

(From Mo. Marguerite Guillot Conferences to the Novices)

THE NOVITIATE IS A FAMILY – August 1876

My dear daughters, I would like to say a few words to you as a mother does to her children – are you not here like children with their mother, and is not the Novitiate a family, the family of the Blessed Sacrament? The Father, our Venerated Father, has departed for heaven where he enjoys perpetual adoration with the elect. The Mother who is still near you must teach you according to his spirit and principles he has given. You, my good daughters, must listen attentively to the advice of your Mother who seeks only to make you true children of our Father. As in a family, the eldest here must give good example to the younger ones and all of you must try to edify one another mutually. I have often spoken of the influence that you can have upon one another by your conduct; you can do much good or harm to your Sisters.

For example, a Sister forgetting herself on a point of the Rule, seeing your silence, your modesty, would understand that she is at fault and would feel herself drawn to imitate you; on the contrary, if a Sister hears you talking without necessity during the time of silence, she herself may be tempted to fail in silence, because of you.

Be a source of edification for one another; love one another as true Sisters. Love each other not with a natural, human affection which is not acceptable here, but love each other in God and for God; be united among yourselves as members of a Christian family.

I spoke a moment ago of silence. After having violated the rule of silence, do not fail to perform the sanction; is it not necessary to punish your nature when it has failed? You have just made a retreat; among the resolution taken, hopefully there was a word for the strict observance of silence, especially silence of action. You do not attach enough importance to the latter, hardly realizing that in failing in it, you disturb the recollection of your Sisters. Consequently open and close doors gently, move the chairs without dragging them, etc. Our Father recommended this silence of action to us insistently. It is then a particular duty for us to be attentive on this point.

How I regret that you did not see him! How quietly he moves about! What gentleness in his movements, in the manner in which he handled objects. He exacted the same attention to this silence of action in others, especially in the Chapel. For instance, in the Chapel at Paris, if he heard one of our Sisters making some noise while standing or sitting, or dragging her feet when making her prostration, he would tell me to reprove this Sister.

Also, in order not to disturb the recollection of the house, avoid useless comings and goings which are furthermore a loss of time.

The family spirit that I recommend to you demands also that you share one another's sorrows and joys. Rejoice in the charity of our Lord, in what can be pleasant and consoling for your Sisters, and help them by your prayers, to hear things that afflict them. Therefore, never permit yourselves to do anything that would hurt them, for example, smiling when an observation is made to them; that is against charity and politeness.

If one of the Sisters makes a mistake or commits a fault in your presence; say within yourselves: *"I could also be at fault and perhaps more seriously so, or more often than she."* You will then think of your own weakness instead of paying attention to other people's faults. Be polite toward one another; may there never be any familiarity in your relations. Be happy and lively during recreations but may it be with propriety. One must not call your name without saying "Sister", which is neither polite nor religious.

Be very careful, my daughters, not to permit carelessness to introduce itself here. Familiarity, free and easy behavior cannot be tolerated in a community and our Venerated Father, in the Rule and in his Conferences, often remind us with what respect we must treat one another in our daily relations.

Finally, I am going to give you some advice on the way in which you must behave with your Mistress. To the respect that you owe her you must join docility and submission; receive like obedient children, her observations, her advice and all that she tells you. The commands are entirely maternal; it is done in the name of love for our Lord and you ought to receive it in the same love. In order to obtain a sacrifice from you, we appeal only to your love for our Lord and you should receive it in the same love, with the same delicacy in His service, bringing to it greater fidelity and generosity. This is the spirit of our Father; how I long for you to be filled with it! Because it is sweet, be all the more delicate in submitting to what you are told.

You have a meeting every morning with your Mother Mistress instructs you, forms you in your vocation, its customs, in all that our Father has prescribed for us. If she presents, either in the reading or in her advice, something that you do not understand, ask her later on for an explanation, but in private and not out loud before your Sisters.

Your Mother Mistress, who must see you regularly, will also give you supplementary time if you need it. I realize some souls have more difficulties than others, more trials, and more temptations. It is evident that they need more advice, more encouragement, more enlightenment, and if they are not self-seeking and proud, they will receive grace through their Mistress or their Superior. But in ordinary times, it is necessary to know how to do without the satisfaction you would find from her as your soul will advance more quickly and nearer to our Lord. Remember this morning's talk, my daughter; it is in observing all these recommendations that you will grow in virtue.
