



« My gaze is fixed on Jesus Christ and the extension of His Kingdom» MME

Very dear Sisters and Friends:

I wish you all a very happy Feast of Saint Marie Eugenie!

As we commemorate Marie Eugenie's 125th death anniversary this year, we have a golden opportunity to deepen her spirituality and renew ourselves. I invite you to reflect with me on her words – “My gaze is fixed on Jesus Christ and the extension of His Kingdom” – Since we have chosen them as an inspiration for the General Chapter 2024. I believe these words reveal the Assumption way of being and doing. They embody values, virtues, and attitudes that define our life and mission, often taken-for-granted stance towards ourselves, our ministries, and our common life in communities and families. For Saint Marie Eugenie, the Assumption is a mystery of transformation, of the victory over evil and death, of communion with God. It is all about a joyful detachment, which implies a “continual work of renewal.”¹



My gaze is fixed on Jesus Christ (Our BEING)

What does it mean to have our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ? Saint Marie Eugenie invites us to have a special focus on the life of Jesus as a source of inspiration and strength. She calls us to live in “Jesus-consciousness” at every moment. This abiding Jesus-consciousness enables us “to have the life of Jesus within us” to use another expression of Marie Eugenie.² It refers to an experience of faith, “which transforms, which vivifies, which animates all our actions, which elevates the most ordinary things to God”³

Marie Eugenie invites us to deepen our faith and create room for transcendence. In every moment, the transcendent is available to us – a sense of awe and wonder, an awareness of something bigger than ourselves, a sense of interconnectedness with everything around us. How do we make room for transcendence in our life? By making space for walks, for “sitting” in nature and appreciating a sunset or breath of air. By meditating in stillness and quiet. Let us look at the face of each person we encounter, appreciate their goodness and beauty. We might find this transcendence even during the daily chores of our life – moments of manual work, mission, and relaxation.

This contemplative experience of God creates a sense of aliveness in our daily life. This contemplative gaze makes our activities of the day more easeful and amazing, an expression of our love, something that connects us to others. It can bring the joy of creating something new every day.

How inspired and alive do we feel in our everyday life and mission? Let us strive to cultivate an everyday sense of abiding in Jesus-consciousness. Let us strive to be aware of the transcendent dimension of human life.

¹ Saint Marie Eugenie, April 16, 1871 – “The Resurrection”.

² Saint Marie Eugenie, December 1 – No year – “1st Sunday of Advent.”

³ Saint Marie Eugenie, October 18, 1874 – “The spirit of faith”

My Gaze is fixed on the extension of God's Kingdom (our DOING)

The motif of God's Kingdom played an important role in Marie Eugenie's thoughts and spirituality. In order to understand her better, let us return to the Scriptures. The Gospels proclaim God's Kingdom by narrating the story of Jesus, his life and mission.

The Markan Jesus begins his mission by announcing the arrival of God's Kingdom (1:14-15) and then by performing powerful redemptive actions (1:21-45). The multidimensional ministry of Jesus – teaching with authority, healing diseases, forgiving sins, raising the dead, expelling demons, and overpowering nature – demonstrated and validated the presence of God's Kingdom. The Evangelist Matthew narrates the intimate relationship between giving glory to God, doing the will of God, and the coming of God's Reign (6:9-10). One glorifies God's name by doing the will of God, which in turn makes God's Kingdom visible in the world.

Saint Luke presents Jesus as the one anointed by God to preach the Gospel to the poor, the one fulfilling the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 61: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord" (4:18-19). Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus was committed to bringing Israel back to God. He was in search of the lost sheep of Israel – sinners and those who lived on the margins of the Jewish community. Jesus' extra-ordinary outreach to those on the fringe of the community as well as his powerful protest and fearless resistance to all forms of evil proclaimed God's Kingdom. John's Gospel presents Jesus as someone who abides in God's love and is constantly in communication with God. The fundamental experience of Jesus is a communion with the sentiments of God, a divine consciousness, which enabled Jesus to say: "I and my Father are one" (10:30). Jesus' mission was to make God's presence visible and to show how God's work is accomplished in the world.

We proclaim the good news of the Kingdom in our times by responding to the needs of the poor and less privileged ones, and hearing the cries of those who are discriminated against and marginalized in the Church and Society. Let us live out the just and compassionate love of Christ and create a "culture of caring" as a visible sign of God's Kingdom in our families, communities, and places of ministry.

Contemplative Gaze and Passion for God's Kingdom

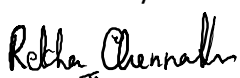
All four Gospels focus on Jesus' mission as doing the will of God, announcing God's Kingdom, and revealing God's love in the world. Jesus is indeed the embodiment of God's Kingdom. And therefore, fixing our gaze on Jesus Christ and having the life of Jesus in us will lead us to the mission of extending God's Kingdom and vice versa.

In short, Saint Marie Eugenie reminds us that our contemplative experience of God goes hand in hand with our mission of social transformation. Our experiences of abiding in Jesus sanctify us, heal us, and make us free for our mission. Our experiences of forgiveness and forgiving liberate us and others. Let our experiences of transcendence empower us to continue the prophetic mission of Jesus.

As daughters and sons of Saint Marie Eugenie, let us live a grace-filled life emanating from a contemplative gaze on Jesus and a life committed to the Kingdom values of justice and well-being of all.

May Saint Marie Eugenie accompany us all on our journey forward to the General Chapter 2024!

With all my love and prayers!



Rekha M. Chennattu, RA
Superior General

Pune, 10 March 2023