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On Mercy

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

My dear Daughters,

When we hear the beginning of the Chapter on Charity in the Constitutions, it has often occurred to me to explain to you the order and economy of mercy in Jesus and Mary. Mercy ought to be in us according to their pattern, since we are told that we must show “that we are true disciples and brides of Our Divine Saviour and true daughters of the gracious, gentle and most merciful Virgin Mary¹”.

This is such a simple thing, you may say, that it needs no explanation. But the world has such false ideas about mercy and some people enter religion with such mistaken notions on it that it seems a good thing once and for all to fix the fundamentals concerning it. These fundamentals are found in Our Lord and in Our Lady. What always predominates in Our Lord’s thoughts, words and actions is God’s glory, His service and His love. His Blessed Mother, even more than the Angels, lived for God’s honour. In her feelings, her thoughts, her sentiments, everything was directed to God’s glory. And following their example, we must give the first place to God’s glory.

Can we be merciful towards the least thing that offends God? No. No indulgence, no mercy is possible towards what offends God, towards vice. Our Lord shows this in the Gospel. He is never merciful, and He never can be merciful towards a sin that continues to exist, towards an offence of God still persisting. And Our Lady, who is all mercy and clemency, has a horror of any offence of God however small. Then what in fact is mercy, if even in Jesus and Mary it can bear no sin, no offence, nothing in the least derogatory to God’s law? It means coming to the rescue of a soul to draw it away from sin, it means having charity as great towards persons as hatred for vice is deep. St. Augustine speaks of this in our Rule on the subject of corrections and warnings.

Our Blessed Lady is most gentle and most merciful because she never abandons a sinner, but follows him to a state in which he can procure glory for God. But it would be coming down from her throne of purity and light if she had the least indulgence for sin.

¹ Constitutions, Chapter On Charity

Everything in mercy and clemency and charity then, consists in loving souls in order to draw them to follow the paths that lead to the glory of God in all things, or to keep them in those paths.

I think I have told you that when one seeks to procure God's glory, one also works for the good of souls. And this is never so well done as when God's honour and glory are given the first place. What we have to seek is the sanctification of souls in God's glory. And that is where we differ from the world. You may sometimes hear such a question as this: "Why not have more compassion for this poor soul in sin?" Such things are said because the right order of mercy is Our Lord's and Our Lady's and it consists not in a compromise with sin, but in drawing the sinner out of it.

And I add: mercy has a great effect which is this: every fault that is regretted that one knows has been forgiven is not only forgotten but wiped out. To forget faults, is one of the things Our Lady asks most of all. The remembrance of other people's faults, whether against God or against us, whether public or hidden, is detestable. Charity demands that we love others, to make them get rid of every kind of imperfection, that we follow them as Our Lady does with our heart full of love, and that we bring into play zeal, authority, even severity if we are in charge. But as soon as this fault or imperfection no longer exists, as soon as the soul regretted it and left it so as to walk in the path that leads to God's service and His glory, then it is time for that perfect mercy, which is in God, which wipes out everything, forgets everything and throws past iniquities into the bottom of the sea. Not only in the New Testament but in the Old Testament there are words of mercy such as "If your guilt be crimson-dyed it shall turn snow-white², God will relent and have mercy on us... burying our sins away sea deep³. That is the real quality of true mercy: it wipes out, it cancels, it takes away every trace of things that have disappeared from God's sight. And in that we must have the same sentiments as Our Lord and Our Lady.

If in the Gospel we see that Our Lord spoke with harshness and severity to those who persisted in their pride and hardness of heart, we see on the contrary that His Heart is open to the greatest sinner as soon as they are converted. It is not the greatness of the fault that counts with God, nor must it be with us; the whole question is the degree to which the soul rejects and detests the fault. A person whose sin is greater but who has completely rejected it, is nearer to God's heart than another whose sin is less but who remains in it.

The great question then is the soul's degree of separation from sin and of horror of it. And in this matter we have to share God's sentiments. When we see a soul wholly rid of its imperfection and going straight to God, we must have extreme love, great sympathy, kindness and joy, because the happiness of Our Lord and Our Lady is so great.

What I have said about other people I say also about ourselves. Could anything be more consoling to us and more likely to help us to keep in the way of perfection than this view of the mercy of Jesus and Mary?

Our Blessed Lady never abandons the soul of a sinner; as far as she can she keeps on obtaining for it lights and the inspirations of grace; she holds back God's arm, she delays His justice, so that, if possible, there may be a conversion. Secondly, Our Lady, always merciful, when she has obtained for us the means of getting rid of sin helps us to correct our faults. Everyone has

² Is 1:18

³ Mic. 7:19

faults. One will be impatient; another proud, another indolent, another will show off, but we detest our faults when we repent. Our Lady is always ready to receive us, and it is a very great joy to be able to take refuge with Jesus and with her. It is also very consoling to live with people who see things as we do, not loving sin or vice whatever it may be, but loving our neighbour in true charity, and if he has succeeded in getting rid of sin, to share the joy of Jesus and Mary so that last year's imperfection may be drowned in the sea and no longer exists for us because the soul that has been stained and imperfect is clothed in the crimson of the Lamb and has regained all its beauty in the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

