

'CONFERENCES M'- EARLY DRAFTS AND NOTES REGARDING THE SPIRIT AND CONSTITUTIONS OF THE LITTLE COMPANY OF MARY.

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NAVIGATION: To navigate the document, click on one of the blue hyperlinks, and it will take you to the relevant part of this manuscript. To return to the beginning of the document, simply hit the back button on your browser.

A Note on this manuscript. Conferences M is an important series in the archived resources. It contains some of the earliest extant copies of Mary Potter's initial vision of the congregation, and copied versions of the original Rule designed by Bagshawe and herself - a rule which was incomplete and constantly being revised, and one which ultimately led her to Rome. The Conferences also have valuable "snippets" of notes, carefully saved by Mary Potter on her views of the spirit and end of the institute, and give insight into her understanding of religious life. We hope you find them interesting.

Thanks are due to Marie Therese West LCM for transcribing the notes so they could be transformed into hypertext for your use.

Liz West LCM

November 14, 1999

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PART OF THE MANUSCRIPT UPON 'DEVOTION TO THE DYING'.

Mary, S.M.

Feast of St. Paul of the Cross, 1874 or 1875.

33 Norfolk St.

Southsea.

The Confraternity already existing is devoted to the double object, 'the agony of our Lord in the garden' and the 'transfixion of Our Lady on Calvary'...Let us glance at the religious orders, and see how they seem to spring up at the time when they might

most aptly represent the epoch of Our Lord's life, through which the Church is passing.

The Church, the spouse of Our Lord, follows her master through his earthly career, and the religious by their profession are bound to represent this... Looking back into the ages of the Church, we see the Fathers of the desert and many other contemplatives representing the hidden life of Our Lord. Later on we see appearing Friars, Preachers, Jesuits, and the other active orders representing Our Lord's public life. Later again, with the increasing devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, orders appear devoted to this most adorable, this greatest of all mysteries of our faith. Following ... comes the order devoted to Gethsemane, and fitly has it appeared at the present time when the Church seems to have followed her Lord and entered upon his passion. The orders – the Body of Our Lord.

Calvary followed Gethsemane. The thought has arisen that an order devoted to Calvary should be the next to claim the benediction of our Holy Mother, the Church. Time will show if such is indeed the will of God... There have been found spouses of Jesus anxious to devote themselves to the work he loves, the work of succouring the dying. [They] have entirely secluded themselves from the world and offered their whole being to this object in union with the Agonising Heart [of Jesus] in the Garden of Olives. So... there may be other lovers of Jesus, who would desire to devote themselves to the same Christlike work of helping the dying, but who... are not called to an entirely contemplative life, but would wish to unite the two; be present *in person* at the death bed, and offer their whole being to assist dying souls in union with the Compassionate and Maternal Heart of Mary on Calvary.

Thus the second part of the Confraternity would be practically represented, namely, the transfixion of Our Lady, her martyrdom at the foot of the cross. We have already shown how this work of devotion to the dying is the most pleasing to Mary. Of all [the] works of charity [it is] the most ... acceptable to the Immaculate Mother of God, who is likewise our Mother. What would ... be the feelings of gratitude of an earthly mother to one who, in her absence, had tended her dying child; nursed him like a mother; performed in her place with the greatest charity all the tender offices of a mother; seen that a priest was in attendance and all his spiritual wants looked to, and finally, having prepared him to die a happy death, watched him and received his last sigh with his head pillowed upon her breast? What then will be the love with which Mary, our Heavenly Mother will have for those who take her place at the bedside of her dying children?

It would surely be a happy vocation for those to whom it would be given. The spirit and model of the order would be Calvary. They would watch before the Blessed Sacrament as Mary watched at the foot of the cross. They would watch ... by the dying, still in union with Mary, and make thus the chamber of death another Calvary...

A community of people, forming one united body, ... would unite the active and

contemplative life... While some are engaged in *perpetual intercession* for the dying, and who are drawn to a close union [with] God, ...performing, so to speak, the office of head and heart, others may be employed more in the useful work of hands and feet... I do not mean that the order in question would consist of lay sisters and choir sisters. No... The only distinction, if distinction it may be called, would be that there are working members, for two reasons. Firstly, an order, whose spirit is... Calvary, and has Calvary for its model, must practise poverty in its integrity, therefore, the members, like poor people, must earn their own living. Secondly, there may be many, who anxious to join this work of Mary, might be afraid to join an order entirely devoted to Calvary, [seeing it] required too much of them... No one could devote themselves to the mystery of Calvary without aspiring to the highest perfection.

You could hardly live on Calvary and not become a saint! However, those who are anxious to join Mary's Own and to cluster around her sweet Maternal Heart, suffering on Calvary, need not be discouraged and afraid that too much would be required of them... They may present themselves to be received as *working* members, who necessarily would not be required to devote themselves to the same practices of penance, watching, prayer etc., as other and more contemplative members of the community. There would be less danger of mistake for those aspiring to the religious life, and yet uncertain as to whether they were called to the active or contemplate [life]. There would be less danger of mistake in such an order as this, than in one purely contemplative or active. They would find both and be able to choose, even if they had entered only as a working member, if they so wished, or rather, if advised to do so by their Director. In fact, the best disposition with which they could join the Order would be one of indifference so far as concerned their own feelings, but a desire to know god's Holy Will by means of obedience.

Another feature of the order in question is that it would be under the guardianship of a priest. To the priest it has been said by Jesus, "he who hears you, hears me" (Lk 10:16). To him will the members of the community vow their obedience. The Mother House or fountainhead of the order will be entirely secluded from the world and exempt from active, external duties. There will the postulants and novices be trained. There too may those, incapacitated by age or illness from any active work, spend their time in the tranquillity so love and looked forward to by the aged and infirm. How many saints have given us an example of this final withdrawal from their ordinary occupations some time preparatory to their death? They had prepared themselves by seclusion and retirement at the commencement of their spiritual career, and fitted themselves thus for work God afterwards gave them to do. At the end of their days we find them again retiring into solitude, before appearing in the adorable presence of God to receive the reward of their labours.

The Order, being strictly devoted to poverty, must not possess funds, but, as I have said, must support itself by labour. The members of the Mother House... would be supported by the other houses of the order. When the word 'labour' is used, it is applied to any kind of work that could be performed by the sisters. A foundation

would have to work according to the people and place they [are] in. Teaching, laundry-work, needlework, writing etc. might in turn or collectively be required. An objection may be raised here... The trite objection of the monopolising the various works to which single women are obliged to resort to support themselves, cannot apply to this order... Many single young women will be by this means provided for, since a fundamental rule must be laid down. That is, no one seeking admittance is required or asked to bring either a dowry or pension. Neither would a large dowry be accepted unless it was to be immediately applied to such a work as building a church, forming a new foundation etc.

The convents must be built and furnished in a very plain, simple style. Regarding the chapels and churches attached what the sisters would not accept for themselves, they may accept for our Blessed Lord, and his ministers; hence an exception is made for these. They will undertake no work in any place without the consent and blessing of the Parish Priest.

RULES REGARDING NOVICES IN THE FUTURE STATE OF OUR INSTITUTE

Written 1876.

We have said that the novices will be trained at the Mother House. They will there pass through a certain time of probation and receive the habit... Before making their vows they will be sent to a branch house where, having seen more of the working of the Institute, which they could not very well have seen at the Mother House where no exterior works are performed. If they return to the Mother House from this branch house with a good account from its Superior, the novice will finally make her vows, not for a time, but the solemn vows allowed to be made by Mother Church in certain cases. It is these solemn vows we hope to obtain leave to make in our Institute, but they will not be made until after many years probation. The number of years cannot be laid down by Rule; it depends upon the decision of the Director of the individual souls. There is such a difference in souls, and likewise such a great difference in whole nations. For instance, considering the short distance we are from France, the difference in character is startling. It should be ever remembered by a Novice Mistress. [This] should be... remembered by a Novice Mistress in asking for a novice to take any of the gradual steps towards the final one.

