

(From Mo. Marguerite Guillot Conferences to the Novices)

SILENCE AND MODESTY – April 1878

I must tell you, dear Sisters, that several among you are not careful enough in the observance of silence. No doubt you do not carry on conversations, but say many useless words, whether for one thing or for another.

When you have forgotten yourselves in this manner, you must perform penance. In the religious life, we must multiply the occasions to mortify and humiliate ourselves. You have come here to lead a life of humiliation; you have left the world to practice mortification; submit, then, to the rules of religious life.

If in everything you act out of love, the most painful things will become easy for you. Well then, my good daughters do everything out of love and perform the sanctions not through fear but to please Our Lord. Oh, how quickly a soul rises when it always acts through love! When you must give an explanation during the time of silence, do it in a low voice. If you speak in such a way that everyone heard you, you disturb the recollection of your Sisters who are united with our Lord; you expose yourselves to disturb their union with Our Lord and thus causing distractions.

I often speak about the virtues of silence and recollection because they must be the soul of our life. It is for this reason that Our Venerated Father recommended them to us so strongly, and that he, so good, so indulgent in all things, showed himself so severe on the point of silence, and wished that I also should be severe. I beg you then, not to forgive yourselves for your failings in silence, and I believe that you frequently deceive yourselves by persuading yourselves that what you say is necessary, when you be insensitive about the practice of silence. On the contrary, if you are exact in performing the sanction after each failing, you will have that much strength to avoid falling on the next occasion. We are always children and we need help to keep the rule by sanctions and penances. Be very faithful to accomplish them. There are no sanctions for failings in silence of action, but I beg you, my good daughters, watch this point with greatest care. You would not believe how much it favors recollection. When you close a door, hold it so that it does not slam. If you had known our little Cenacle in Paris at the beginning of the Society, you would have admired the silence that reigned in the house; no noise was heard. When I hear you walking at times with so much haste, I wonder what you are thinking about ; do you believe that you will get quicker by hurrying? You are mistaken, for a person who is self-controlled, who acts calmly does more and better than one who is excited.

Be vigilant also in modesty of the eyes. The eyes, you know, are the doors of the soul; if you leave them open; so many things will enter which will become sources of distraction. Mortify yourselves then by keeping custody of the eyes. This will help you avoid many faults. I hope we shall no longer see Sisters circulating in the house, eyes wide open, curiously taking in anything and everything.

Be modest, but as Our Venerated Father wished it, without pretense, without being artificial or unnatural. Practice modesty like silence, out of love, and the mortification of your eyes will no longer be difficult for you.

This advice that I give you, my dear daughters, has for its object to make you good religious, true Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, that is, adorers – but in order that I may be able to attain this goal, you must for your part, make some effort to observe my advice; you must let yourselves be formed. I have said more than once that we do not want half-religious, but true religious, true adorers. A saintly priest said to me recently: *“It is better to have only ten good novices rather than thirty lukewarm ones”* – and I share his opinion.

Do not then, excuse yourselves any fault against the religious virtues of which I have just spoken to you. For without the practice of silence, recollection and modesty, our houses will never be houses of adoration, and if they are not houses of adoration they have no reason to exist.

So then, my good daughters, understand this well and try to practice all that I am recommending to you with so much insistence.
