

(From Mo. Marguerite Guillot Conferences to the Novices)

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE HAS ITS TRIALS – October 1866

In yesterday's instructions we were told that in the religious life there are serene days and dark days. Is that not true my good Sisters? When grace is with us, everything is pleasant and easy, everything is agreeable, everything pleases us. Divine grace helps us; we find consolation in all that we do, and if we find something difficult, grace shows us a certain pleasure in sacrifice. In this state, the soul is carried along, it is not walking by its own effort; but, it is not always thus. It would not be sufficient in the religious life, to be always consoled; in order to advance, the soul must progress in the midst of thistles and thorns, and when her time of trial is upon her, she suffers very much and in many ways.

The religious life, in fact, is a continual combat, a war without truce, against everything in us that is evil and defective. The soul must be crushed therein by suffering, immolated by God and by itself. The mountain of religious perfection is a rough one to scale. But a soul of good will should not be discouraged when it encounters all these trials. On the contrary, it should be happy to have to suffer for our Lord and if, when faced with crosses, sorrows, struggles, weariness, desolations, the thousand miseries that are found in religious life, this soul of good will says courageously to our Lord that it accepts all for love of Him, He rewards it magnificently, for God is never outdone in generosity. The more generous a soul is with Him, the more liberal He is in return. It does not always feel the action of grace but that is not necessary, and the soul receives the strength of will which allows her to bear all that happens, not only with resignation and calm, but with love.

Never let yourselves be frightened by what may be painful to nature in the religious life. Besides, what is that in comparison with the favor that is ours of being the Servants, the Spouses of our Lord – His sacramental spouses, as our Father says?

Oh, my dear Sisters, we have the better part. Let us guard it well; let us resound by our love to the choice that the Divine Master has deigned to make of us. Let us treasure this place; let us not lose it through our own fault. If you only knew how the poor postulants and novices who left the Congregation because of their lack of generosity and infidelity to grace, are plagued with regrets, and how unhappy they are! Do not expose yourselves to the same misfortune.

As the soldier in the of war lives without concern or worry, abandoning himself to the care of his officers, and to the direction of his general, having for all his fortune, his weapons and his pack, and thinking only of pleasing his commander, thus, dear Sisters, ought we to live.

Are we not like soldiers always at war against ourselves and the enemies of our perfection? And to carry off the victory in this perpetual warfare, we have only to abandon ourselves to the leadership of our General, that is to say to our Lord, without worrying about anything, without being over anxious about our welfare, contenting ourselves with the necessary things that religion gives us and seeking only to please our Lord.

But, you will say, if the religious must not worry about material things, should she not be concerned about her soul? May it not happen that in the spiritual life, she will experience pangs of conscience, weariness, perplexities, which can often be very distressing? Her soul may be in darkness, in state of trial in the midst of which she may believe herself to be far from God, rejected by Him! Would it be possible for her not to feel this?

Again I repeat, that a religious soul in the midst of these difficulties must remain in abandonment and confidence, surrendering herself to the good pleasure of God, refusing Him nothing He asks of her, accepting all the states in which God places her in order to imitate our Lord in His state of abandonment. In this way she follows her "*General*" like a good soldier and is no other concern except to please Him. Remember that you have to seek one thing only; that our Lord may be satisfied; - whether you be so or not is of little importance. On earth you must live by faith; the sensible joys of love are for heaven. At certain times God lets us have a glimpse of them, but more often He leaves us in obscurity and dryness, and it is then that we are pleasing to Him; it is then that we acquire merit if we serve Him with greater love and generosity in desolation than in consolation, in darkness than in the light.

Come then, take courage; think only of pleasing your General, of loving Him and following Him.
