



March 24, 1889¹

Keeping silent,
An excellent way to do penance

My dear Sisters,

During this Lent, I wish to recommend silence to you. It is one of the rules which people most often break, and almost never without charity or some virtue being affected. This is the penance that a Religious can always perform, and during Lent it will make up for the austerities that most of us cannot practice.

There are different ways to fast from words. First, silence during the recommended hours, so that several hours pass without uttering a single word. Then, the silence of patience, charity, and virtue, on occasions when something is troubling and painful. This silence has much greater merit and can therefore somewhat replace other penances, if each time something unpleasant is offered to God and one remains in silence, placing between God and oneself all the little crosses one may have.

Try to practice this patient silence in your work. When several Lay Sisters are together, it sometimes happens that the one who is supposed to help doesn't help well, or that the one on whom a task is relied upon doesn't do it as she should. If on these occasions we were always humble, patient, and charitable, saying only words that remind us of proper conduct and none that express boredom or impatience, we would also better preserve all the other virtues.

These are the recommendations I wanted to give you, noting that the children themselves make efforts to be more silent during this time. If you are surprised when they talk, how much more surprising is it when the Religious speak too easily and are not careful enough to maintain the virtues of patience and charity!

Even during recreation, I recommend a silence of patience and charity. Recreation is not given to give vent to all the imperfect impulses that reside in the mind, but rather so that, rejoicing with one another with enthusiasm and cordiality, as the Rule states, we may emerge more prepared to maintain silence, with a completely peaceful and calm mind, free from any self-reproach.

¹ Unedited Chapter