the spirit of the Assumption. Today, I shall look at it from another angle and I shall show you the attitude of Our Lord towards God, His Spirit, which should be ours.

The most holy soul of Our Lord was oriented towards God in a manner which is known to us. We have clear ideas about the order of the thoughts and sentiments in Our Lord's holy soul.

Our Lord sends us the Holy Spirit who dwells in us; He gives us His grace; He gives to us a very great, very intimate, very marvellous communication of Himself through the holy word of His Gospel, through His blessings, through His sacraments, and above all through the sacrament par excellence, the Eucharist. We are so constituted then that we may live by Christ's Spirit; we must often see to it that our soul is oriented in the same direction and manner.

What do I mean by that? When a cathedral is constructed, its apse is directed towards the rays of the sun in a certain fashion; it faces the light and receives this light in a special manner

Is our soul habitually turned towards Our Lord Jesus Christ, towards His sentiments, His thoughts? His habitual sentiments were, we know, adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, the most ardent love, and the closest union with the divine will. He was oriented towards His Father by a complete abasement which was adoration; He could say He was humble and gentle of heart¹. Finally, he had an extreme zeal to make His Father known, a zeal which made Him cry out: "I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?²" Our souls should also live in these sentiments. When we work or rest, let us find out sometimes if the sentiments

¹ Mt 11:29

² Lk 12:49

of our soul are adoration, praise, blessing, and giving to God the cult due to Him. Try to establish your soul in a state in which it has sentiments and acts similar to those which the holy soul of Our Lord Jesus Christ formed under the action of the Holy Spirit who has been given us to be our spirit.

May the sentiments which are in us always be directed to praise, adoration, blessing, love, profound esteem of all that God has given us, perfect submission to His will often expressing itself by Our Lord's words, "My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me, to accomplish His work³"; or "Not My will but Yours be done⁴".

What I have just said is more a subject for meditation than for discourse. Not many words are needed to express it, but we do need much care and recollection to keep our soul from preoccupying itself profoundly with other cares. The things of earth may stay on its surface, but it is not admissible that a religious soul have a great anxiety, a tremendous worry, an exaggerated ardour for things not of the supernatural order. As the sea has certain very profound movements and others which take place only on the surface, it is thus also for the soul: the things of God can stir it profoundly, but other matters are permitted to cause only a ripple on the surface.

Our Lord has taught us to act towards His Father in a filial way. Take the first disciples: they did not have this fear of God which seems to disturb certain devout souls. I do not think it is one of the sentiments at which the soul should voluntarily stop. Undoubtedly one must have a hatred and horror of sin, the desire to make reparation even at the cost of one's blood; but I believe that love should in the long run banish too great a fear.

I say this with much reserve; I know very well that fear is the beginning of wisdom⁵, that there would not be a great love in a soul which did not have a great horror of sin; but it does not seem to me that fear should prevail in the soul more than love. The soul must have such an eagerness to serve God and do His will in everything, that it separates itself more and more from sin. Sin becomes for it a phantom from which it flees, which it detests in the least of things. Once a soul is established in these dispositions, fear is less necessary.

Fear is an initial sentiment; it always subsists because of the disproportion between God and us, but it is not one of those profound movements to which we must habitually surrender our soul as we should give ourselves unceasingly to adoration, the annihilation of oneself before God, the total recognition that God is all, that He is all-powerful, perfect, infinite, that He has all rights over us, that we are absolutely nothing before Him, and that we have to remain always in His presence as a creature that must constantly depend, humble itself, and obey.

Yes, we must always be in this disposition of adoration, of praise of the perfections of God, of blessing, and of thanksgiving for all the good things we have received. Devote yourselves to the study of the interior sentiments of Our Lord Jesus Christ; study the perfect honour He rendered to His Father; study His perfect religion, His perfect devotedness, the unlimited and unmeasurable zeal with which He was unceasingly animated at all hours of His existence; and try to let the interior of your soul participate in these dispositions.

