



Chapter – 10 March 2020 JOYFUL DETACHMENT



Very dear Sisters and Friends,

As the feast of Saint Marie Eugenie is around the corner, it gives me immense joy to write this message to all of you during this season of Lent. It is an important time in the liturgical calendar for “prayer, fasting and almsgiving” – a special time set apart for deeper communion with God (prayer), personal conversion (fasting), and for more sensitivity to the needs of others and connectedness with the world outside (almsgiving). In his message for Lent 2020, Pope Francis referred to the paschal mystery of Jesus’ Passion, Death, and Resurrection as the basis of our personal conversion and explained its implication as follows: “Putting the paschal mystery at the centre of our lives means feeling compassion towards the wounds of the crucified Christ present in the many innocent victims of wars, in attacks on life, from that of the unborn to that of the elderly, and various forms of violence.” This according to Pope Francis implies being personally committed to “the building of a better world.”

Some of you must have already received the CGP 2020 document, and others will receive it soon. One of the dreams of the CGP community is to **allow our charism to come alive** in and through our **authentic witness** to it in our daily life. In the context of our pursuit of integrating the Assumption Way as truly as possible, what Rabbi Jonathan Sacks once said is very timely and helpful: “In our uniqueness lies our universality. By being what only we are, we contribute to humanity what only we can give.” Where does our uniqueness lie? How can we support one another in being who we are? Saint Marie Eugenie considered **Joyful detachment** to be one of the characteristics of the Assumption Spirit, of the Assumption Way/Culture. Let us make this Lenten season a period of grace to grow in joyful detachment and thus to become truly daughters and sons of Saint Marie Eugenie.



Today I would invite everybody to reflect with me on the virtue of joyful detachment. What does Marie Eugenie say about Joyful detachment?

THE CHAPTER OF MARIE EUGENIE ON 19 MAY 1878

In this Chapter, Saint Marie Eugenie talks about “joyful detachment from earthly things” and presents it as “one of the practical consequences of the spirit of the Assumption.” She envisaged a movement from self-centeredness to God’s reign on earth as a requirement for the disposition of joyful detachment and dreamt of a life in which doing the will of God takes precedence over everything else. The virtue of joyful detachment presupposes a personal encounter with Jesus and deep communion with God.

In the words of Marie Eugenie:

“The Spirit of the Assumption tends towards a joyful detachment from earthly things and a going beyond trials and difficulties without complaining or wasting our time over them.”

The virtue of joyful detachment is all about our faith in God and a deeper life-giving, freeing spiritual life centred on God’s reign.

“As we free ourselves from useless words and actions, complaints, worries and worldly affairs, we make the Kingdom of God present.”

Moreover, Marie Eugenie talks about joyful detachment in the context of doing the will of God:

“We trust ourselves to God even before we know His will. When God’s will is known, we accept the will of our Father without complaining, in a certain joyful detachment from all that is a merely human or earthly way of seeing things.”

Joyful detachment is above all an attitude, which enables us to see and accept everything from the perspective of God’s goodness.

“The spirit of the Assumption tends towards joyful detachment. This attitude leads the Sisters to see everything “in the light of God’s goodness”, in his love, and to welcome trustfully all that comes from him. They face troubles and contradictions inherent in life, knowing that nothing can separate them from him” (Rule of Life, 47).

The virtue of joyful detachment implies a profound experience of and union with God – nothing “can separate us from the love of God” (Rom 8:39).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

It is difficult nowadays to think of joyful detachment as a virtue since it has become for some an outdated topic to reflect on. But I want to guarantee you that once you experience its grace you will never be the same – all your detachments will become joyful ones. It is all about growing in the freedom of the children of God. I remember a story from the Buddhist tradition which can be of some help to us. Once a disciple asked the Zen Master: “what can I do to make myself free?” The response was: “You don’t do anything to become free, but you drop something, then you are free.” Dropping our attachments is a gradual and progressive process of letting go. Maybe during this Lent, let us make a list of attitudes that we need to drop in order to become freer, and then let them fall off one by one from our minds and hearts.

All of us are called to give graceful witness to who we are as Friends or Religious of the Assumption. We are called to be joyful, committed disciples and apostles to one another. What happens to us when we grow in freedom and joyful detachment from the values of this world and our own personal attachments to places, people, preferences and missions? It

empowers us to give space to the work of the Spirit in our personal lives, and in those of our families and communities. The spirit of joyful detachment connects us with others and helps us to stay eager, paying attention to the movements of the Spirit within us and around us. As daughters and sons of Marie Eugenie, when we see things in the light of God's love and goodness, we will become passionately in love with our Assumption Way of life and its spirituality. If there is passion in our hearts for the choices of God, then there is tireless dynamism and endless creativity in everything – who we are and how we do whether it is prayer life, or community/family living or our mission.

As a Lenten resolution for this year, may I propose the following for our community/family reflection? Let me ask: What does letting go mean to each one of us? Shall we share in the community/in the Assumption Together group or family a personal story of a time we were able to let go of something that was once difficult? What helped us to let it go? My own personal experiences have taught me that, if we let go of our small attachments and dreams, God takes us even higher and does BIG things. During Lent, the liturgy has us pray: “the joy of the Lord is our strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). Sacred Scripture does not say that joy is our strength, but rather “the joy of the Lord is our strength.” I think our trust in God (that all is for our good, that nothing can separate us from God's love) which enables joyful detachment, gives joy to God. So, let us explore and discover what brings joy to God, then by doing that, we will be given the peace and the grace of God. This experience of grace and peace encourages us to express our kindness, to create healthy relationships, to nourish community or family connections and to inspire others to follow paths that lead to the joy of God. This can be one of the Assumption ways of being personally and collectively involved in and committed to “the building of a better world.”

In communion with the General Council and the community of Auteuil, I wish you a Happy Feast of Saint Marie Eugenie!

Have a meaningful celebration!



Rekha M. Chennattu, RA
Superior General

Auteuil, 10 March 2020