



Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

March 11, 1881

Meditate on Our Lord Jesus Christ being dragged before the tribunals

My dear Daughters,

Continuing our meditation on the sufferings of our Lord, we have arrived at the moment when He is brought before the courts. So many thoughts present themselves on this subject that one does not know which to focus on. So I will begin with one of the most practical.

See how our Lord is judged by men and learn to practice exactly what He said earlier: *Do not judge*¹.

What crime had He committed to be condemned? Faced with such an unjust condemnation, one must say to oneself: "I will not judge, neither for a little nor for much, neither in great nor in small matters.

Our Lord has said it; judgment is not mine."

I make a reservation, Sisters. One may be obliged to judge. A novice mistress who did not form a judgment on her novices, a Superior who did not form a judgment on the dispositions and character of her religious, a boarding school mistress who did not form a judgment on the conduct of the children, would be wrong. But before judging, each of them must surround themselves with precautions, to protect themselves from all the small passions that distort judgment. It is personal passions that distort judgment.

Thus, we judge more favorably a person we find more amiable, more pleasant in our interactions. A child who doesn't give trouble in class, who is more docile, more polite. On the contrary, we judge unfavorably, and so to speak without appeal, a child who has little means, who gives a lot of trouble in class, who is tiresome because of a fault that, perhaps, will pass.

We judge very falsely when we judge by a kind of comparison of ourselves to others. Woe to the superior who would say: "But I wouldn't do that... I have no influence over such and such a person... She is slow, I am lively. She is stupid, I am intelligent..." These are all poor reasons, because they are personal reasons.

A novice mistress must judge her novices to see if they are capable of fulfilling the duties of their vocation. A Superior must judge the religious entrusted to her, to preserve them from the dangers within them, to guard them from the traps of the devil who seeks to kidnap religious souls and lead them to evil, to correct their faults and develop the virtues appropriate to their state.

This is a legitimate judgment that is not made out of blame, criticism, or, above all, by comparing oneself to others. The rule of judgment, when one has to judge, is to judge by seeing what a creature is in relation to our Lord, and what one can do with it in relation to the degree of Christian perfection to which one is responsible for leading it. But beyond that, one must not judge.

¹ Mt 7, 1

Yet it is one of the deepest passions of the soul to judge others. Why? We wonder. In the meantime, we judge our neighbor. The fable put it this way: we have a pocketful of other people's faults. Our Lord put it more seriously: *Why do you look at the speck that is in your neighbor's eye, while you do not notice the log that is in your own?*² It is therefore a passion, and a passion against which we must be on our guard. Whenever a judgment is formed under these conditions, we must stop and not accept it.

Remember, Sisters, that the men who judged our Lord did not believe they were doing wrong. They believed they had a certain duty to condemn Him. Put yourself in their place. These were judges who were Chief Priests and Elders of the people. They had blinded their eyes so as not to see that this was the Messiah. They had always interpreted the Law in such a way that they believed the Messiah would be what we believe the Antichrist to be, that He would come with great power and great splendor. This opinion was so widespread that a Roman emperor himself believed he was the Messiah because he was powerful and came from Judea. So, seeing a man who had nothing but humiliation and poverty on his side, who was the son of a carpenter and who did not seem to be able to place Judea in the first rank among the peoples of the earth, the chief priests and the elders of the people entered into a fury and, justified by a certain zeal for the Law, they condemned Jesus and treated Him as guilty.

They were, it is true, blinded by malice. Once this blindness and malice were established, they reasoned: *It is in our interest that a single man die for the nation*³.

They regarded the movement taking place in Judea as harmful to the country. They wanted to prevent Jesus from being recognized as the promised Messiah. Without a doubt, their cruelty, their injustice, their false testimony are not justified on this account.

When we begin to judge, we do not know where we are going. When we become angry with a creature, when we take them on the wrong side, when we believe that they have acted badly towards us, it is the devil who reigns, it is the evil spirit who is there. We do not know how far he can lead us. Therefore, we must stop from the first moment and say to ourselves: "I obey the precept of our Lord who says: *Do not judge and you will not be judged.*"⁴ What a happy and sweet consequence! We will be able to present ourselves with profound peace at the tribunal of God, if we have fulfilled this precept.

It is necessary to dwell on this first point, but the second is no less important. Our Lord exposes Himself to the judgment of men: this, Sisters, is much more difficult. To submit to the judgment of men and accept it in peace, in silence, in gentleness.

Submit to the judgment of those who seem religious, of those who hold secular power, of those who are in the world and who think only of pleasing Him. To accept this judgment with all the contempt, all the pain, all the torture, and finally death, which are its consequences: this is what our Lord did.

We must often have before our eyes our Lord presented before all these tribunals, accused by false witnesses and making no reply to the accusations brought against Him. Finally, He is questioned about His doctrine. He came to spread the doctrine, as He Himself says:

I came to provide for my Father those who would *worship him in spirit and truth*⁵. Therefore, he could not remain silent when he was questioned about his doctrine. What does He say? *I have spoken to the world openly. I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where the Jews meet. I have not spoken in secret. Ask those who heard what I taught them. They know what I said.*⁶ Then one of the soldiers who stood by struck him with a slap, saying, "*Do you answer the High Priest in this way?*"⁷

² Mt 7, 3.