The French have a certain enthusiasm and fervour which might easily lead to mistake. The English character being far more matter-of-fact, there would... be... [Less] likelihood of a mistake, [that is], fervour, romance or enthusiasm being mistaken for true solid religion. In the French mind there seems a necessity for a certain kind of hero-worship. It may be taken as a rule that a longer time of probation would be necessary for the French novices than the English; a longer trial, and by "trial" is not meant the ordinary mode of trial, namely by unneeded reproof,

correction etc. Whilst we would not be so uncharitable and so rash as to judge others as regarding the practice of trying novices, we simply say it will not be in our Institute, being contrary to its spirit of simplicity. I may say I have personally known a novice who paid little heed to good advice given her, though she took it humbly and respectfully. Being used to correction simply to try her where there was no occasion for it, she considered the reproof given [and] years [later] saw there had been great matter...

Novices will be tried, therefore, by all that would be painful to nature; it will be an open trial, and simply the duties they will have to perform in after years. There is a certain kind of feeling which comes upon the mind of a novice who is being tried. It is difficult to name, but it is not quite a wholesome feeling. It is not all for God. It may generate into a certain pride in endeavouring to show how brave she is – at any rate, simplicity is not kept in its perfection. As simplicity was the interior spirit of Our Lady, it must be one of the distinguishing marks of our Institute, [whose members] are bound to imitate her.

It must be remembered that we take after those who guide us. Therefore, a Novice Mistress must act simply towards her novice if she would have her novice act simply towards her. It must be a feeling of mother and child between the two, the filial devotion of the child on one hand, the loving solicitude of a mother on the other. The Novice Mistress... is chosen for life, or so long as she is able to exercise her duties.

Silence will be strictly observed in all parts of the house except the appointed places for recreation or transacting business. The sisters will salute one another on meeting in any part of the house, except the place of recreation, with the indulgenced prayer: “Blessed be Jesus”, and the response: “Blessed forever”. They will say the “Hail Mary” before breaking silence. They will say a short prayer in honor of the Blessed Sacrament every time the clock strikes, and thank God for the graces of the past hour. The first action of the day will be an invocation to the Blessed Trinity with the sign of the cross... Then turning to Mary, the sisters will say: “*Accipio in te in mea anima praehe mihi cor tuum, O Maria*”, which ejaculation we hope may one day be indulgenced. It would be well to repeat it with a spiritual communion before each action of the day. This will be a most important part of the interior life of each sister. Their sacramental communion will depend upon the advice of their Director, but to spiritual communions there need be no limit. The sisters will have recourse to Our Lord as to their life, their strength; they will live by him. Spiritual communion will be the means by which the sisters will strive to obtain grace and strength to perform the arduous duties of their Institute. In their sacramental communion, and in their visits to the Blessed Sacrament, they will present [to] Our Lord the heart of his Mother in which to repose. [They will] hope to keep him with them during their various duties, and draw at all times from him the help they need to [perform] them well. Thus too will they renew their spiritual life and prevent their own souls [from] growing weak.

The most important matter in the arrangement of each foundation will be the

Director. Upon the Director will in a great measure depend the welfare of the community. No community must be without one, if possible in the immediate neighbourhood... It will be absolutely necessary that the Director should be one who is devoted to Our Lady as the members of the Institute he directs are themselves. As the sisters may be in places where there is not such a priest, arrangements must be made with one who will accept the fatigue entailed by it. [He is] to come at certain intervals, once a week or oftener, to give directions, hear confessions, [give] conferences to the sisters on the spirit of their Institute etc., and look to the general working of the establishment. Such a Director will be... regarded by the sisters as the representative of God to them on earth, and as a grace for which they must be especially grateful to God's good providence... However, in the case of any sister feeling that she would like to consult another priest, the better plan would be for her to openly say so, in which case the Director would probably arrange that she should do so.

There should be no human respect in such a matter, or indeed, in any matter. This will bring us to another rule, which is human respect is to be avoided as the very evil spirit itself. It is not the evil spirit; it is our own spirit, which follows us in all places. Yes, it will follow us even on Calvary; it will follow us even on the cross! Human respect is totally opposed to the spirit of our Institute, the spirit of holy liberty. It is by practising acts of virtue that we obtain a habit of virtue. Thus, if we wish to be perfect in the virtue of obedience by repeated acts of virtue, little, simple, childlike acts of obedience will bring the virtue of obedience. It will be a settled habit, not an occasional virtue, but one rooted in the soul. Likewise, if we wish to possess any other virtue, the way to obtain it is not to reason upon it. Not to be continually repeating how we wish we possessed it, but simply to begin and perform little, and then gradually, greater acts of virtue, until we find we form them easily and naturally. If we wish to overcome human respect, go boldly (under advice) and perform little acts that may cost you something to perform at first, but for which you will be well repaid. [That is] by being freed from the thralldom that the person is ever under, who is afraid of human opinion, not for the good reason that God may not have the glory from us that he should. [If] our conduct [is] not in accordance with our profession, we do not do the good to others we should. Others cannot glorify Our Father in Heaven for the good they see in us – we may laudably fear that, but the other fear, for our paltry selves... We may be a little contemned; that our self-love may be a little wounded. This fear is despicable. [It] cannot be too much avoided, particularly in the important part of our Institute we are now come to – the visitation of the dying.

Regarding this, the first thing to be observed is that there is no occasion for two sisters to be together. One will be sufficient, unless there were work to be done requiring some other help. When the place requires much cleaning etc., a sister might simply accompany the one who is appointed to take care of the dying person, to perform what she would not have time to do herself, returning directly when it is finished. One of the affiliated might at any time do this. Likewise, regarding the sister to whose charge the dying person has been given, it must be remembered that

the soul is her one principle work. All her other duties are to be subservient to it. No other sister but the appointed one, without necessity, is to visit. It will be this sister's special charge. She must be a mother to that soul, and not cease her continual inward prayer in all the outward works she performs for the sufferer. They need not distract her. In washing the sick person, she may be praying that the soul likewise may be cleansed from the slightest stain of sin. In giving food, the sister can be praying that her charge may be strengthened by the Bread of Life and so on. The sister may not consider it is a light duty she has undertaken, but a very solemn and serious one. She will beg the blessing of the Director before commencing it, and likewise dispensation from her office etc.

It maybe added here that the sister watching the dying person may be relieved from her charge for a while for necessary repose if she has had to watch many nights. Though it will be found by those who are faithful to their vocation, that God will give them a special grace enabling them to bear what, without this grace, would be impossible. The sister watching will pray humbly that the grace that enabled Our Lady to watch, to stand through three long hours of Our Lord's agony, may in its degree, be bestowed upon her. The sister will do and say simply what she believes to be her duty, without regard, as I have said, to any human respect. If in doubt as to what is the thing to be done in a certain case, she will say a 'Hail Mary' with an invocation to the Holy Ghost, wait quietly part of a minute, and then act. She may be sure what she then does will be the right thing to do. This is a general rule in all doubtful matters where you cannot have recourse to the advice of Superiors. It is the medium between too much confidence, and too much diffidence. It is the course God desires us to adopt. He permits difficulties to come upon us that we may have recourse to him to solve them. He desires we pray if we would receive from him; [he] obliges us to turn to him.

The Holy Spirit must be consulted on all occasions of difficulty. Even if Our Lord were to speak to us, we should turn for explanation of that Word to the Holy Spirit, because such is the Will of God. The Apostles understood not the Word of Our Lord; they often misunderstood his meaning. Many saints have had revelations, which were true in themselves, but misunderstood by their own minds. Julia of Retine, when Our Lord showed her the remarkable vision, which brought us the Feast of Corpus Christi, prayed for two years before she understood what it meant.

