

(From Mo. Marguerite Guillot Conferences to the Novices)

THE NOVITIATE IS A TIME OF FORMATION – January 12, 1870

Profit well from your Novitiate; devote all your attention to your formation, saying; *“Lord, what would you have me to do?”* ... He will tell you, whether by making you understand it interiorly or by the voice of those who have the mission to form you. Several among you have heard this response of our Lord and are faithful in putting it into practice. Others are not doing all they could do and I warn them that if they do not try to acquire humility, obedience and charity, they will not be admitted into the Congregation. We do not want half-religious.

I know that one can have very violent temptation against one’s vocation. The devil is furious at seeing souls give themselves entirely to our Lord; he would kill us if he could, but being unable to do so, he tries by every means possible, to make us lose our vocation. He leads us to think about the world we left behind, regret our families, become discouraged at the sight of duties which requires perfection we feel unable to give, and he uses all these means to try to make us turn back. What must we do then? We must open our hearts to the persons charged with directing us, and if they affirm that we have the vocation, that what we are experiencing is only the effect of temptation from which we need to rise courageously, then we must no longer hesitate.

Yes, my dear daughters, if you pass through this trial, endure it, for the day will come, perhaps soon, when peace will return to your souls and you will be happy that you persevered and kept your place at the foot of the throne of love of our Lord. Pray much for one another; that is a duty of charity in which you must not fail.

I return to my subject – I was telling you that the Novitiate is a time of formation.

The novices are placed under the direction of the Mistress who is concerned about them from morning until night to teach them all the observances of the religious life, to study in each one of them their nature, character, their qualities and virtues in order to develop them. She reproves them for their faults and corrects what is evil or incompatible with the religious life, with our vocation. It is a complete education that the Mistress must give her novices. It is education entirely different from that which they received in the world, because the religious life is the opposite of life in the world; other rules, other customs are followed here.

The religious life is a life of mortification, of self-denial, of humility, so from the time of the Novitiate the Mistress must train the novice to renounce all that is contrary to these virtues and correct in them all seeking of comfort and self-love. She must teach them a dignified religious bearing, the strictest modesty, but always without affectation.

Thus it is necessary that the novices, on arriving, should endeavor to correct their exterior faults; the interior will follow afterwards, for our Lord, who waits with kindness for all that is done for Him, will reward your docility in following the advice that is given to you concerning your exterior, by granting you all the graces which will render the interior work easy.

Surrender yourselves whole-heartedly to this formation, my daughter, in order to correct your faults and reform your character. If you receive any observations, accept them with submission and peace. I know that it is necessary to be already advanced in virtue to remain calm and smiling when annoyed and hurt, but from the very beginning of your novitiate, you must strive to acquire this self-control that will make you humble.

In the Novitiate you will learn also how to practice charity and all the rules of religious politeness in your relations with one another. Correct everything in you that can be an annoyance or source of suffering for others. Those who are too slow must endeavor not to be late for the exercises; those who are disorderly must learn to arrange their things, to take care of them, etc.

Therefore the purpose of the Novitiate is to make you become true religious; our mission is to form you, to train you in the practice of all virtues which make the religious, and to teach you to forget yourselves in all things. That is why I tell you and repeat so often that you must not give in to yourselves; you must shake off your little troubles, your slight fatigue, without stopping at the slightest discomfort, at the slightest headache.

If you have a headache caused by weakness and need food, eat something despite the distaste you feel and your headache will pass without any further care, but if you have a bad migraine that is unbearable, then you must remain in your cell, even in bed, as long as is necessary. In this case, it is evident that you cannot go to Office or to adoration; say so very simply and ask for the necessary dispensations. You must act likewise in cases of serious fatigue.

But when it is a question of slight ailments, do not complain too soon for the devil will do everything to persuade you that your health does not permit you to follow your vocation. Do not expose yourselves to being sent away for not having the necessary health when in reality, with little effort, you would be able to support the fatigue of our life of adoration.

It is true, some among you fall into the contrary excess of that which I have just spoken of, and say, in spite of the discomfort they experience; *"I do not want to ask for anything; I will keep going to the end."* That is self-love. Instead of acting thus let them accept humbly the fact that they cannot do all they would like to do and when they feel tired, let them ask for permission to rest.

I desire that on this point, as on many others, you imitate your first Sisters who worked very much, who devoted themselves to the Society, who continue to do so but without imprudence, and who do not stop at trifles.

Well then, my good daughter, be like children in the hands of the persons who must form you, in order that they may help you pass through the mold of the novitiate so that you can become true religious, dead to self and living only in holy obedience. If you do this, when the day of your vows comes, you will be able to present yourselves to our Lord and say to Him: *“Lord, here is the holocaust that you desired; everything is Yours.”*

Until then, you are the object of our solicitude. May our Father aid us in our task and may he obtained for you the grace to respond to your care.
