

(From Mo. Marguerite Guillot Conferences to the Novices)

POVERTY – October 1868

Today is the feast of St. Theresa, a great saint whom we must seek to imitate in her humility, her confidence, her abandonment to the will of God, her spirit of faith and of prayer, and especially in her great love for our Lord.

Although our Rule does not prescribe corporal penances like those which St. Theresa practiced, and which her daughters still practice, we can however, do as the Carmelites, imitate her spirit of penance and poverty by the practice of interior mortification and the acceptance of all the exterior mortifications which the perfect observance of the Rule entails, as well as the exact practice of poverty in our lives. It is especially of poverty that I wish to speak.

My dear daughters, if we must desire and seek that which is richest and most beautiful for our Lord, we desire for ourselves the simplest, the most ordinary, even the poorest: we must always be content with what is strictly necessary. Consequently, in regard to our nourishment, our clothing, the furnishings of our cells, let us conform exactly to all that is prescribed by the Rule and the Customs, without seeking, asking or desiring anything more and more comfortable. This fidelity to the observances of poverty will be the sure guardian of the Society, for the weakening and ensuing ruin of religious orders has nearly always come from a disregard of poverty and infractions against this virtue.

Let us then be firmly attached to the practice of poverty remembering how our Lord loved it made it the companion of His entire life; let us often think of the fact that He wished to be born poor and in a stable, to endure all the privations that poverty imposes, and to live during thirty years by the work of His hands, and finally die stripped of everything on the Cross in order to begin anew, in the Blessed Sacrament, a life of poverty, which is still more total. Following such examples, should we not be happy, my dear daughters, if we lack something, or suffer some privation? Could we be dissatisfied with what is given to us either in the way of clothing or food? On the contrary, let us joyfully accept everything as alms that religion gives us and for which we should be profoundly grateful. Whether the food pleases us or not, whether the clothing that is given to us is new or not, patched or in good condition. Let us always be content as are those who truly love poverty.

It is also necessary to practice holy poverty when using objects put at our use in the employments or in our cells. If through culpable negligence, we let them deteriorate; we would be committing a fault not only against the virtue of poverty but against the vow. That is why I ask you, my dear daughters, to take good care of all the objects that are put at your disposal, to

put them away when you have no further need of them so that they may not get ruined, and if you noticed that something in the house is being damaged or remains lying around, you should inform me, and not think of the objects as related to your employment and therefore, no concern of yours. You have nothing to say to the Sister who is in-charge of the employment since you are not to correct one another, but you ought to inform me of what you have seen.

In the practice of the virtue of poverty, see a means of proving your love for our Lord, keeping in mind that you are taking care of what belongs to the Master. And so now, my dear daughters put your whole heart to the task.