I dwell upon this [fact], as it is an important point. The sisters visiting will have to act with great prudence and discretion. If they go too confidently to their work, saying they have no fear, God will assist them etc. They may mistake presumption for hope. If, on the other hand, they say they are not fit, they will surely make mistakes and fail; they will likewise err. They must resolve at every step to have hold of God's hand and be constantly seeking his help, not in general circumstances, but in particulars. It is a very great mistake in far too many cases with good people that, relying upon the fact that they are doing God's work, they rely far too much upon as extraneous assistance that he has never promised to give. The Holy Spirit, the Good Counsellor, desires to be consulted at every turn in our path, and it is thus,

we must seek him on all occasions.

Never decide without a short prayer on any matter. Never give advice without an inward prayer to the Father of Lights. Then give your opinion and do not alter it without some good reason indeed. By 'good reason' I do not mean something apparently better, but the opinion of superiors, which must ever outweigh our own. All necessary minute instructions will be found in the Manuel for the Visitation, which every sister will study in her leisure moments. [She] will carry [this Manuel] with her on the visitation, more for the sake of the prayers than aught else, as the rules and regulations should be known by heart.

The hours of the community will be regulated according to the work [the sisters] are engaged in... Once the time is fixed it must be most particularly adhered to – no one may absent herself without leave or some good reason. Every sister should endeavour to be at her appointed duty a few minutes before time rather than after. (It may be well to mention the advice of the late saintly Dr. Grant to the sisters of a convent he was interested in. That they be careful to be exact to their time because the angels were waiting to give their blessing to the work at the appointed moment for its commencement. When a sister arrived late, it was lost.) This may seem a small matter, but it is precisely the seemingly small matters we have to be most careful in.

Grace is so precious that we cannot be too careful not to lose the seemingly smallest. One grace lost is a chain of graces lost for eternity, for they are linked one in the other. This then is one most important rule the sisters will be most careful to observe – that no grace is to be lost through carelessness on their part. They are bound to be careful for poor souls are depending upon them. The eternal happiness or woe of some fellow being may depend upon a sister's acquiring grace and being faithful to it when given.

The same rule will apply to the use of time. "Time is the purchase money of eternity". Yes, and with us especially, not alone does time purchase eternity for ourselves, but for others also. Every moment of it is precious. By making little compacts with God, we can make our time more profitable. We can offer every beating of our heart, as advised in the beautiful prayer of St. Gertrude. We can have the intention with another saint of receiving the Blessed Sacrament in every breath we draw. Or we may desire that every breath we breathe should be united with Our Lord's last sigh on the cross, for the benefit of those about [to] draw their last breath.

In a word, we must remember most earnestly we are not our own. [We must] employ our whole being to the greatest advantage that the 'talent' entrusted to us be well spent. We must remember constantly we have chosen a devotion (or, it might be better to say, God has inspired us with a devotion) after his Own Heart. There [are] absolutely no bounds to the graces he will bestow on those who are devoted to it... It must ever be recollected [that] these graces are not given for us, they are for our work, and God will demand a most exact account of them...

Those who enter this little Society will not be required to enter at once into its full spirit, that is to say, the Spirit of Calvary. It may be some years before they are prepared to do so. The preparatory step will be to enter into the Path of Mary as little children, and be born again of her. They will then consecrate themselves entirely to her Maternal Heart to be disposed of, body and soul, according to her wish. This preparatory step having been taken, they will then take time to consider and consult with their Director as to whether they feel themselves called to take the next step. [It] follows in our little Society, namely, to follow Mary on the Way of the Cross and stand with their Mother at the foot of the Cross. There to watch as she did, Jesus dying. There to pray as she did in union with him, "Father, forgive them!" (Lk 23:34). There to join their hearts as she did hers with the Agonising Heart of Our Lord, and be united with him so closely that henceforth their place of abode will be on the cross in the Heart of Jesus.

There they will unite their every breath with the laboured breathing of Jesus in his agony. [They unite] every beating of their heart to the pulsations of that strong loving Heart that beat with so great [a] love of the human race. [It was] the sight of the final doom of so many unhappy souls who, dying in sin, would be finally cast off from the home they should have had with his Eternal Father. The breaking Heart of Jesus, so united to that race, in its agony spoke those most mournful of all mournful words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Yes, "forsaken ME" were Our Lord's words. For he has so united our nature to his own, so made himself our brother that the final condemnation of the lost, to a certain extent, was felt by him more acutely than those most unfortunate beings unitedly will ever feel it for themselves. The souls in hell know not what they have lost. Mary even does not know it fully. Jesus alone knows what a soul loses when it loses God forever. Therefore, when that part of human nature that will be finally cut away was seen by Our Lord upon the cross (numbers of them even members of his Church), Jesus felt their loss of God, their final abandonment by his Heavenly Father, as though it were himself. His cry of dereliction ascended to his Father, as though he had condemned himself in his condemnation of those he had loved more than his own life. Visible things are meant by God to instruct us. Let us then think of the pain we feel if a member of our body is cut off. Take this as a faint figure of Our Lord's suffering at the severance forever of his members from himself.

Those who, having passed through the intermediate stage I have already mentioned, and have been vowed and united to Jesus on the cross, will henceforth live in a constant union with him of thought, desire and feeling. That is to say, his thoughts during those three hours, his desires, his feelings will be theirs for the remainder of their lives. They will never seek to come down from the cross where his love has called them, where their Mother has place them. If Mary has obtained that certain of her own should, by a special grace of predilection on the part of God, be called to so high and holy a vocation as to be Spouses of Jesus, to stand with herself on Calvary, those who have received this great grace cannot be too careful to correspond exactly with it. [They will] daily more and more study the interior dispositions of Our Lord

and her own (though those two and one) [and] enter day by day more fully into the Spirit of their Institute.

Every morning they will follow "the Way of the Cross" remaining at the 12th Station to make their morning's meditation. [They will] choose one of these Words of Our Lord upon the cross, which they will constantly bear in mind during the day. As God's spirit leads them, so let them choose. In this, as in all relating to their interior life, the members will remember ever – liberty of spirit will be the distinguishing mark of their Institute. They will owe it to [their] Mother to... obtain for them from God a partial return to that liberty enjoyed in Paradise by their first parents. Therefore, they will not be circumscribed by any particular form of meditation etc. as provided they are imbibing more and more the spirit of Mary and are perfectly open with their director. There will be little fear of what, however, we must never forget does happen – Satan appearing amongst the children of God, delusion taking the place of true piety.

This liberty of spirit will then be the precious gift bestowed upon Mary's Own and will well repay the voluntary servitude they have embraced when they are bound to Jesus on the cross. It comprises all other virtues in itself, because there cannot be true liberty of spirit where there is pride, self-love, vanity, human respect, or any other of these poisonous exhalations engendered and given for the by our own sinful selves (though we too often attribute them to the temptations of the devil). No, liberty of spirit only exists where there is true humility, where the soul is emptied of self, where human respect is a thing of the past. When there is liberty of spirit half the stumbling blocks in our way are removed. How is this great virtue to be obtained? Where shall we seek it? We shall obtain it where we obtain all our grace – from Mary. We shall seek and find it when we have lost our won spirit in her, for it is essentially her spirit. This then the members of our Institute must seek to acquire, and may confidently expect to obtain if they are faithful to their vocations. The same liberty of spirit will extend to the penances and mortifications. Whilst they will perform only those allowed by the Director, one soul will not be bound by rule to perform penances perhaps not suitable to her... Likewise another [may be] hindered by rule from performing penances that might be [a] help to her spiritual advancement. Public penances will be performed only when thought advisable by the Director. They will be the exception – not the 'Rule', the spirit of Mary being opposed to any public demonstrations. Mary preferred to be hidden, to being humbled. Two or more sisters may perform a penance together, but not as a rule the whole community.

There will be a few fast days (strictly speaking), but the Ecclesiastical fasts and the diet will depend upon the climate where the Little Society of Mary is established. In England it being almost a necessity for people who are actively employed to take meat twice a day, whereas in another climate two or three times a week might be sufficient. Such matters will be settled by the Sister Infirmarian of the Community. [She] will be one chosen for that office who has had long experience in illness in herself and others, one likewise capable of applying herself to study all the sanitary

matters of the Community. To her the sisters will make known their ailments; she will have full liberty to order, in the matter of diet etc. what she thinks is advisable in individual cases.