³ Jn 18, 14

⁴ Mt 7, 1

⁵ Jn 4, 23

⁶ Jn 18, 20-21

⁷ Jn 18, 22

Finally, he only definitely answered the High Priest when the High Priest said to Him, “I adjure you by the living God that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God?” *“You have said it,”* Jesus replied, *“and I tell you, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*⁸

Jesus therefore answered only once, because it was His duty, as it would be the duty of any man in his position, to answer, not to excuse and justify himself, but to defend the truth. Another time, because he was questioned in the name of a legitimate authority about something that it was important for humankind to know. He was the Son of God and, consequently, He had to proclaim His mission one last time before His death and give this final testimony before the courts.

Well, Sisters, on the small occasions—we don't have great ones, perhaps we will—on the small occasions when we have to be judged, who can say that they don't respond with excuses and a multiplicity of words? Who accepts being wrong? Who doesn't have fifty thousand reasons to give? Go into your hearts. I will not paint in detail this kind of imperfection and weakness, which makes it so difficult for us to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ who remained silent in the face of unjust accusations. He was judged and He remained silent. He remained silent because He was our model. He remained silent for an even deeper reason, because He took the place of the guilty, because He, Who had in no way sinned, appeared there covered in our sins.

As for us, when we experience some humiliation, I admit that this time we did not deserve it. But in our lives, there are fifty thousand occasions when we have been wrong. We ourselves recognize that, if we had been given justice, we would have had to be very severely blamed. Who is there who has no sins to reproach themselves with in their past life? If there has been a single mortal sin, all the humiliations of the earth are due to us. It is only by the mercy of God that we have not been cast down to hell to be the object of Satan's mockery and insults for all eternity. Even if we have no mortal sin, who is there who has not committed a voluntary venial sin? Who has not, since childhood, committed a single venial sin deliberately?

When the great Saint Augustine wrote his Confessions, he was deeply humbled by the bad actions he had done, the bad passions he had had as a child. You will remember with what pain he recounts how one day, having allowed himself to be carried away by some little boys of his own age, he entered a neighbor's garden to steal some apples⁹. It is not entirely clear that this is a mortal sin. For theft to constitute a mortal sin, the stolen object must have a value of about ten francs. These few apples or figs were not worth that much. And then the consent of a child of that age was not enlightened enough to constitute a mortal sin. Yet Saint Augustine accuses himself of this fault with extreme humiliation, with great shame, great regret, and great sorrow.

What we lack is that we do not have the sorrow for the sins of our lives, for the thousand circumstances in which we have been proud, hot-tempered, jealous, cowardly, soft, lazy, etc., that the saints had. Saint Teresa too, when she speaks of the faults of her life, speaks of them with extreme sorrow and humiliation. However, her confessors agree that she had preserved her baptismal innocence, so that not having committed a mortal sin does not prevent us from presenting ourselves, in the face of humiliations, in a state of confusion, humility, and penance that makes us accept them as our own sins and to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, Who accepted them, He Who was holiness and innocence itself. After these two reflections, I will make a third. Who is this, Sisters, who agrees to be treated in this way? It is the infinite Wisdom of the Father. It is the One Who is the object of the angels' adoration. It is the One Who will come to judge the world. It is the eternal Word, God and man at the same time. How much love and gratitude we owe Him for having been willing to agree to be dragged before the courts in

⁸ Mt 26, 63-64

⁹ *Confessions*, Book II, chapter IV

this way! I cannot go into detail. You will see Him, in meditation, brought before Annas, after a night of horrible suffering in prison, then led before Caiaphas, brought before Pilate, dragged before Herod, and finally brought back to Pilate.

As you follow all these painful steps, you will say to yourself: "He Who is thus treated as the vilest evildoer is Our Lord, He is the One Who created us." This is the One Who reigns in the heavens, the One we hope to see throughout all eternity, and in whose sight we shall find all happiness and joy".

This consideration must never abandon us when we meditate on the Passion. Then we understand the astonishment of the angels when they saw the Second Person of the Holy Trinity descend so low to save us. Then we also understand what Our Lord must have suffered when He saw, in His foresight, the small number of souls who would want to follow Him on this path of humiliation and contempt.

Who, indeed, even among faithful souls, wants to follow Jesus Christ in this silence, in this submission, in this acceptance of human judgment, with every kind of humiliation, insult, outrage, and finally with a tragic death at the end? It was not to spare Him that He was treated in this way.

Therefore, I ask you to draw two conclusions from this. The first is that we must embrace love, which is the reason for all things. Holy love is never strong enough in souls. When will He come to us, Sisters? When will He sweep everything away? When will there be nothing left that can compare with the holy Love of God?

The second consequence is that while asking for love and trying to arouse it within us, in order to have and keep it, we must purify our hearts. Perhaps you will find that, for some time now, I have been saying this to you quite often. Yes, we must purify our hearts of all movements contrary to the holy love of God. We must purify them of all those remnants of contention, of animosity, which cause us to rise up against a creature, to create a sort of separation between ourselves and that creature, to want nothing to do with them.

If the heart is pure of all pride, if we want to accept only pure intentions full of God's love, then the heart is ablaze. But as long as these thousand vain things that relate to us remain in it, the heart is not free and cannot be inflamed with the holy love of God, which is the final word of religious life. Religious life is meant to lead to perfection, and perfection is found in love. But love, said Saint Benedict, can only exist in humility, and it is humility that leads to holy love and gives it perfection.