

(From Mo. Marguerite Guillot Conferences to the Novices)

RECOMMENDATION FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE – October, 1866

The monthly retreat has passed; keep carefully in your hearts what you have heard and make of it the nourishment of your souls. Choose what suits you the best among all the good things that have been said to you; a single sentence, a single word sometimes can suffice.

May this retreat strengthen you in your fidelity to observe all the Rules and all the practices of the religious life. Among those which I have recommended to you and which I recommend to you so often, I put in the first place, that silence which keeps us recollected. What good can we do in our vocation if we do not possess the holy virtue of recollection? If our minds are full of useless thoughts, we shall be overwhelmed with distractions as the *prei-dieu* and our soul, incapable of adoring, will suffer very much.

So then, keep silence very strictly. We may think sometimes that silence is not continual here, but we are greatly mistaken for, apart from the time of recreation, we must say only what is absolutely necessary; even what is useful can wait. If this is hard let us rejoice. We ought to be happy to have some sacrifice to offer to our Lord, and the harder a thing is, the harder we should be to do it.

The new comers must know then that it is necessary to observe strict silence and to perform the penance after each failing. Do not be astonished at that, my daughters; it is the means of expiating your faults and of correcting your eagerness to talk. When a soul wishes to correct herself of a defect, she imposes a penance upon herself for each failure; even souls most advance in virtue used this means. Our Father, holy as he is, punishes himself when he fails in the virtue that he proposed to practice.

By performing the prescribed penance you will accustom yourselves to silence and you will become recollected religious and prayerful souls, entirely occupied with our Lord.

When you have to say something that is necessary, you must say it only in the places where it is permitted to speak but never in the regular places. In a Community "*regular places*" are places where silence must be rigorously observed, that is to say;

1. The chapel,
2. The sacristy
3. The chapter room
4. The cells
5. The corridors and stairs
6. The refectory

The Chapel is the principal “regular” place where absolute silence is observed and where the most profound respect must be shown; a severe penance punishes infractions of this silence.

In the other regular places silence must be rigorously kept; to be excused from it there must be urgent necessity, and then it would be necessary to speak briefly and in a low tone, of voice in order not to interrupt the general silence and disturb the recollection which must reign in the house.

After silence, I recommend punctuality, so necessary to the good order of the Community;

1. Be punctual for adoration first of all. We give you more than enough time to prepare yourselves. You must never be late for adoration which is our primary duty.
2. Be punctual for the Office. In this case again you have the necessary time; you have only to obey the bell.
3. Be punctual for meals. The second tables are for the adorers and the Sisters who have a serious reason for not coming to the Community meals. Be very exact, my Sisters, in observing all the points of your Rule, not only the principal ones but those which may seem less important. Nothing is small in the service of God for everything takes on value on account of the One for Whom it is done.

Love all these practices of the religious life which are subjecting, it is true, but which please the Divine master because they are a perpetual renunciation – for love of Him – of your tastes, your way of seeing things, your habits. In regard to the recreations, I entreat you never to criticize what is done either in the chapel or in the house. In religion nothing is done except by order of the Superiors and it follows from that, that by blaming or disapproving anything you to blame or disapprove authority.

Be careful also not to speak of food at recreation; a religious must not reveal her taste and her repugnances in this regard. This leads me to speak of the refectory;

Avoid making noise with your chairs, the plates, the cups, knives and forks. The refectory, as I have just told you, is a regular place. You must be silent; keep your eyes lowered and your mind attentive to the reading.

With regard to the reading, I recommend that you read in a very intelligible manner, sedately slowly. I prefer that you read less and that you are clearly understood by all. The

reading is nourishment that our souls must take while our bodies are nourished materially; how can we profit from this nourishment when the reading is not well done?

Well then, my dear Sisters, I ask you to reflect on all these recommendations in order to observe them well and for my part, I ask our Lord to bless you and make you understand it.