These rules not applying to the Mother House where perpetual intercession can well be carried out. The rule for every branch house will simply be that shall always be at least one watching in choir in union with Our Lady on Calvary, praying for the agonising, praying for the sisters who are assisting them. The hours from twelve to three will be specially devoted to meditation and supplication for the poor dying throughout the world. The choir will be always open during these hours for the affiliated to likewise join in this pious work, and where it can be arranged, built so that externs may easily have access without disturbing the Community.

Where a choir is built will always be arranged that a part be put aside for the affiliated, so that if the Director wishes to do so, he can arrange public devotions for them. There need be no fear of these prayers interfering with the meditations the sisters will be making. A true interior spirit will not suffer by such distraction. The meditation and prayer will ascend to God, and draw his blessing with marvellous efficacy. Holy angels will be sent with messages of forgiveness, pardon and peace. They will inspire the sisters watching by the dying bed with the words they should use, and they will be words of power touching the hearts of the most obdurate. The liberty of spirit possessed by the sisters will hinder their recollection being disturbed in choir by of the affiliated, or by the distractions surrounding so many dying beds. Those distractions, which even well meaning people are the cause of, ... are so injurious to too many a poor dying person. The sister attending will be no more distracted than was Our Lady on Calvary by the people, sights and scenes by which she was surrounded.

Those whose hearts are united with the Heart of Jesus on the cross will possess a rare gift of union with him. The sisters will likewise recollect that whatever graces they may receive, they are not given for anything Our Lord sees in them. They have, by a particular attraction of God's Holy Spirit, for which they should be ever grateful, been chosen for their special devotions, Our Lord's own devotion – his devotion to his Mother, his devotion to the dying. It was his desire for good deaths [that] caused the happy deaths of the Holy Innocents at the commencement of his own life. At the end of his life, it was the same desire that brought forth the exercise of his power which he gave not only pardon, but a plenary indulgence to a sinner, whom he at that instant, changed into a saint. All through his life he had sorrowed over bad deaths, but at the end he exercised his mercy in a wonderful way.

Likewise his Church has ever grieved over the dying, impenitent sinner. In the hour of her crucifixion with her Divine Master, she, in union with him speaks publicly to the repentant, dying sinner... She [speaks], as likewise Our Lord had ever spoken privately to the sinner even at the last, to the sinner, who needs some extra outpouring of grace from God to save it – that it is forgiven...

The time of novitiate would vary according to the individual character, but it may not be less than three years, and it may extend in many or most cases to five or six years. It is most essential that sisters, who are exposed to so many temptations, mixing in the world, should have a very deep foundation of religious virtue, or they might dwindle into mere nurses and the beauty of the true religious pass from them. This may easier happen with sisters whose vocation calls them away from the restrictions of convent life, than with those who do not quit their convent, therefore, the need of a more than ordinary long novitiate with us.

Obedience to the smallest rule and regulation is what will be the test of the novices' vocation. No novice will be professed until she has had some experience of her religious life away from the convent. A great note must be taken as to whether her religious spirit is affected by her mixing with the world.

All sisters will not be obliged to go out to nurse. All who enter will have to be indifferent as to whether they are set apart for prayer or household duties, or for nursing or mission work.

Sisters will from time to time be recalled to the Mother House for a longer or shorter period to reanimate their fervour, to renew their love of the hidden life.

All the convents will be under one government, united most closely as different members of one body. What affects one must affect all, lest any division should unhappily arise. Those who are united in the Heart of Mary must be ever of one accord.

All will owe obedience to the Mother, but the Mother will consult the Council on all important matters. Her principal duty will be to see the Rule strictly observed throughout the Little Company, and she must ever remember that to the Rule she herself owes obedience. She is not to govern according to nature, inclination, caprice or even devotion. She has to govern according to what is prescribed in her Rule and Constitutions. It is her only safeguard for herself in her directions, and the Community which she, together with her Council, governs. The Council will consist of the Mother, Mother Assistant, Novice Mistress, and one or two other senior Mothers. From time to time, on doubtful or important matters, all seniors will be consulted.

EARLY DRAFTS OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

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THE MOTHER

The Mother has indeed an office which, if accepted in a proper spirit must tend to the sanctification of her own soul as greatly as the power she has of sanctifying others. She should daily consider its awful responsibility. She has indeed to watch in prayer and penance, in crucifixion of soul and body, labouring to bring her children to Jesus Christ. She has to consider that God will call her to account for the souls he has committed to her care. That she has to fight with each individual soul's temptations as though they were her own. That she has to see they are employed in such occupations that they will tend not alone to the general good of the Community,

but likewise she has to consider what will tend to perfection of their own soul. She has need of patience to perfect her work with her children. She has need of gentleness and yet firmness, not natural firmness, but that firmness derived from union with God.

Natural firmness is very seldom united with that warm heart, that heart naturally warm, which a mother needs, as well as supernaturally loving. The supernatural love some naturally cold natures possess is scarcely sufficient. They cannot attract other hearts to themselves so well. It is difficult to open the mind with the same unreserve, unless there is a somewhat natural as well as supernatural character to deal with. But, one of these naturally loving hearts could scarcely be firm as a Superioress needs to be, unless strengthened with supernatural firmness. Too painful to human nature would be many duties that the Mother has to perform if not supported divinely – such as the dismissal from the Community of some soul, who may assure her with tears, if she is dismissed she will be lost, and many, many other duties that wound and lacerate the heart.

The Mother has to fight constantly with that tendency in human nature to relaxation; the seeing that the Rule is perfectly observed, otherwise abuses will most certainly creep in; that the general good order of the convent is kept as it should be in Our Lord's house. She has to see that everyone is performing their allotted charge conscientiously. She has from time to time to see each sister, and discover if she is making progress in perfection, though this can best be discovered from the way she performs her works, than from her own account of herself. She has to watch as "having to give account".

2. SPIRIT, DEVOTION AND WORKS OF THE LITTLE COMPANY OF MARY

The spirit and model of the Little Company is Calvary. The end proposed is first, the imitation of Jesus and Mary on Calvary, the saving of souls, especially at their last hour. The members of this Institute will form a body of united in the heart of Our Lady, to strive to represent before God the Sweet Heart of Mary pleading as she did on Calvary by the Precious Blood – pleading first for the Church, its Head, and the members who have the greatest need, the dying. Some of the sisters will remain ever watching and pleading before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Others will go forth in the same spirit of Calvary to tend him in his dying members. To tend also those who are in danger of the eternal loss of God – for these they hope to obtain a grace such as was accorded to the good thief on Calvary.

A simple natural life, not an extraordinary life but a very simple one, [is what I seek]. I mean, religious life so far as religious means 'binding', and those who embrace this life are bound to God, but that is not an extraordinary thing. If Adam and Eve had not sinned we should all have been thus bound, that is to say, we should have belonged so entirely to God; we should have ever felt so consecrated to him that the formal binding would not have been necessary. We should have been as

little children playing before a loving God, sporting and abounding in our liberty in the life of love given by the Good Creator to his happy creatures. Yet, not selfish in our happiness, since every joy would produce from God's sinless children an act of love and thanksgiving to their good Father. Their own joy would but have made them rejoice the more in his.

The life of God's creatures, if sin had never entered God's good creation, would indeed have been religion. But it would not have been the life of restraint by which we now understand the life of a religious. Certainly, the Incarnation produced a new and different perfection than was intended by God in the beginning. Man abused God's gift of liberty, of independence. Man abused God's spiritual and temporal gifts. Man chose to use his free will to disobey. He used God's temporal gift when forbidden. The evil introduced went on increasing; disobedience to God's laws became universal. The good gifts of God abused. Our Lord came to restore all things. He chose obedience. He chose poverty. These states of life were least abused. All perfection must necessarily consist in imitation of the Incarnate One. Therefore, we choose a life of obedience and poverty, but this need not destroy. It may, and should indeed, rather bring back to us our original gifts.

