

(Letter of Mo. Marguerite Guillot, SSS to a Novice, no date given)

TO A NOVICE

My dear Sister, you are about to become a Novice today, on the glorious feast of Our Lady. You have a beautiful model in the Blessed Virgin Mary who entered the Temple as a novice to consecrate herself to the service of God for life. Why did she go to the Temple; was it because she was not sufficiently united to God to be recollected everywhere? And indeed, her union with God was already perfect, but as God loved her with a love of predilections and wished to give her His choicest graces, and gifts, and elevate her to the most interior life, the holiest life, the life the most consecrated to His service ever heretofore known, He drew her to the temple away from her father and mother and all the delicate care her tender age required. Thus God, who is the God of all ages, drew her to Himself from her earliest childhood, and the Blessed Virgin as we know love Him from the first moment of her existence. Also the saints tell us that upon entering the Temple, Mary took the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, consequently the three vows of religion and that she was the first religious because she was to be the Queen and Mother of Religious.

How beautiful Mary's entrance into the Temple must have been and with what complacency heaven must have regarded the young virgin who left the house of her father and mother without regretting anything, consecrating and sacrificing herself with all her heart: As Mary truly loved, she was happy to make this sacrifice. She walked joyously before her parents. Love is quick, it soared ahead as was the case with Our Lord Who went to Jerusalem where He was to institute the Eucharist and suffer death. The Gospel says: "He walked before."

Assuredly, the parents of the Blessed Virgin suffered a great deal from this early separation from their daughter. There must have been very painful moments for the heart of her mother, not to say what it must have cost the heart of Mary. She was a daughter and a loving daughter. Do not think that saints do not suffer or feel things or that their love for God makes them insensible; that would not be true. The more we love God, the more acute our sensibility becomes and nature very often revolts in the face of sacrifice. It is true that the Blessed virgin being immune from the stain of original sin could not suffer from self-love but she did suffer much through filial love.

The temple of Jerusalem was built on a mountain facing Calvary. The magnificent steps leading up to the Temple were first built by Solomon then reconstructed after the ruin of the first Temple. With what joy the Blessed Virgin must have gone up those steps. She preceded the Lamb of God whose Mother she was to become. She was the blessed Sheep who was preparing herself to give this Divine Lamb to the world. After entering the Temple Mary was presented to the High Priest, then she was obliged to take leave of her parents to whom she gave a loving farewell, for although they could come to see her, she no longer belonged to them.

In the temple, Mary practiced all the duties of the religious life. She obeyed everybody making herself the least of all and showing herself most obliging as St. Ambrose tells us. She had nothing of her own; as she was to be Queen of religious who possess nothing. She practiced the most perfect chastity without the shadow of an imperfection. She shone like the sun of purity. The Holy Spirit compares her to the sun: “My chosen one is as beautiful as the sun.”

Thus Mary gave herself to the practice of perfection in the midst of her companions without attracting attention too herself; but souls yet imperfect are inclined to be envious of a companion who is more perfect than they, so the Blessed Virgin certainly must have had to bear with the effects of childish jealousy, particularly peculiar to little girls. She must have suffered a great deal thereby learning by experience the trials other souls were to undergo.

Finally, we can say that the life of Mary in the Temple attained the highest degree of perfection possible to a creature. The Presentation was the occasion of Blessed Virgin's appearing in public. It is the day on which many religious renew their vows, and priest their clerical promises. The Blessed Virgin is their Mother and Queen.

Sister, today you are doing what Mary did. You were in the house as an aspirant but now you are going to enter into the Cenacle. You are going to follow Mary. What a beautiful day this is! Days are distinguished one from another according to the events that take place in our life. Well, today you are going to consecrate yourself to God.

The consecration of a novice is a renunciation of the world, a complete renunciation of the things of the world in order to lead a life of death so as to live only of Jesus Christ and with Jesus Christ. It means that already a big step has been made and the hardest one of all.

A novice is giving her liberty and lets herself be put to the test. This is perfect before God. It is then that the words of the Apocalypse are realized in her: "To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna...and anew name." Who is it that overcomes, she who has left the world, her liberty, her comfort and

the possibility of satisfying her nature. To sacrifice one's free will to act or not to act, to renounce the life of liberty one had in the world is to gain a great victory. It is what costs the most and many have not the courage to make the sacrifice.

Then it follows that one must leave oneself, but many souls remain with their own ideas of perfection, in slothful attitude because they lack the courage to go further and lay the axe to the root. You had the courage to make the first sacrifice. You have left your home. Without being obliged to do so, you have renounced your liberty to put yourself under obedience that appears to be very petty and miserable in the eyes of people around the world since there is no honor attached to it. God hides this grace from the eyes of people of the world because they are not worthy of it. The world esteems things according to their exterior fame, but what the world does not understand you do.

The first victory has been won. The battle however is going to continue. It would be a pity if we only had one victory to gain. The devil and nature are going to attack you, so that you may have the consolation before God of renewing your sacrifice and of giving yourself to Him anew.

Our Lord also said: "It will give him the hidden manna if not the Eucharist possessed, the delight of the heart? This manna can be recognized only by those who eat it. It is our Lord manifesting Himself to the heart. You must have experienced this.

You see now, my dear Sister, what a simple taking of the Habit is. It is very beautiful! And what should you do in return? Give yourself entirely to Our Lord, being a completely new life, consider all you have done as a preparation and indeed it is only that. Go to Our Lord as the Blessed Virgin went to the Temple, go

to Him as she went to Him in the Eucharist. Do everything the way she did: take her for your model and you will not go astray. You will not weaken if you lean on her heart. She will make you a Saint because she is the Mother of Sanctity. He will bless you now and God will do the rest.