

*(From Mo. Marguerite Guillot Conferences to the Novices)*

## **DIFFERENCES OF CHARACTER – February 1870**

Today, I would like to speak to you about the cordiality which should reign among you, in spite of character differences. Yes, characters differ one from the other, and yet it is necessary that the most perfect agreement exist among you and that you all have the same spirit.

Just as in a flower garden the same kind of flower of different colors exhales the same perfume, likewise, in a Community, although there are persons with a variety of characters – those that are kind, gentle, lively, moody, weak or sensitive, nevertheless it is necessary that in the constant contacts they have together, nothing should destroy the peace; everything must reveal the union and charity which animates the Sisters.

So I say to each of you: if your personal character leaves something to be desired, try seriously to reform it. Do not say: *“It is my nature which is thus”*, for nature, with the help of grace and the cooperation of the will, can be straightened out, reformed, and corrected. Get to work with courage, goodwill, and counting on the help of our Lord, you can, after having combated with generosity, win real victories over yourselves and make consoling progress. May the memory of St. Francis de Sales encourage you since it was at the price of incessant struggles and of generous combats against his violent character that he became the gentlest of men.

Whatever may be your defects of character, do not despair of overcoming them; pray and watch over yourselves. In the morning foresee the occasions that might present themselves, what you will have to do, the people with whom you will be. Be prepared in advance to dominate yourself on the points you are weak in. If during the day, forgetting your resolutions of the morning, you commit some fault, make the accusation with humility to your Mother Mistress; ask her to permit to you to make amends for it if that is in order and ask for the penance that you deserve. She will teach you in what cases you must make reparation for your faults before the Sisters who witnessed them, and you must submit docilely to what she will tell you.

Do not think of this as being very hard, for you must be very glad to be treated with severity and you must not be frightened by a penance you are asked to perform since this manner of acting is to correct you of defects and render you capable of serving our Lord.

Of ourselves, my dear daughters, we are so weak that we did not know how to take necessary means to correct ourselves. Understand then, what a great act of charity we are performing toward you when we admonish and correct you. Imitate the saints who knew how

to accuse themselves and who received with gratitude all the advice that was given them in order to advance the work of their perfection. Imitate them also in their zeal to punish themselves for all these faults.

Do you think that our Father did not impose penances upon himself after his faults? He certainly did not fail to do so, he told me one day. That when he had broken one of his resolutions he imposed a sanction on himself and that it was a certain number of strokes of the discipline. If our Father, who was a saint, acted in this manner, what must we not do, we who are only beginners in the spiritual life?

There is work to be done by every type of personality; those with a lively character will have to control themselves in order not to hurt others and not to disedify them by their outbursts. Person with a sensitive character, who make everyone around them suffer, are often found in communities. How many times these people take offense at a word, a gesture, a glance, and think that it was meant to mortify them or to teach them a lesson. With a little humility they would not be offended so easily but would be glad, on the contrary, to encounter a small chance of triumphing over self-love, of immolating their ego and of renouncing self for the love of our Lord.

As to those who have a weak character, their duty is to overcome this indolence; if not, they could not be kept here. There are still other types of characters which must be corrected. These are the ones who are always ready to give advice, to make remarks, to meddle with what is being done without having the responsibility and the mission to do so. It is absolutely necessary to correct such defects. In a community, no one, outside of those whose duty it is, should permit themselves to make observations to their Sisters or to give them advice.

Well then, my good daughters, be brave and set to work so that you may become what our Lord wants you to be. Be a source of edification for one another, and if some of you give in to the defects of your character, by making humble reparation of your faults, you will edify your Sisters. I, for my part, say to our Lord: *"I pray You that none of these children may disturb the peace which should reign in this dear little Novitiate."*

I hope that our Lord will hear my prayer and grant you the grace to live under His divine gaze in unity and charity.

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