In the Little Company of Mary we desire to lead, as we have said, a simple life. By simple life we necessarily mean exemption from many strict rules and observances enforced in many religious orders. But, and here we would wish it noted particularly, this holy liberty, this simplicity, has to be attained by very great labour, by perhaps years of great restraint of most rules, of rigorous and punctilious observance, therefore, the difference between the novitiate and houses where the professed sisters are.

The wise holy rules of religious orders then, the strict discipline, all that can be practised of ancient monastic rule, we desire observed in the novitiate. That afterwards, coming forth from their time of seclusion, they may safely mix as the active professed sisters necessarily must, with the world and give them good example. It is necessary that those, who are to have the advantage of the religious habit in mixing with the world, should have so much greater liberty than most other orders; should first be well tried as to their spirit of humility and obedience. Because it depends upon how far they can submit themselves, as to how far they are likely to wear their habit, and use their future liberty without disedification to the world. (This section on the Spirit appears as a Compendium in the text).

The special and distinguishing devotion of the Little Company of Mary is that of the Ven. Grignon de Montfort, entitled by him *True Devotion towards the Blessed Virgin*.

The principal work of the Little Company is to nurse the sick and dying with an entire devotion, performing for them and for their families every service of charity that may be possible. No kind of sickness, no class or condition of sick people, unless where the reputation of the sisters would be endangered, is to be exempted

from their service.

Another work of the Institute is to promote the conversion of heretics and unbelievers into the Church, by visiting, exhorting, and instructing those who may stand in need of it. This work will be done in subjection to the Rector of the Mission, and only so far as it will not interfere with the nursing, which is the primary work of the Institute.

3. THE ECCLESIASTICAL SUPERIOR.

The Bishop of the Diocese is the immediate Ecclesiastical Superior of the Little Company of Mary. [He] governs it in all matters with plenary power. He will consult the wishes of the sisters in his government, and will receive their suggestions or complains, as provided for in the rules concerning the meetings of the Council and of the Community. He will likewise receive any appeal or complaint at any time. He will see each of the sisters at stated intervals (for the present, once every three weeks) that he may encourage her, and help her in any difficulty. If any sister wishes to speak to the Bishop at any time, she should ask permission to visit him. The permission must not be refused without grave reason, and if there be grave reason at anytime, the visit must be arranged for at the earliest opportunity. The Bishop may, if he pleases, delegate his authority to a priest as his representative.

8 August 1882 – the Bishop wished the following to be added :

“Although the rule provided that any sister who thinks she is hardly dealt with may refer the case to the Bishop’s decision, this is not intended to authorise any disrespect, or disobedience to the Superiors of the House. Sisters must always obey immediately and respectfully, and any disrespect shown, either by openly threatening to appeal, or by asking leave to go to the Bishop in such a manner as to the equivalent to a threat of appeal, will be severely penanced.”

4. THE SUPERIORESS

The Superioress will preside at all exercises, give all dispensations and permissions, distribute each day among the sisters the work of the day, so far as it is not already assigned, correct the faults, direct the work of all without exception, and watch over the exact observance of the Rule. She will, from day to day, or as occasion may require, appoint the sisters who are to go out nursing, or begging, or visiting for missionary work. She will conscientiously enforce the strict observance of the Bishop’s directions, consult him on all matters of importance, and will endeavour in all things to act in conformity with his intentions and wishes.

5. THE SECRETARY

One of the most important and useful offices in the convent is that of secretary and general assistant to the Mother. What is her duty? Simply and entirely to see that the

directions of the Mother are carried out, and perform them herself faithfully and as perfectly as possible. It is a very enviable position, for the soul likewise, there being so many opportunities of practising humility. In fact, it needs a truly humble soul to perform it, for it needs a total quenching of one's own ideas to replace them with another's. It needs the most perfect harmony of thought between the Mother and her Assistant, or there would be great waste of time and disedifications ensue. Therefore, it would seem almost well that the Mother should choose her Secretary herself. A house divided against itself cannot stand (Mk 3:25).

It would be a very sad state of things if ever it should come to pass that the Sister assisting the Mother should prefer her own way or her own ideas to the Mother's. If they were indeed better, it would but cause disunion and party spirit to promulgate them amongst the sisters, though in all simplicity she ought to do so to the Mother.

The importance of this office and the necessity of its being properly carried out may be known by considering this fact. The Mother may arrange, write up her directions for the good order and happiness of the household, but if there is not some one to see that her directions are carried out, of what avail are they? Therefore, let the Sister assisting her be indefatigable in seeing that the Mother's least orders are carried out, and by her own earnestness in this point show the importance of obedience in the least details. The Sister assisting the Mother should be as the very shadow of the Mother. Her usefulness would consist not in carrying out any pet plans etc. of her own, as other sisters, in whose minor offices there may be far more independence, than in this more important one. [Here] the Sister will most perfectly fulfill her office in proportion as she fulfills not her own will, but the will of her Mother, when in fact their wills are one.

Happy the convent that possesses such a Mother and child working hand in hand, and heart to heart.

6. THE NOVICE MISTRESS (THE NOVICE MOTHER)

The Novice Mistress will have special charge of those who join the community, during their novitiate.

The Novice Mother must act in perfect harmony with the Mother. She must teach her children by example more than by words. If the novices see their Novice Mother, they will certainly imitate her. If the novices are well grounded in obedience all good will follow. The office of Novice Mother is one of the most beautiful in the convent – so Mary-like, so hidden, so humble.

What has been said concerning the Reverend Mother of the duty of suffering, of consulting with the Holy Spirit on all occasions, of supernatural firmness as well as a gentle loving heart, all this applies likewise to the Novice Mother. [All] can be read in the Office of Reverend Mother.

7. THE SISTER BURSAR

Will have special charge of the goods of the Community, of keeping of accounts and of all dealings with tradesmen and other business affairs of the community – in all things consulting the wishes of the Superioress and being guided by her directions. All monies received by any of the sisters (except capital for investments) must be paid in immediately to the Sister Bursar, who will keep an exact account of the same. All monies required, either by the Superioress or the sisters, must be paid to them by the Sister Bursar on cheques drawn by the Superioress, which cheques must be countersigned by the Sister requiring the money, and then filed by the Sister Bursar. An account of the money when spent must be returned to the Sister Bursar. She will have the care of all clothes and properties of postulants, which they may wish to put by and reclaim. If these are not carefully packed and entrusted to the Sister Bursar, they will be treated as community goods, and will not be made good if lost or worn out. The Bishop also directed that the Sister Bursar should each morning give out all things required for the food of the Community on that day. Other articles used in the laundry or in the workroom will be given out by her at the same time when they need renewing.

The sister Bursar will have special charge of the goods of the community. She will transact the business with merchants and other people in the name of the community and keep accounts. She will have the care of the clothes and other property which postulants wish to put aside, and claim if they should happen to leave the Convent. If these effects, instead of being carefully packed and confided to her care remain in use, their value cannot afterwards be reclaimed if they are lost or worn out.

All money received by each of the sisters, except the capital to be placed at interest, should be immediately put into the Bursar's hands. The money, which the Mother Superior or any other sister may require, shall be given to them by the Bursar according to the orders of the Mother Superior. She shall keep as exact account of all the monies thus received and spent.

The Sister Bursar will give each day, or when it may be necessary for the food and clothing of the sisters and all articles in use in the laundry and workroom.

The Sister Bursar should not only be guided by the instructions of the Superior, but she must consult her in all things. She will act in harmony with the Mother Assistant in keeping the Convent in order, and in encouraging regularity in all the observances. She should be full of diligence and act with the strictest integrity as to fulfill perfectly her important duties. She must take great care to watch over, and to economise all the goods that belong to the community, looking on them as they really are – the goods of the Church consecrated to God and to the Blessed Virgin.

