



23 March 1879

On the Death of Mother Marie Agnes

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

My dear Daughters,

We have just had to bear such a great sacrifice, sorrow, pain that it seems difficult to speak of anything else. There are many conclusions to draw from the event which has struck us, we must think over them.

The first one is that no one knows either the day or the hour. When health is recovered, when we seem to regain our strength, to be very useful, one can suddenly be called to God, through sufferings which do not give time to perfect our preparation, if it has not been completed.

In the religious life as elsewhere, we must always be ready to go before our Spouse. It is a source of strength in the religious life to say to oneself: "Behold a sorrow: perhaps I will only have to bear it twenty-four hours? ... An effort to make: I have but one day before me.. A great act of virtue: the reward is perhaps quite near." It is a source of strength to say this to oneself; just as it is to put oneself every moment in the presence of God, to be very faithful in avoiding the least faults, the slightest stains, so as to keep our souls very pure, alight with a generous and submissive love.

There is another thought more painful to state and yet we must know how to do it when God sends a trial: have we merited it? This misfortune, public, private, individual, is it the punishment for our sins? When St. Catherine of Sienna said that, when other saints said it as she did, they were more enlightened than we are; we are no better than they are. We must look within ourselves and say in the sorrow God sends: "This event, so extraordinary, so unexpected, have I contributed to it by my sins? This sorrow that I pay for and that others pay with me, is it not in some way a reparation for my sins?" and then, we must put away, avoid and repair all the faults which displease God, and thus avert His anger.

Each one has in himself something to redeem by this power of repentance, of which Father Emmanuel spoke the other day: the little generosity one has put at the service of God, the faults to which one gives in, the natural inclinations one has retained, all that displeases God and could make Him turn away His eyes from us.

After having shown this necessary side of humility, I add: whether it be a punishment or a trial

(God knows), the great means of drawing good from it is to accept it with an acceptance full of love, of faith, of resignation. We must turn towards the Blessed Virgin at the foot of the Cross. Our Lady was absolutely without sin, and she has had to offer her Son in a terrible manner on the tree of the Cross; it is this sacrifice which has obtained our salvation. Our Lord died for the sins of the world, not for the sins of Our Lady: she had none; and yet it is this blood which obtained her spotless purity.

This sacrifice which had preserved her from all stain in her Immaculate Conception, was a punishment. The Cross was a punishment, not for Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin, but for the sin Our Lord Jesus Christ had deigned to clothe Himself with; and this punishment which repaired the sins of His best friends, had preserved the Mother of the Saviour.

Without the sacrifice of the Cross, the Most Blessed Virgin would not have been immaculate; and this sacrifice made reparation at the same time for all the faults of Peter, of John, for Peter's denial, the sins of Magdalene, those of the most faithful friends of Our Lord of each of the Apostles. All these faults were atoned for at that moment; the sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ were the punishment thereof. And the Blessed Virgin accepted all in God's will, in a spirit of sacrifice.

We too must, in a spirit of sacrifice, unite our hearts, our minds, our wills to the adorable sacrifice she made at the foot of the Cross. We must enter into these thoughts and these sentiments which are the thoughts and sentiments of Our Lord, so that our sorrow may be of great value; so that, being expiatory, if it is God's will and if we have merited it by what we do not know, our sorrow may obtain all we need.

May this pain be a prayer, may it be an act of adoration; for what we must hold most dear, is the glory of God, the rights of God; God recognised as being always good, always a father, always holy, always perfect in His will and in His commands, even when He tries us. What we must hold closest to our heart is to be as incense ever burning at the feet of Jesus Christ, at the feet of God. May everything in the soul be adoration; even when all in the soul may be crushed.

May this very painful blow contribute to our sanctification, to the good of the Congregation, to the good of the beloved soul that we so deeply regret not seeing any longer among us. These holy dispositions, which should be ours, multiplied by the number of people which constitute our religious family, can obtain for her a more speedy enjoyment of God and a greater degree of glory. All imperfect thoughts, every thought which may have a tinge of doubt or selfishness, all thoughts which are not humble, submissive, full of adoration, will fail to obtain for this soul eternal glory wherein she will be very powerful.

Remember, Sisters, that in every cross, in every sorrow, in every anguish, we must place these four characters of the cross of Jesus Christ: ask pardon, render thanks (render thanks, this is difficult: recognise that what we lose, God had given to us, recognise that He has crowned this soul in His grace and His mercy, that He had given her all that was good in her, that He will render to her the fruits of it in heaven, and that we must render Him thanks in spite of our sorrow); but specially **ADORE AND PRAY**. Adore, make of our sacrifice a prayer which obtains grace for us and for others.

You know it, Sisters, we are not in this world for ourselves; the Assumption does not exist merely so that only what concerns the Assumption be its ultimate purpose: it exists to acquire

the salvation of souls. Therefore, when something happens within this Assumption of ours, let us pray that God may render back to it what it has lost; but let us also pray for the salvation of many souls as an outcome of this; that God, having accepted the victim, may keep away evil and sin, the teaching of evil and sin with which we are threatened so much in France and in all countries, since the modern trend is to get hold of the education of children so as to indoctrinate them with atheism. May the sorrow and the pain we may experience, and specially this one which is greater and more intimate, be offered for this great aim of doing good to souls.

You know that Mother Agnes always wished to do good to souls, to be good to those who approached her, and in teaching, to produce good and fervent Christian women; she will be happy if, in the midst of our sorrow, we obtain from God that He preserve other children from all which might prevent their receiving a Christian education, and becoming good and fervent Christians.

I tell you this for the present loss; but I wish that this may be the sentiment you will bring to every private or public sorrow that you may experience. We should always strive to have those sentiments which honour God, which make of the cross a very fruitful tree in our souls, a tree that bears fruits of salvation for us and for many others; it is for this that we are Religious, and it is towards that we must work interiorly, when we cannot always do it exteriorly.

