



*April 22th, 1881*

### Virtues that are the basis of the resurrection of the body

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

My dear Daughters,

We are now in Eastertide, the time of the Resurrection. For a long time we have been meditating on Our Lord's sufferings which must be a habitual subject of meditation for all Christians and for all Religious. How happy one is to rise to the joy of Easter, and to think of the Resurrection, first Our Lord's and then our own, the great mystery of Faith. It is not possible to understand it: we must believe: believe that this corruptible flesh of ours, that will be eaten by worms in the grave, will rise again in glory. We must say what the heretic converted by St. Gregory said on his deathbed. He took a piece of the skin of his hand between his finger and thumb and declared in a loud voice:

*"I know that I shall rise in this flesh, I know that I shall see my God, that I shall see the beautiful, pure, shining and glorious flesh of Him who ransomed me in this same flesh that He will give back to me by His Almighty power".*

That is an act of Faith. You know, when we say the Rosary, at the Mystery of the Resurrection the fruit we ask for is Faith; and St. Paul said: "If Christ has not risen, then our preaching is groundless, and your faith, too, is groundless". (1. Cor. XV. 14.

I might say that fact of the Resurrection is our belief. On it rests our Faith. I might say more about Faith, but I feel urged to speak about the Virtues that seem to me the basis of this resurrection.

It is not the virtues of the soul that I am going to speak about but the virtues that belong more specially to the body. They shone out most brilliantly in Our Lord, so it is a good thing to fix our eyes on them for a while. The virtue each of you has thought of at once is, purity. We do well sometimes to adore the infinite purity that radiated from Our Lord's adorable body and shone out in all His actions. To this I add at once, modesty, since St. Augustine says: "*Do not say your intention is pure, if your outward demeanour is not modest*".

Picture Our Lord after His Resurrection. What adorable modesty in all His kindness! What shining purity radiated from Him and formed His beauty. His grace. His charm, that united to draw souls to Him. Then look at yourself and say: "This flesh of mine will rise again after death, this body of mine will have its resurrection. Therefore it must be clothed in that incomparable purity that is revealed in perfect modesty, peace, gentleness, in the perfect order in which man was created".

What is against purify of the body is sin, sin of any kind, even the slightest venial sin. Some sins are not to be named in the assembly of saints, and their best antidote is the horror that they inspire and that bans them completely from our thoughts. But there are sins of the flesh that can be named in the assembly of saints: gluttony and sloth, or greediness and laziness, two sins I consider very difficult to avoid altogether.

Since Trappists whose food is of the coarsest with nothing to please the taste often accuse themselves of greediness, we ourselves may well look to see if we never commit acts of greediness. It is hard to escape them. Certain forms of food

may be attractive or repugnant to us, and very much so sometimes. Well, to go against this attraction or this repugnance, to be ruled by reason, taking what is required to keep our strength up and resisting what is merely pleasure, is a constant act of virtue, one of those acts of virtue that keep our flesh very pure in God's sight. The Fathers of the Desert long ago used to say that those who could not overcome themselves in the matter of food were not strong in the things one does not mention. And St. Philip Neri who was less severe said that those who could not mortify their mouth would never achieve anything in the spiritual life.

Now take laziness, another inclination hard to resist. Who is not lazy in one way or another? One is readier to do what is pleasant than what is not? If one has three letters to write one begins with the one that will give the least trouble. Laziness creeps in on many sides, in work carelessly done, in the use of time when one is not miserly about it, in rising, in going to bed. In short Sisters, you can each make your own examination better than I.

Then there is a certain bodily pride. Even in the holiest states of perfection one meets people who - doubtless in a small degree - value the external advantages they may have. There is a certain satisfaction in being pleasant to look at. There is a certain pleasure, contrary to perfect purity of body and soul, in being liked by Sisters and children, in being preferred to others for some merely human and natural attractiveness, not for devotedness to souls nor for the example of true piety, but for something exterior such as amusing or likable qualities. That, Sisters, is inferior. This pride of the flesh has in it something out of keeping with the wonderful purity that clothed Our Lord and Our Lady and which they taught the Saints to imitate.

When we contemplate Our Lord after His Resurrection we see Him with all the qualities of a glorified body. He veils His

glory because human eyes could not bear it, but His body is glorified and has all the brilliance of purity and of separation from creatures. That means a lot. Note well that during the forty days after His Resurrection Our Lord had few dealings with creatures. He would come to them and then He would leave them, and when He came it was always for a deed of faith or mercy: to make Bishops or Priests, to institute Sacraments, to found His Church. He had not yet ascended to Heaven but He withdrew in prayer, in His glory, in His holiness and purity, into a state that does not correspond with the life of sinners here below, but which corresponds very well with the Religious Life, as Bourdaloue tells us. The Religious is seen by men and women; she has to do with them more or less frequently. But every time that she meets somebody, she must bring them something of God and then draw back into that state of separation from creatures which is her proper state.

Meditate on all this and ask Our Lord that the purity of your soul may bring about the purity of your body. May this body which is your companion and your servant here below, which is destined through all eternity to share the joy of the soul and increase it, which is destined one day to shine with all the brilliance which is appropriate for a virgin, a spouse of Jesus Christ, a queen, - because what are queens but the spouses of Jesus Christ, - may this body, as I was saying, be kept in peace, in modesty and in penance in union with Our Lord.

In reality all that I have said to you is impossible without the spirit of penance, without that spirit which dominates the natural inclinations and the flesh and combats them. Every time that the inclinations of the flesh make themselves felt, penance has to come in and separate us from this inclination and make us expiate the weaknesses we may have had in the past. But do not deceive yourselves. Your penances would be in vain, in the sense that you could be bruised by the blows of the discipline,

exhausted from fasting, if your desire is to please your fellow-beings, and give way to self-seeking You might do all possible bodily penances, but if you lacked the virtues I have just been speaking of and the holiness of purity that would make you pleasing to God, all your penances would be mere waste.

Penance, then, must be the servant of the other virtues, but it should be there to give the soul the strength necessary to rise up to Our Risen Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

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