



30 July 1871<sup>1</sup>

## The Aim and Works of the Congregation

### Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

My dear Daughters,

I am glad that this point of the Rule mentioning the apostolic activities that can be undertaken by the Congregation has been read and I wanted to draw your attention to this: we are to work for the salvation of souls by the means enumerated, such as retreats, boarding schools, orphanages, etc. But it would be a mistake to think that we could do all that at the same time. One or the other house, according to circumstances, can do work of these different kinds, but to overburden ourselves is not in keeping with our spirit. The thing of first importance for us is to have enough time to devote to God and our interior life. We are too often influenced by what Father Faber calls the great fault of our times, the agitation, the sort of fever of wishing to undertake everything. There are souls who, from zeal, multiply their occupations and burden themselves with a heap of activities and do not reserve enough time for the most necessary thing of all, caring for their interior life, their spiritual progress, their union with God.

The basis of our life must be the service of God by our sanctification, by directing our intention towards Him, always with the firm purpose of complete submission to His holy will, in a spirit of silence, obedience, humility, of prayer and recollection, and in a state of total gift of self and constant union with Our Lord.

There may be people who in the midst of zealous absorbing tasks or activities even to the point of agitation, can keep themselves in a state of perfection and spiritual progress. But, believe me, my dear Sisters, there are few such souls and 98% need a certain degree of rest and peace and silence to be able to practice recollection and to pray and to make progress.

Having spoken of what concerns the basis of our religious life, I must add that there will be acts of imperfections along with your acts of virtues. This must not surprise you nor disturb you. You must expect it till the end of your life. Always, both in ourselves and in others, we shall have to put up with imperfections that may be obvious, without however making us guilty in the sight of God. Man sees what is external; But *God sees the heart* as Holy Scriptures says (I Kings 16. 7). He sees us through and through and judges our intention. He looks at our state more than at our acts.

Thus it is necessary for us to attend to our interior life and to put it right, using the right means: prayer and recollection. That must be the foundation of our life on which everything else is to

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be built up. One cannot build on shaky ground as people try to, who live in a rush and scatter their energies on external occupations; they try their best to catch up with their meditation and their recollection and all the exercises of the interior life. It is true that lately external happenings have created hindrances to our recollection, breaking up communities and scattering sisters in all directions. But now there is nothing to prevent us from taking more care for our interior life again. We can do it more easily here because we do not have urgencies. We have even more time than before, since our apostolic activities are less and the boarding school is very small.

It would be a good thing to renew yourselves in the habit of silence... I also recommend obedience and dependence. Lately several things have been done without permission, and, dear Daughters, that ought not to be. Why is there a local Superior in the house as well as the Superior General? Precisely to make it easier for you to practice obedience. So from now onwards be careful to ask all the necessary permissions, and take the habit of constantly practising humility and patience and all the religious virtues.

