



Chapter – 10 March 2025 MARIE EUGENIE AND PILGRIMS OF HOPE



Very dear Sisters and Friends:

The feast of Saint Marie Eugenie in this jubilee year evokes many blessings of hope. We celebrated the 50th anniversary of Marie Eugenie's beatification last month, which invited us to pursue our own paths to holiness.



A couple of months ago, the Church celebrated the consecration of the new altar of the Notre-Dame Cathedral of Paris, which engrained the relics of Saint Marie Eugenie. This takes us back to Anne Eugenie's conversion experience at Notre-Dame when she listened to Fr. Lacordaire's Lenten sermon and reminds us of our own foundational experience of God. Moreover, in his Lenten sermon this year, Pope Francis invites us to "journey together in hope" in line with the Jubilee year motto to become "Pilgrims of hope."¹ Hence, I chose the theme for our reflections this year – Marie Eugenie and Pilgrims of Hope.

The concept of "pilgrimage" is linked to the Congregation's founding. In one of her personal notebooks, Marie Eugenie recalls that the idea of founding a religious congregation "who bore the name of the Assumption" was revealed to Abbé Combalot during his pilgrimage to Saint Anne d'Auray.² Moreover, Marie Eugenie often made pilgrimages to Marian sanctuaries.³ She also encouraged the commencement of the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes with

¹ See "Let us journey together in hope," the Lenten Message of Pope Francis, published on 25 February 2025. See also Pope Francis, *SPES NON CONFUNDIT*, Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025.

² Marie Eugenie, *Notes Intimes*, No. 1505: "The following Lent (1837), the confessor that my mother had given me having died, I addressed myself to Abbé Combalot. From the first reports, he spoke to me about the work that he believed he had called to find. In a pilgrimage to Saint Anne d'Auray, the Saint had made known to him, he said, that the Holy Virgin wanted to have daughters who bore the name of the Assumption and who were dressed in white and purple."

³ Examples include August 9, 1856, Pilgrimage to Bétharram, Marian sanctuary; Notre Dame de Fourvière in May 1862; April 14, 1888, to the sanctuary of Madonna del Buon Consiglio in Genezzano (to give thanks for the approval of the Constitutions).

Father d'Alzon, which continues to be celebrated today. Her life witness and writings show that Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus was a true “pilgrim of hope” who fixed her gaze on Jesus Christ and dedicated her life to the extension of God’s Kingdom.



Her writings demonstrate that Marie Eugenie conceived her life as a spiritual journey—a “pilgrimage,” even though she does not use this expression.⁴ The concept of pilgrimage is deeply rooted in the biblical themes of the journey of faith, endurance, and trust in God’s covenant promises. Although born and raised in a wealthy family, Eugenie’s early life was marked by many losses, including the death of her beloved mother, which led her to search

for deeper meaning in life. Her conversion experience at Notre Dame Cathedral revealed the power of a spiritual journey, empowering her to dedicate her life entirely to God and transforming society through Christian education. From that moment, she began her spiritual pilgrimage with Christ, seeking how she could serve God in a world filled with suffering and uncertainty.

Marie Eugenie presents Jesus’s pilgrimage – his entire life and mission – as the model for our earthly journey.⁵ Jesus’ pilgrimage began with his incarnation. Like Abraham, who left his homeland in obedience to God (Gen 12:1), Jesus left the glory of his heavenly abode to embark on his earthly pilgrimage (Jn 1:9,14). Jesus’ entire life was a journey from place to place, calling people to repentance, announcing the good news to the poor, healing people, and preaching God’s Kingdom of justice and peace. His life and mission was a journey of obedience to the Father’s will (Jn 4:34), reaching its climax on his death on the cross (Phil 2:8). And Jesus completes his earthly pilgrimage through his resurrection and return to the Father (Jn 20:17). Thus, for Marie Eugenie, following Jesus means embarking on a lifelong pilgrimage of hope in “absolute conformity to the will of God.”⁶

⁴ For example, “In this life, which is a perpetual journey, she [religious] walks every day...” (Marie Eugenie, Instructions of chapter, 2 July 1876.).

⁵ Marie Eugenie, Instructions of chapter, 28 September 1879.

⁶ Marie Eugenie, Instructions of chapter, 4 January 1880.

Marie Eugenie had a “pilgrim mindset”.⁷ What I mean by a pilgrim mindset is the perspective that enables one to live in hope despite trials and challenges. Marie Eugenie’s life journey is marked by many difficulties, which are overcome by faith-filled perseverance and unwavering hope in God’s providence. According to Marie Eugenie’s vision, pilgrims have deep faith, which enables them to go forward with hope even when they do not see the full path.⁸ Being a pilgrim of hope does not mean ignoring life’s struggles and the world’s sufferings. It means facing them courageously by trusting God even when hope seems impossible.⁹ In times of trials and doubts, what sustained Marie Eugenie’s hope was her conviction that “it is God who guides everything; no hand more loving, none wiser, to guide us to our destiny.”¹⁰ Marie Eugenie wanted us to “let our roots grow only in heaven.”¹¹ As daughters and sons of Marie Eugenie, we are encouraged to live with this “perspective of eternity” while considering the earth as “a place of glory for God.”¹² It is an invitation to focus on God’s Kingdom rather than earthly achievements and temporary success stories.

Marie Eugenie believed faith in Christ could renew our hearts and transform society. She was convinced that Christian education was key to forming young people who would shape the world’s future. She did not walk alone – she founded a community of sisters (and laity) who shared her vision and mission, which is why we are here today. Like Marie Eugenie, how can we live as “pilgrims of hope” today?

In many ways, our world is not different from hers. We also live in a world wounded by wars, conflicts, individualism, and materialism within and around us. Saint Marie Eugenie inspires us to be peacemakers in a time of conflict, foster communion in the context of exclusion, live simply in a culture of excess

⁷ See, for example, Marie Eugenie, Instructions of chapter, 7 January 1877 and 4 January 1880.

⁸ Marie Eugenie referred to them as “travellers” (Instructions of chapter, 2 July 1876).

⁹ Marie Eugenie, Instructions of chapter, 4 January 1880.

¹⁰ Marie Eugenie’s letter to Abbé Combalot, 20 July 1840.

¹¹ Marie Eugenie, Instructions of chapter, 9 August 1874.

¹² Marie Eugenie’s credo, probably a letter to Father Lacordaire, see *Origines I* – part 2, chapter XI.


and consumerism, trust in God at all times, and commit ourselves to the Reign of God.

We are called to walk in faith, trusting that every step forward and every experience, whether positive or negative, has a purpose. She encourages us to face challenges and difficulties with hope, knowing God is with us on our pilgrim journey. Enduring trials and problems with unwavering hope, she wants us to build pilgrim families and communities for a better world.

In this context, Pope Francis's invitation resonates with Marie Eugenie's vision in many ways. He proposes: "It would be a good Lenten exercise for us to compare our daily life with that of some migrant or pilgrim, to learn how to sympathize with their experiences and, in this way, discover what God is asking of us so that we can better advance on our journey to the house of the Father."¹³

Like Marie Eugenie, let us cultivate a pilgrim mindset with a contemplative gaze, embrace life as a sacred journey following Jesus's footsteps, always trust in God's project better than ours, build up new societies of justice and peace, and protect our "common home" for future generations. May Saint Marie Eugenie bless our pilgrim journey! HAPPY FEAST!

With all my affection and prayers!



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¹³ Pope Francis, Lenten Message of Pope Francis, 25 February 2025.