



24 September 1876

Confidence In and Devotion to Our Lady

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

My dear Daughters,

We are beginning a series of feasts of Our Lady. Last Sunday it was the Seven Sorrows. Today it is Our Lady of Ransom, then there will be the Patronage, the Holy rosary, the Motherhood and the Purity.

It is a good moment to speak about the trust and devotion we owe her. I have often spoken to you about this, so today I shall speak only of one point of view, namely, that we should often praise and thank God for the graces and perfections with which He endowed Our Lady.

Of all the things God has made and shown to men, the most wonderful is Our Lady. She is His masterpiece; in her every perfection and every virtue is united. Her humility matches her greatness. Whatever happens to her, whatever the circumstances of her life, she responds with consummate virtue.

When the Angel comes to announce the mystery of the Incarnation to her, she gives the sublime answer that has filled all generations with admiration: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to His word¹”. At the foot of the Cross her silence is more wonderful than any words, and she stands there while Jesus undergoes the cruellest of deaths. We do well often to remind ourselves of all Our Lady was, so as to praise God for it.

At Lauds we praise God for all He has created, earth, sea, mountains and valleys: for all He has done for man, and we call on all creatures to bless Him. I can think of no better devotion for Our Lady’s feast than to bless God for having made so good and perfect a creature, so gentle and holy and full of the highest graces, who sums up in herself all the different kinds of beauty lavished on other creatures.

Theologians say that it is not enough to admire in Our Lady all that she is by grace; we must also admire the wonders of nature that God put in her, because she is a marvel in the natural order. And it was to these gifts of nature, so perfect and so sublime, that God added outstanding treasures of grace, so that her first degree of grace surpassed the highest graces of the Saints. The words: “with its foundations on the holy mountain²” are applied to her. This means that Mary began with the degree of grace that the Saints reached at the end of their course. At the

¹ Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. Lk. 1:38

² Ps. 86 :1

first moment of her Immaculate Conception, she started with the highest degree of perfection ever attained by a human soul, even the most advanced in holiness.

Thus it was that Our Lady began: she was privileged above all others, made holy in her conception, full of the most outstanding grace, chosen by God for His highest plan, destined to be the second Eve. To all this she responded by a boundless fidelity. She always corresponded with all her graces, always grew in fidelity, so that she became supremely perfect in love, generous in sacrifice, strong in suffering, united in Our Lord, so fully His image that we cannot form any true idea of the grandeur of her perfection.

Having thus looked at Our Lady and seen what praise and admiration and blessings we owe God, I was going to say something else we have to do. But I change the subject here to emphasize what a great part of the homage we owe to God consists, and we must never forget it, in praising, adoring, glorifying and thanking Him. See the Gloria in Excelsis: We praise You, we bless You, we glorify You, we give You thanks³. All is praise. And only after that comes the prayer: You who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

It is the same in our spiritual life. A very important place must be given to the acts by which we adore and praise God, offer Him thanks, and glorify Him, first in Himself, and then in all His works. Now, among all His works, the greatest is the Incarnation. It is an infinite work, a work that is as great as God's almighty power. Our blessed Lady too; is in a way an infinite work because to create a Virgin Mother is a work absolutely beyond human understanding, that stretches out to God's Infinity. So we must make this wonderful work of God first and foremost the object of our praise and blessing, glorifying and thanking Him for it.

Anyone who might think that in the spiritual life it is enough to pray for what one wants, to try to acquire by meditation what one lacks, to compare one's soul with God by examination of conscience, would be greatly mistaken. Certainly these things are necessary but they are not sufficient in our dealings with God. The virtue of Religion obliges us to look at things first from the point of view of God, and to seek His interests.

Now I come to the second way in which we must look at Our Lady. It is one of joy and consolation for us since it considers her mercies. In her God created the most perfect heart a woman ever had, the holiest heart among all creatures. He filled it with kindness and mercy for us, with zeal and compassion for sinners. And like God, who is sovereign good, and always wants to bestow Himself on His creatures, Mary, His most perfect creature desires unceasingly to bestow on you God's graces of which she is full and of which she is almoner. And it is true to say that she has never been called upon in vain⁴, that she has never turned the cold shoulder to anyone who appealed to her, and that her help has never been lacking to anyone who asked for it with faith.

We have not enough confidence in the Blessed Virgin. If, always, we called on her in temptation, in sorrow, in difficulties, and went to her as to a Mother and threw ourselves with love and trust in her arms, we should not so often be broken and crushed, because we should always have as a prop to lean on, this purest and holiest, most perfect and most powerful motherly heart that ever was. The inhabitants of Heaven pay attention to us and watch us with more unceasing solicitude than do the inhabitants of this world. We must not forget that. Sometimes one says to oneself: "If only I had someone who saw what I suffer! (and I do not

³ Laudamus te, benedicimus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi.

⁴ In the "Memorare"

mean in a merely natural sense: I speak of a real need of the soul)... If my Superior or my director could see the state of my soul, its difficulties and needs, so as to help me...! My dear Daughters, it is quite certain that Our Lord sees all that; He sees your soul, its sorrows and its difficulties. He is always and without ceasing attending to us and giving us the grace we need.

Our Blessed Lady too attends to us, and most specially to us nuns who bear her name and who are her daughters. Though she is the Mother of all Christians we have a special claim on her as our Mother. Did we not leave our own mothers and choose her as our Mother, in a more special way than most baptised souls, even than those who consecrate themselves to her at their First Communion or on her greater feasts or by joining her Association. We have the same right to call her our Mother as we have to call Christ our Spouse. And as Our Lord is called the Souse of all faithful souls, and with a deeper meaning of souls consecrated to Him in Religion, so likewise when we call Our Lady our Mother that name has a deeper meaning than in the case of other baptised souls, by the fact that we belong to an Order that bears her name.

Today we honour her as Mother of Mercy. And the legend⁵ in the Breviary shows her so solicitous about the sufferings of the poor Christians who groaned and wept under the cruelty of the Saracens that she came herself to start an Order for their deliverance⁶. She sees our sufferings too and gives them her attention. We must respond, by whole-hearted confidence, so the care she has of us. This confidence must grow day by day, as we experience the effects of her Motherly kindness. And the affections of our heart must grow ever stronger towards Our Lord and towards His Mother and the inhabitants of Heaven whom we hope to join some day!

I add only a word about imitating Our Lady. We find such happiness in her kindness, her mercy, her sweet gentleness and humility, her clemency, her union with God and her obedience. Would it not be a denial in act of all this if we did not try to have something of her virtue in us so that people would find in us some likeness to our Heavenly Mother? And that occasions and circumstances would draw from us a response of submission and humility and faith like hers, and above all, silence like hers? Look at the Gospel and see how Our Lady keeps silence, and never talks about herself. And since today we are keeping the Feast of Mary, Mother of Mercy, let us attend specially to the imitation of her gentleness, her kindness and her charity towards everyone.



⁵ “Legend”: word used in the Liturgy for the readings at Matins on the lives of the Saints

⁶ Cf. 2nd Nocturn of Matins of 24 September: apparition of the Virgin asking for the foundation of the Order of Mercy.