8. THE SACRISTAN

Will attend to the duties of the church and sacristy.

The Sacristan must be most particular about this office. She must learn all she can of its duties, for they are most responsible ones. Culpable ignorance would be a grave fault. When we are placed in any office, it is our duty to use every natural means to understand how to perform it most perfectly.

The Sacristan must study the rubrics of the Church that she may know the many matters it is necessary she should know. Likewise [she should] inquire of the Priest under whom she is sacristan, whatever she is in doubt of ignorance of. She must give notice to the Mother Assistant some time before she is out, of any article required for the altar. Altar things must not be used for anything else. Without great necessity a novice may not be sacristan. The Sacristan must be circumspect in her intercourse with the Priest.

9. THE SISTER INFIRMARIAN

Will devote herself to the care of any sister who may be placed on the sick list by the Superioress.

The Sister Infirmarian will perform her office with love and devotion. She will wait upon Our Lord's spouses as she would wait upon himself. She will be chosen for her experience in sickness, her kindness and firmness also. We are told that in times of sickness we have to be careful not to let our souls get sick also. Therefore, the Sister Infirmarian will devote herself to the sanitary affairs of the convent, and should make any suggestions she thinks conducive to the general health.

It is the duty of the Infirmarian to see that the sick sisters are provided with all they require, the Superior's leave, however, being asked in any unusual or doubtful matter. Those sisters only are under the care of the Sister Infirmarian, who are placed on the sick list – that is, specially entrusted to her care by the Superioress. It is the duty of any sister who may have any considerable ailment to ask the Superior to be placed on the sick list.

Sisters who are on the sick list will ask the Infirmarian for everything. It will be the duty of the Infirmarian to see they are provided with all that they require, the Superior's leave, however, being asked in any unusual or doubtful matter.

10. THE MISSION SISTERS

Her duty is to help the Priest in his sacristy, works, visiting and looking after the people, and also to the day nursing and short cases of the neighbourhood, that is, of the Mission, not to be sent out elsewhere without urgent necessity.

The sister to whom this responsible charge is given will need the greatest prudence and humility, as well as zeal. She must offer most ardent prayer to God day and night for the souls who are in a certain sense committed to her care, Prayer alone

will not suffice. There must be sacrifice. There must be mortification, interior and exterior. There must be prudence, or the sister will find difficulties with the Priest of the Mission. She must carefully avoid interfering with him in any way and consult his wishes on all matters. There must be great humility or the sister will find damage to her soul from being placed in so prominent a position; she may lose her Mary-like love of being hidden. She must take any opportunity to obtain other sisters to perform such actions as may redound to her credit. [She must] prefer that other sisters should be preferred to herself.

She must be very orderly, methodical and thoughtful. [She must] take addresses and make notes in writing, and always give the Priests, with whom she had to do a memorandum on paper with, address of any case she is mentioning to him. She must never grow weary with seeming want of success in her apostolic work. Her prayers and labours will find favour in God's sight, and if not heard immediately, will be perhaps at some future time; maybe the time they are needed most, the hour of death.

The Mission Sister will keep an orderly Mission Book that could be easily understood by any sister who may replace her in her charge.

Again regarding the missionary work of the sisters, great, great patience and perseverance is needed. Go like the Good shepherd, seek the lost sheep; unsuccessful for a long time may be your endeavours, but persevere. It is for a Good God we work. "Those who instruct others unto justice shall shine like stars for all eternity" (Dan 12:3). Though repulsed at some house, return again and again, praying to their Guardian Angels, and finally you will come away victorious. You will indeed go on your way weeping, but returning come with joy, carrying your sheaves with you (Ps 126:6). Yes, you must pray entreatingly, earnestly, tearfully, if you would gain souls. In season and out of season must your prayer be ever ascending to the Most High. You may remember how the Angel told his client he offered himself his prayers, when he prayed with tears. If we are really corresponding with our vocation, we shall obtain this good, this zeal for souls. If we have it now, let us humble ourselves, acknowledging how little union we must have attained with Our Blessed Lord not to have imbibed more of his Spirit, more the instincts and feelings of his Sacred Heart.

11. OF THE COUNCIL SISTERS

The duty of the Council Sisters is, of course, first as with other duties, to pray to perform their duty well and conscientiously. [They must] look upon this office as a most serious and responsible one, [and] consider that upon the due and conscientious performance of this duty will depend in great manner the well being of the convent. [They must also] consider that the counsel they give must be the result of no personal feeling, [and] must not be influenced by human respect. Likewise remember it is their duty calmly and seriously to think of anything that could

conduce to the good of the community. If a thought strikes them of something useful to the good of the community, to immediately lay it before God in prayer. Then having prayed, make some little note of the matter lest it should slip from their memory.

Many a thought that God has sent is allowed to slip from the memory through indolence, through slothfulness, through a dislike of exertion, which may be wrongly excused, saying they do not like to put themselves forward. Ah, how many evils does not supineness cause in the Church at large as well as in individual cases? A Council Sister, however, must give her opinion conscientiously, but must not be irritated if it is not followed, because however much she may believe some proposal carried will be followed by detrimental effects to the community in general. She must, nevertheless, submit patiently to those who are in authority and submit to them.

12. THE ELECTION OF SUPERIORS AND OTHERS

Extract from the Bishop's letter upon this point – “All charges, including places at branch houses and post of visiting Sisters of Missions, renewable annually on New Year's Day, the Sisters to be changed as a rule unless there were good reasons against it. The Council would send a list of the proposed changes and appointments to the Bishop for revision and confirmation between Christmas and New Year's Day.

The Superioress and a Council of six to be re-appointed annually, all the professed sisters meeting on Our Lady's Expectation, and voting by ballot, thus a list to be printed with names of all professed in order, followed by three columns headed and filled up by each thus :

(Diagram omitted)

This might represent one voting paper – others might, of course be differently filled up. The Bishop receiving the voting papers would see pretty clearly the mind of the majority as to the appointment; [he] would form his judgment accordingly, and would appoint by Christmas, as he thought fit. The Bursar, acting as Secretary, also as community Sacristan and Infirmarian, is an office so influential and important that I think the wish of the whole Community might be well taken; though probably the Superioress would be first appointed, and her wishes consulted by the Bishop. The Council, after Christmas, would then send nomination for the Novice Mistress, Visiting Sisters, sisters for branch houses as said above. The Bishop would make the list out for New Year's Day. The appointments are made for this year. Appointments will not be changed during the year without strong reason, and the Bishop will, as a rule, consult the Council or at least the Superioress.”

If the Bishop did not care by himself, or by any other Priest to make ordinances and appointments, those made by the General Congregation or Council as above, would become not only recommendations, but definite ordinances or appointments, unless and until the Bishop chose to reverse them.

13. NOVITIATE : On what has to be done before postulants are admitted to their clothing.

- Intending postulants will remain for nine days as guests in the house.
- They will wear the postulants' dress for three months.
- They will prepare for the reception of the holy Habit by a nine days retreat.
- The votes of the Council Sisters will be taken for their clothing, and the Bishop will decide whether or no to give them the Holy Habit.
- Postulants must bring with them five pound, which sum is to be returned to them if they leave.

LETTER FROM BISHOP BAGSHAWE

St. Barnabas' Cathedral Nottingham

24 June 1881.

My Dear Child,

I am surprised and sorry to hear from you that the opinion exists among the sisters that the final reception or re-admission of a sister rests with and depends upon themselves! There is nothing in the Rule, and I am sure I have never said anything to countenance such an opinion.

The Rule is that the Bishop (or some priest deputed by him) rules the Community autocratically. [He exercises] his own sole discretion in all matters whatsoever without exception, and if he asks or receives the opinion of the Superiors, or of the Council, or the General Congregation, he is in no way bound to act upon it.

Please let this be read by everyone of the sisters who are professed or about to be professed. See that they understand it. For the future, if any one of them expresses an opinion to the contrary, let her be severely penanced as one guilty of attempting to subvert the Rule.

