



December 15, 1889¹

The Sources of Joy: faith, obedience, purity

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

My Dear Sisters,

I will simply remind you that Advent is a time of hope and joy. But what is the foundation of Religious joy? It rests first and foremost on purity of conscience. What gives Religious Sisters joy is that they are at peace, that they rely on God, and that their conscience is secure enough so that, if Our Lord were to suddenly take them, they would be ready and have oil in their lamps. This is the first foundation of Religious joy.

The second lies in the obedience that leads them to perform their duties with the utmost fidelity. The more one is surrendered to one's Superiors, the simpler and more trusting obedience becomes, and the greater the joy. When one interacts with Religious and finds one experiencing some sorrow or sadness, it is almost always because she has something to complain about, which is unfortunate, or because she is not fully surrendered to her Superiors. If one obeyed with faith, persuading oneself that one is doing God's will by fulfilling obedience, it would be a source of joy.

Finally, another great source of joy is living faith and love for Our Lord. When Bishop de Ségur, who had become blind, was asked if he wasn't sad at no longer seeing all the things of this world, he replied: "But what I see within is much more beautiful! If I could still see St. Peter's in Rome, I would find it very beautiful. What I see within is far more beautiful and never grows tiresome!" Indeed, his living faith and ardent love kept him ever attentive to the One Who dwells within us. What can give more joy to the religious soul than to ardently love Our Lord and to make His love the center and, as it were, the sun of one's life?

Strive, between now and Christmas, to cultivate these principles upon which your joy rests. Our joy is not that of worldly people. Everywhere, even in heretical lands, Christmas is a time of great joy, but one not based on true faith. It is a purely human joy, whereas our joy is based on faith, on obedience, on purity of conscience, and Our Lord, too, finds joy in coming to us; He comes with consolation.

In this great city of Paris, there are undoubtedly very holy souls who will receive Him, but how few compared to the great number of indifferent people who do not think of Him. This poor Lord is being driven from everywhere, and He seeks in Religious Houses hearts open to Him through purity of conscience, purity, and obedience.

This truly means giving one's soul for one's brothers and sisters, and each of us has a part to play in this state of the Good Shepherd and can and must go that far in service to our neighbor and devotion to souls. Look within yourselves, and if you do not find that you have made progress in these solid, necessary

1. Unedited Chapter.

virtues, resolve during this Advent to renew yourselves entirely in order to follow Our Lord, poor, obedient, humble, stripped of everything, charitable, patient, and devoted to souls.

I will never forget that the first time Mother Therese Emmanuel received a great grace was after preparing herself for it during Advent through extreme devotion to the Holy Childhood.

She constantly kept Our Lord, annihilated in this Mystery, before her eyes and applied herself in a very special way to doing everything for Him, to giving Him everything during this time preceding Christmas. It was then that she received from God one of the graces that seize a soul and consecrate it more particularly to love and prayer.