



*6 November 1881*

### Discretion among Ourselves

**Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus**

My dear Daughters,

There is a recommendation that is perhaps not so necessary in this house because it concerns a fault that is not often committed here. But I have noticed the fault elsewhere so I speak of it lest it might make its appearance among us.

Your Superior and the Mistress of Novices are constantly drawing your attention to the virtue of discretion as one of our characteristics at the Assumption. We owe each other good example and edification by the practice of religious virtue and by fidelity to what we are told to do. But there must be no busy-bodging about others. To a certain extent one cannot help noticing what other people do: if anyone does not keep to the Rule and customs of the Congregation, you can warn your Superior or the sister herself. You know the right way of doing this: it must be done on your knees, with great respect and gentleness and charity. That is not against the discretion we owe each other. But to make general remarks at recreation, or to talk to one sister about what another sister does, is altogether hateful. There is no peace in a House where that sort of thing goes on. Sometimes in a teasing sort of way a sister will say to another: "You are always doing this or that for such and such a sister. I saw you making up the fire in her employment..." No sister has any business to speak like that; the Superior alone has to see such things. Remarks of that sort would deprive a sister of freedom to do her work as she should, or to show friendliness towards another. This is one instance, but one could think of countless others. Take such a remark as this: "This sister is buried in her books... She is slow... she really might work harder"... You have not got to enquire into other sisters' lives. That would be tiresome and annoying for them. And anyone who is by nature a tease must watch over herself a lot not to give way to this fault.

It is for Choir sisters as well as Co-adjutrix sisters that I say all this. Do not interfere with other people's business and do not make remarks about anyone. If you think time is being wasted, tell the Superior and think no more about it. What does it matter to you if a sister sweeps her storeroom three times a week, or goes to make up a fire five times a day? If you found fault with her, were it not for religious good manners, she would doubtless say: "Get away with you. It's none of your business". How do you know that the Superior has not told that sister in private

to do 5 times as a penance a thing that needs only to be done once? When the Fathers of the Desert told their monks to plant cabbages upside-down, these busy-body sisters would have come along to say it was not the right way to plant cabbages.

You see why it is that in Religion there must be no meddling with each other. That is one of the essentials for living in peace and charity. Each of you, when she came here, undertook to live under the Rule and Obedience and to work at acquiring perfection. But she did not undertake to submit to the little ideas and chitchat of any and every sister. A soul who is attentive to God and to purifying her conscience, and who wants to practise humility and charity, has no time to notice if the stairs are swept once or twice a day, or if a fire is attended to, and so on; or, if she sees it she says: “thank God that is no business of mine; I have enough to do attending to my perfection and my work”.

My advice to you, Sisters, is to do that; and if you do you will be able to live in peace.

