



*13 August 1876*

### To Renew Oneself - Meditate On the Rule of St. Augustine

#### **Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus**

My dear Daughters,

We are nearing the feast of the Assumption. We are also approaching our General Chapter and I would like to recommend to all what should be its fruit: renewal in the observance of the Rule. Today, I would like to talk to you on the Rule of St. Augustine. What I ask of you now is to take it up and make an examen of the virtues which are recommended therein.

Take, for example, the love of God. If you gather all that is said in the Rule on this virtue, you will see how much Our Holy Father St. Augustine insists on charity towards God; in the first place, then towards our neighbour. The first word of our Rule is this: above all, may God be loved, and then our neighbour. Later on, in connection with “warnings” on the correction of faults, the giving out of books and clothing, see how charity for our neighbour comes to the fore always, as the dominant quality.

Take up the question of poverty. Certainly, the Rule of St. Augustine is full of mildness and charity; yet, see how it insists on poverty. It states that all things be held in common, that we should not work for ourselves to get our own clothing, bed, or veil; that in the clothing which is given us, according to the season, attention should not be paid as to whether or not we get back what we have brought or are given what another has already worn. This proves to us that in the time of St. Augustine clothing was held in common.

This has always made me think that, contrary to the opinion of the hermits, who maintained that St. Augustine and his religious were dressed in black, that their habit was of white wool; because this is the custom among the Africans. Therefore, these habits, once washed, could, without inconvenience for health or cleanliness, be worn by any religious.

We cannot do the same with our purple habits; but we can at least enter into the spirit of the Rule, so as not to have any spirit of ownership about the things given us for our use.

Pay attention also to what is said about the correction of faults, which must be done with the greatest charity; then, to what concerns the Divine Office. It is true that it is not stated, as it is in the Rule of St. Benedict, that the Office is our main occupation. But notice the importance that St. Augustine gives to the Office. Just this simple recommendation: “Meditate in your heart what your lips are saying”, would be enough to sanctify the Office completely. The first Augustinians, then, said many prayers. Evidently they were not litanies (these were not

customary in those times): it was the Office, or what forms its basis, the psalms, the hymns, the lessons from Sacred Scripture. Take to heart then, this recommendation of meditating in your heart what your lips pronounce.

You may be asking yourselves: “why is Notre Mere recommending so strongly to us that we meditate on the Rule of St. Augustine?” It is because it is so easy, my dear Daughters, for even the holiest things to turn into routine. Perhaps you have not reflected sufficiently on the virtues prescribed by it in order to practice its directives in your everyday life.

Take then, all the details of the Rule: group them together. You will find there the counsel and the precept for all the religious virtues: whether they be obedience, humility, poverty, modesty (because it is mentioned also); whether it be the Divine Office, especially the love of God; as also all the details: work, the correction of faults and all the occupations of a soul that is consecrated to God. Make a personal check-up from the point of view of the principal virtues. Those of you who are supposed to attend the General Chapter will find therein a unity of ideas within which they can remain and which will help them to prepare for the Chapter. Those who are not attending it will help the General Chapter by trying to become poorer, humbler, more obedient, more charitable and more united to God.

We have our Constitutions, which deserve our attention; but how much should we not also love and observe perfectly this Rule, coming from ever so great a Saint, a great Doctor of the Church, a Rule adopted by so many Religious Orders, which has formed so many saints. There are few Rules that have enjoyed such great approval by the church, excepting those of St. Benedict and St. Basil. Those that came later, like those of St. Francis and of St. Ignatius, have also certainly been approved; but they are, in a way, less consecrated by time.

Let us bind ourselves, then, more and more, to our Rule, my dear Daughters, let us form ourselves on its spirit. We will then be sure of basing ourselves on the foundation stone which is Jesus Christ and His Church.