Whensoever any postulant has made an application to be received back into the community, a Council should be held within a day or two to advise the Bishop on the answer to be given to her application. If he decide to admit her, an interval of nine days shall elapse after her admission, during which a novena may be made. At the end of the novena the Council shall meet again and send to the Bishop –

- A careful report of her behaviour during the nine days
- An estimate of her character
- Their opinion as to whether or no she should be admitted and receive the cap.

If the postulant be admitted and receive the cap, the Council shall meet again at the end of three months. [This is] in order to give in like manner a report and opinion to the Bishop, in order that he may decide whether or no the postulant shall be admitted to the Habit. A similar report and opinion as upon postulants shall be given to the Bishop at the end of a novice's two years probation from the day of her clothing, that he may decide whether to admit her to Profession.

On account of the expense of frequent Council meetings, it shall be necessary to summons any Councillor, who has to make a railway journey in order to be present, or who cannot be spared from a case. If the number of Councillors readily available prove in practice to be insufficient, the Bishop may direct the Superiors to summons a General Congregation of all the Professed Sisters for the above named purposes, instead of a Council Meeting.

+EDWARD,
Bishop of Nottingham.

PS Except the meetings above, the character, conduct, correction or dismissal of any sister shall not be discussed at any meeting of the Council or General Congregation, except by the special order of the Bishop.

It is particularly to be noticed that obedience, blind unquestioning obedience is the one thing that will be required of the novices. The postulant is told on her arrival that the first act of her religious life will be to consecrate herself to Our Lady. This she does after several months' preparation. On the day she receives the habit she makes a solemn consecration of herself to Mary, to be henceforth her child. Imitating Our Dear Lord she chooses Mary for her Mother. She remains under her influence as a child in the womb. She is gradually brought to birth; she is in union with the Infant Jesus. She obeys those over her as he obeyed Mary and Joseph, and performs her actions in union with him. She gradually grows in grace. She advances in the spiritual life. She has to go about everywhere doing good, healing the sick, instructing the ignorant. The quiet part of her novitiate when she was in union with the boy of Nazareth is gone; she mixes more with the world. She is preparing for her great sacrifice. She prepares for her espousals with Jesus on Calvary. She follows him the way of Calvary and is finally bound to him there for time and eternity. After many, many years of religious life the novice is finally professed and becomes the Spouse of Jesus.

14. NOVITIATE : On what has to be done before novices are admitted to Religious Profession.

15. OF OFFICE AND PRAYER GENERALLY

16 OF SILENCE

All postulants and novices must observe silence and speak only when it is necessary. Those only may talk who are engaged in laundry work.

Silence will be observed during meals. One of the sisters in turn will read a portion of Scripture and then other spiritual reading during two-thirds of the meal, and then she will begin to take her own. Talking is allowed at tea.

Exception is made to the Mothers, but they should respect the silence by speaking in a low tone in silence times and places.

Silence must be observed during meals, except at recreation times and days.

There is something very beautiful in silence if we only practised it properly, something mystic, unearthly. Why we do not appreciate it is because we do not practise it properly. Silence with creatures on earth is given us that we may better hold conversation with God, and the Angels and Saints in Heaven. But we are earthly minded, and when our lips are not engaged with the things of this earth, our thoughts are. Let the sisters endeavour during silence hours to enter really into communion with God, to think of the other world, its beautiful sights and sounds. If they do this, soon, very soon, they will come to love silence and fulfill the precept given us "to let our conversation be in Heaven."

17. OF CHAPTERS

A Chapter is a solemn gathering together and invoking of the Holy Spirit, a solemn calling upon God to be present with them, and as he has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"(Mt 18:20). So, by faith, the sisters should see Our Dear Lord present and act and speak as they would do if he really appeared in the midst of them.

There are various kinds of Chapters, Chapters of Council, of Faults etc. The sisters will give their opinions or accuse themselves simply and frankly, and in the presence of God.

When the first bell rings the sisters will visit the Church silently and having made their visit, place themselves in the Chapter room according to seniority. They each receive a written penance before leaving.

The Chapter of Faults will be held weekly. Postulants and novices are present. The

postulants retire after the exhortation. The junior novice then accuses herself of breaches of the Rule, exterior faults, commencing with the words: "I accuse myself before God and Mary Immaculate, of ..." When the novices have all accused themselves, they retire. The Professed then in like manner accuse themselves. All present at the Chapter receive a written penance.

The Chapter will be given by each Mother in turn. If the Mother, whose turn it is to give the Chapter, be away her turn passes to the next. The Superioress can always add her own remarks to those of the Mother giving the Chapter.

18. OF THE COUNCIL

The Council will meet once a week. At this meeting the Superioress will take the advice of the

Council on all matters concerning the general government of the house, and the appointment or removal of officials. She will not raise any extraordinary expense without their consent.

Except the meetings above named (viz. Those for the voting of postulants and novices to admission and reception – see Bishop's letter...) "the character, conduction, correction or dismissal of any sister shall not be discussed at any meeting of the Council or General Congregation, except by the special order of the Bishop."

It will be the duty of all members of the Council to state – firstly, all notable or habitual breaches of rule or omissions of observance, which have occurred in the Community since the last Council. Any suggestion, which she thinks, would be for the good of the Community, which does not touch upon any point already decided by the Bishop. The statements of each member of the Council, beginning with the junior, will be noted down, and each of the other members present will express their opinion thereon as briefly as possible, which opinion will also be noted down. Any member of the Council who is absent nursing may, if she please, send in her statements to be noted at the Council.

Papers presented at the Council to be forwarded to the Bishop, should be representations of any breach of observance, abuse or misconduct, which cannot be or are not remedied by representation to Rev. Mother, also, any suggestions of new regulations which might be for the benefit of the Community.

19. OF THE GENERAL GONGREGATION

All the Professed Sisters will be summoned on all important questions affecting the interest of the community in general, and for any extraordinary expense, beyond the expense of three pounds.

20. OF THE VOWS

The Profession of the sisters will not take place, as a rule, until after many years of religious life. We have said that it is on Calvary the final espousals with Our Dear Lord take place. Jesus went not to Calvary hastily. He has set us example in this as in all things. He who needed not to prepare himself did so. He set us example of how we should offer the sacrifice ourselves, of how we should prepare for it. He allowed three and thirty years to take their slow course before he made that grand act of love on Calvary that he had so longed to make.

Let us imitate Our Lord in this, and then, when the happy day arrives for our espousals with him, joyously shall we be placed on the cross with Jesus by Mary, to vow our vows for time and eternity, and live henceforth as Spouse of Jesus Crucified should live.

A simple vow for one or more years is made by the novices and the blue veil received, but they are not to be considered professed.

Those who live in Mary's Company must learn from their Immaculate Mother how to preserve their souls, chaste, fresh, fragrant, detached, pure, separate from all earthly things, like their Mother, receiving nothing from this earth. Mary's Own will be God's virgins receiving only from God, and giving of their abundance to others. They will keep aloof from all of this earth as far as duties permit. [They will] receive nothing from it beyond what is necessary to enable them to serve God. [They will] love nothing of it, have no pleasure from earthly things, striving to preserve themselves pure for the sake of the all holy, all pure God.

The sisters will use every means to preserve this precious gift, by being truly humble and mortified, not clinging to the joys of earth, repressing pleasures to sense and taste. In particular, [they will] mortify themselves rigorously where they find it most needed, guided in this as in all things else by obedience.

The great preservative of a chaste, virginal soul is union with God, taking all their pleasure in him, letting all their joys be for and in their Lord, having him for their only Lover.

The sisters are not forbidden to embrace and kiss one another. They may thus encourage mutual love in all simplicity, imitating the early Christians.

The sisters may not walk out with any man, and should avoid being alone with them at any time.

21. THE CEREMONY OF RECEPTION

22. THE CEREMONY OF PROFESSION

23. OF THE HABIT

24. OF THE CELLS OF THE SISTERS

The sisters will each have a separate cell or curtained apartment to themselves.