³ Jn 4:34

⁴ Lk 22:42

⁵ Prov. 1:7

At this moment when you are about to separate, I feel pressed to recommend to you something which I deem very important. Try, when you speak, to do good; try to let your words leave behind them some Christian truth. Do not be contented with speaking with kindness about all that fills human life, to say banal phrases like “How is your father?... I’m so glad to see you.... It has been a long time since I have heard from you...” This is not bad, but the conversation being finished, what is left? What remains to become a seed for life eternal? Nothing.

I ask that every time you have to deal with people of the world, with the children, with the friends of the house, with the young girls who think of becoming religious, ask God before entering the parlour that some of your words be a seed for eternal life – a simple word, not that of a preacher; and, when you come out, make a serious examination to see if, in what you have just said, there were only “nothings,” or if there was something for life everlasting.

Our Lord is for us a great model in this. Take the holy Gospel. It contains the simplest things in the world: a woman who has lost her drachma and who sweeps her house to look for it. A man who is in need of bread and who seeks his friend in the middle of the night to ask him for some. A vineyard, a vinedresser, a father of the family. Our Lord speaks of these things for the sole reason of making known the kingdom of His Father and the necessity of salvation. He speaks to influence men to be gentle, good, humble, and peace-loving.

To speak for this reason only is impossible; we are obliged to add “indifferent” words; but if we spoke only “indifferent” words, if we left nothing that could be a seed of the heavenly kingdom, we would not be imitating Our Lord Jesus Christ, and we would not be cultivating well enough the interior field of our heart. “Good people draw what is good from the store of goodness in their hearts,”⁶ says the Gospel. It is from the riches of God’s spirit in us that the good word comes, the word of faith.

You are about to make your retreat. I ask you, Sisters, examine yourselves. See if each of you habitually speaks one word of faith for every hundred words you utter. You write letters. Is there to be found in each of these a word of faith? If such is not to be found there, I would prefer that your correspondence be burnt. There are Sisters who have this gift of slipping always a word of faith; others seem not to have it at all. You must all try to imitate the thoughts of Our Lord and say like Him: “I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?”⁷

Thus, when you write to the children during the holidays, counsel them to receive the sacraments, advise them to be faithful to their prayers, recommend good books to read; remind them of a thought of faith, as the importance of salvation, the brevity of the things of this world, the consolation of having served God at the hour of death, etc.... It is not very hard to find things such as that to say; with the children you do not have to search for fine sounding phrases.

Saint Ignatius converted Francis Xavier with this single word: “What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul?”⁸ He did not preach in the manner of Bossuet; he limited himself to this word drawn from the Gospel which he repeated till the latter was convinced of the vanity of human glory.

⁶ Lk 6:45

⁷ Lk 12:49

⁸ Mt. 16:26

Apply this to yourselves. When I read the letters which have to be sent or those which arrive, I tell myself sometimes: “What a waste of time! What will remain of all this?” Other letters however are not long but they contain good counsels, something which does good, which leads to God; I prefer two pages of these to eight which leave nothing behind. It is with this criterion that a Sister must evaluate her correspondence, her relationships, and her words.

To the above recommendation I would add, that among us, we should be less “preachers” than elsewhere. If you ask me the reason, it is this: our Sisters, having spent the whole day in holy and serious thoughts, come tired to recreation. Recreation is held, St. Teresa says, so that the spirit may relax and rest. Nevertheless, in the freedom, gaiety and joy of the conversation, one may sometimes insert a word of faith; but such a word must be pleasant, or else one should not say it. St. Teresa and St. Francis de Sales had this talent; ask it from God. To the Superiors above all, I would say, that they should ask God the grace to uplift the tone of conversation in an agreeable manner, with thoughts of faith.

In everything, Sisters, let us ask Our Lord Jesus Christ not to lead useless lives, not to waste our thoughts, nor our words; but to direct them as He did so that a durable and supernatural good may result from all our work and all the efforts we make in our dealings with others. If we engage in this, self-love will vanish; for what will remain of self-love when one is preoccupied with God’s glory?

