

(From Mo. Marguerite Guillot Conferences to the Novices)

THE GRACE OF SUFFERING AND THE SPIRIT OF MORTIFICATION **– January 1867**

Very few among us, my dear Sisters, understand the greatness of the grace attached to trials and sufferings, and some even rejoice when they have been able to avoid what vexes them to or makes them suffer. How far we are from the generosity of the saints and their knowledge of God! The Saints, in order to advance in virtue and approached more closely to our Lord, embraced what cost them the most, made the most painful sacrifices, endured the hardest sufferings and we? ... we are always afraid of doing too much, enduring too much; we fear difficulties and crosses, we are surprised that we should be put to the test. Ah, my Sisters! Never say that you suffer too much; never let me hear complaints like this: *“why must everything be for me a cause of pain and suffering?”* Be persuaded that God permits it thus, in a plan of mercy, for the greater sanctification of your soul. Yes God often allows much suffering in a small thing, a little action to be done, or a small event, in order to increase your merit, to increase your love and generosity.

God is pleased to send the most sufferings to the souls He loves most, and He uses everything that surrounds them to make them suffer. He acts thus for us; community life, the subjection of obedience, relationships and work in the employments, all can be a cause of painful and frequent sacrifices for our poor nature, but also a source of merit, and opportunities to practice virtue by renunciation at every moment. Consequently, they are all means of pleasing our Good Master.

In our Congregation, dear Sisters, there are no great obligatory physical penances but our lord knows well how to make the heart, mind, will and senses die, in order to make us find life in Him.

Lent is approaching; for us it means a time when we practice mortification in a special manner. You need only to profit by it. You certainly cannot all fast, but all of you must enter into the spirit of the Church by the practice of penance. Avail yourselves of all the occasions of suffering and mortification that you meet within the religious life.

You sometimes ask to perform exterior penances and you neglect the essential penance, that which you can always practice without permission and which is none other than the perfect accomplishment of your Rule, the acceptance of all the sacrifices and renunciations that it imposes on you, the effort required to acquire all the religious virtues – a penance that is worth more than the hardest disciplines or iron cinctures.

If you knew how much the sacrifice of a word, a glance, a gesture pleases our Lord and how much He favors with His graces the soul who is generous enough to mortify herself continually in His way, you would not hesitate to embrace the life of penance. How earnestly I desire that you do so, not only during Lent, but always, yes, even until death. How I wish that you would put all your efforts into observing exactly all the prescriptions of your Rule; You would become very agreeable to our Lord and your soul would draw, the most abundant fruit from it.

Yes, it costs something to poor nature and sometimes very much, to continually submit to obedience in all things, even the smallest; it costs to humble oneself and to accuse oneself; it costs to break one's will, to renounce one's own taste in order to submit at every instant to the voice of the bell calling us to be present at a certain exercise, or to the orders of our Superiors assigning us to work or to employments which are not to our taste; but, how many virtues are practiced in this way. What progress is made by the soul who is faithful in all these opportunities? Therefore do not neglect all these prescriptions of obedience which sanctify your smallest actions.

Do not step back before the mortifications which your self-love must endure when you have to ask a permission, make an accusation or receive an observation; accept everything generously, remembering that the spirit of your vocation is a spirit of love and sacrifice and that your love will prove itself only by your generosity in sacrifice.
