

(From Mo. Marguerite Guillot Conferences to the Novices)

DEATH TO SELF – THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT - July 1866

Another week has passed. Each passing day draws us nearer to eternity. How essential it is to use our time well in order not to lose a single moment. I am not speaking at present of the good use of time in work, although you must be very attentive in this respect; I am speaking to you today of using your time well for eternity, by taking care to act only with a very pure intention, solely to please God. If what you have to do seem hard, you should instead of complaining, be very glad since in this way you have the occasion of showing more love for our Lord.

We receive many special graces: alas, do we profit from them, do we make them bear fruit, and do we correspond to them as we should? If we lose all the occasions of practicing virtue which comes to us unceasingly, what bitter regrets we are preparing for ourselves as the hour of death, and what merit we are losing! Think of this, my daughters, and do not complain that I keep coming back on this subject. Is it not of outmost importance?

I pray you; I beg you, work only God, for His glory, His love! Do not work solely through duty, to obey the Rule, and to do what you are ordered to do; these motives, that are certainly good, would not be sufficient for a Servant of the Blessed Sacrament. Act always and in all things, through love, and to please our Lord; then you will always act with that delicacy of soul which forgets itself in everything to seek only the good pleasure of our Lord. This self-renunciation made on all occasions leads the soul to union with the Divine Spouse.

Your religious life makes this work of renunciation easy by providing you so many occasions of despoiling yourselves, in a word, of practicing death to self, the ***“little death”***.

Kill the poor ego, first of all, by humility which is so often recommended to you, but by a humility which is simple, natural, without affectation, and without show. Do not make exaggerated excuses for mere trifles which seem to bid for esteem and praise rather than for a sincere humiliation after a fault; sometimes it is better to say nothing and accept in silence the humiliation of having made a mistake. The devil is so clever that he suggest to self-love this show of humility in order to make us fall afterwards into thoughts of vain complacency. But when it is a question of real faults, then certainly, you should not hesitate to humiliate yourselves and you should make amends for them, however painful this may be to you.

Again, die to yourselves by obeying promptly, blindly, joyfully, then, by practicing all the little mortifications which present themselves during the day, by restraining your curiosity,

glancing at everything, unnecessary movements by accepting inconveniences, a place which displeases you, the nearness of a Sister who is not agreeable to you, etc.

All these little renunciations help nature to die and are sometimes more painful than the greatest physical penances. In order to increase our merits, God also permits that the little crosses which accompany these renunciations often appear very heavy, and the heart is so overwhelmed that it seems unable to support all these sufferings, but often He couches the trial with interior strength giving to the soul the courage not only to carry the cross but to love it.

I have told you that this renunciation of self is demanded of you at all times and if you wish to practice it generously, you have only to observe your Rule, for fidelity in obeying all the points of this Rule will lead you to a perpetual death.

Silence, recollection, the spirit of prayer, a dignified religious bearing, and a manner of walking, modesty of the eyes are, actually, the fruit of continual mortification; each act helps us advance in the interior life and in the perfection of our state, a perfection towards which we must constantly tend.

I add that love must always be the motivating power which leads you to this fidelity, and at the same time, as it renders you more and more delicate in practicing your Rule, it will sweeten what seems to you too hard and too difficult. Our spirit is a spirit of love and of sacrifice because love proves itself by sacrifice, by constant giving, and in order to give we must despoil ourselves of something, which entails some sacrifices, some sufferings. Deepen this spirit of love by giving yourselves, by renouncing yourselves, by dying to yourselves. The more painful the sacrifice will seem to you, the greater should be your ardor.

Religious Spirit: Certainly, the religious life is sometimes very painful. It differs completely from the life in the world, so it is necessary, in the Novitiate to despoil oneself of the spirit of the world in order to acquire a religious spirit. In the world everything exalts pride. You are flattered, complimented, your faults are excused, and your qualities are exaggerated. In the religious life, on the contrary, you are humiliated, you are rebuked, your faults are corrected, observations are made when you deserve them, and sometimes even when you do not deserve them. All that is to combat your self-love, and give you simplicity of mind and heart. The penances that are imposed in the convent seem like trifles, foolishness, nonsense to people in the world because they do not understand the utility of them; they do not see the good that is done to souls by these means; but the saints who knew the value of humiliations were always happy to submit to the practices of the religious life; let us imitate the Saints, my Sisters.

How I would like to make you understand the necessity of being filled with the religious spirit, in order to be able to form you, for you have to learn new customs and to adapt yourselves to ways that are very different from those of the world!

You must first of all acquire a religious exterior, both in bearing and in gait. Some have an affected air, something that lacks simplicity and naturalness; others walk on their toes which gives them hopping walk without dignity, others swing their bodies in a way that inappropriate; some make perpetual gestures with their hands and arms; others are not sufficiently erect. All these ways of acting are opposed to religious dignity, religious modesty, to that dignity a religious should have, but I repeat, nothing forced, nothing stilted.

Be simple and natural in your modesty, hold yourselves erect without rigidity, lower your eyes, and when walking keep your hands at the waist without letting them hang at your sides. This is too casual, like crossing your legs or your feet.

A religious exterior leads to God and edifies even persons in the world. Make efforts to acquire it by heeding all the recommendations that are made to you.

Dear Sisters, profit well from your novitiate and advice given to you. Several among you have not profited from it as they should. They must set to work to make nature die if they wish to become religious and good Servants of the Blessed Sacrament.