The sisters may not sleep together without necessity.

25. OF THE REFECTORY

Silence must be observed in the refectory at all times. Letters must not be delivered or opened in the refectory when the sisters are there. The meals will be served in an orderly manner, and prepared carefully.

The sisters will assemble in the refectory in an orderly manner. The meals will be served quietly and sedately. The sister who serves will be in the refectory before the appointed time and see that each sister is served before the second bell rings. So that after grace has been said, the sisters may sit quietly down and attend to the reading. The sisters may not be too quick or too dilatory over their meals. They should perform it as an act done for God. It is neither religious to eat too quickly, nor linger over the meals like people in the world. Pass charitably to one another anything the sisters near you may need.

26. OF THE FEASTS

Feasts should be kept in a joyous, happy spirit. Let each sister contribute to the general enjoyment. Recreation does a great work in many souls. It charms away temptations. It frees the soul from many disorders; it contributes greatly when performed in a proper spirit to the mutual charity and love of the sisters. [It] binds them together and helps greatly to that spirit of unity so essential in a religious house. [At the same time it] enables them to do so much good and be such a pleasing spectacle in the sight of God, the holy Angels and Saints.

27. OF THE CUSTOMS OBSERVED

28. OF THE BY-LAWS

The rules and supplementary letters of the Rule of the Bishop must be fastened into a book, which must be so placed as to be accessible to every sister. The must be read quite through in the refectory once in each week, beginning on Monday morning.

29. OF THE BRANCH HOUSES

30. OF INTERCOURSE WITH SECULARS

31. RULES FOR SISTERS OUT NURSING

Before a case is accepted, it must be known what is the nature of the case, that a suitable sister may be sent. In case even of a telegraph, a return telegraph must be sent, asking a statement of the case.

A sister will be sent, from time to time, to inquire minutely into the cases where sisters have been, and are then nursing, that it may be known if all things are going well, and the sister giving satisfaction.

Sisters must be firm in resisting patients or others where they would wish them to do what is manifestly wrong, or tending even to wrong.

32. OF PUNCTUALITY

33. OF ORDER

34. OF THOUGHTFULNESS

36. OF TIME

The time table must be strictly must be strictly adhered to, whether the sister in the house be many or few. The sisters appointed to ring the bell, and the Superioress, are both responsible for the bell being rung for each duty at the prescribed hour. This must never be changed for mere convenience, never without real necessity. When the sisters have assembled at the call of the bell, if the Superoress be accidentally absent or detained elsewhere, the senior Mother or Sister present will, after a delay of two minutes, commence the meal or exercise. The sisters are requested to consider regularity and punctuality in attending all community exercises a matter of primary importance. Those who are resting may lie late in bed, but when up they must attend the exercises with the rest.

Dispensations from points of observance are sometimes necessary when a sister ill or evidently over fatigued, but they should neither be asked for nor offered without some real necessity.

The sisters must accustom themselves to take no refreshment whatever except at the community meals. None must be asked for or offered without real necessity. Relaxation on those points is so great an evil in a community, that it would be a very mistaken charity to encourage it by any overdue indulgence. The sisters may never go out in secular dress, unless by the special leave of the Bishop.

The sisters may go out alone in the daytime, but, if obliged to go out again after dark, they must endeavour, if possible, to be accompanied by a secular, and without a companion they must not go out at all after dark unless on urgent business.

Any sister who feels herself too ill or over fatigued must make the same known to the superior. If asked to go out nursing, in case of doubt, the Superior must prefer the health of the sister to the convenience of externs.

Any sister not otherwise engaged under obedience, or who is not resting from nursing, will occupy herself in the parlour under the Mistress of the Work – novices in the novitiate.

OF RECREATION (This was an additional 17. in the Index).

On Recreation Days there will be talking throughout the day, except in the refectory. There will also be dessert in the parlour of Superior's room after dinner or supper, to which externs may be invited.

The time of recreation is a time for practising great virtue. Let the sisters enter with a loving sisterly desire to hold communion with one another, to show their love for one another by interesting each other, listening or answering as they find it best.

Pleasing indeed to Our Dear Lord and Mary-like is the sister who joins cheerfully and unselfishly in the recreation, though inwardly her heart is suffering intensely, or her body wearied, aching or even [in] intense pain. A plenitude of grace will she obtain by her generous, unselfish spirit, and great steps will she make in the path of the saints.

OF EXTERNS

[Externs] must not take refreshment in the Convent except in the parlour or Superior's room. Externs must confine their visits to the parlour unless, with the permission, they are shown over the house of visit the sick in the Infirmary.

OF HOSPITALITY

[Hospitality] must be practised in the highest degree in Our Lady's home. Let the sisters vie with one another in showing charity to all visitors, offering them refreshment and all kindness in word and deed, not sparing their own trouble in doing so. Let Mary's Own in this imitate their Mother and let them, by doing so, give the world what it expects, and has a right to expect, from religious. – a good example of charity. Let them learn that religious are not selfish people as is sometimes thought, shut up in their convents away from the world and its cares, and thinking little and caring less what becomes of the people in the world. Let the sisters show their love for souls, for God's people, by waiting upon them and entertaining them with love, and then draw them to love Our Dear Lord more by loving his Spouses.

MISCELLANIOUS INSTRUCTIONS

Sisters who are not on the sick list will ask the Superioress if they need any food or drink out of the community meals. It will be the duty of the Superioress to provide any sister with such food or drink if she judges it to be necessary for her. She will also place upon the sick list any sister whom she judges to be seriously unwell.

The Superioress will be called 'Reverend Mother', and addressed 'Mother'. The other professed will be called respectively 'Mother Mary Elizabeth, Sr. Mary Margaret' etc. It is especially ordered that this rule be attended to and enforced.

If the Mother be from home, the next senior sister shall have the authority of Superior until her return. So far as is necessary to keep order and observance, see that the Superior's orders are obeyed, and to do what is required in emergencies. Nursing lectures will take place each day with the exception of Saturday and Sunday. The senior sister present will read out a portion of a book selected by the Rev. Mother for a time, and the rest of the time will be spent in discussing it.

All wine and spirits will be kept in a cupboard of which the Superioress alone will keep the key. She will not give out any whatsoever except upon the express order of the Bishop or the medical attendant.

Sisters nursing infectious cases must abstain from all intercourse with the Convent, even correspondence, neither should they come to any public service.

Community books should not be lent to externs.

Incurring debt is strictly forbidden. No expense is to be incurred without an estimate taken, or contract made without having the money in hand to pay.

Once, at least in the quarter, the Superioress (or if she is unable to go, a professed sister deputed by her) shall make a visitation of all the branch houses in the diocese. A report of all things requiring correction shall be made to the Superioress, and by her to the Bishop that proper remedies may be applied. A more frequent visitation may be made at the discretion of the Superioress.

All messages must be taken first to the Superioress.

The sisters are awakened with the ejaculation "*Benedicamus Domino*", to which they reply, "*Deo Gratias.*"

DUTY OF THE VISITING SISTER

The sister visiting has not to interfere with the arrangements of the place, but to watch what is done and allow it, even though [it may] not [be] what is right. She has to see the usual way of doing things, make her comments on paper, take notes of what she sees or thinks wrong. She should avoid giving directions, so that she may

see the power of direction that the Superioress possesses. I want this particularly understood that when I come myself, or any Council Sister for me, I do not want to be referred to or expected to give directions. I have tried to excuse the want of order, forethought, and general management, by thinking perhaps it is different when I am not there. I have hoped so, at least with a kind of forlorn hope, that perhaps too the extra trouble of visitors is putting out the general arrangements, though still, this should no be.

The Superioress should be ever thinking and planning for the good order of the convent committed to her care. She should consider the comfort of the community, which cannot be without good order, for people like to be considered for and arranged for carefully. They feel the comfort of it. A badly managed, ill-regulated house causes a general feeling of discomfort and uneasiness. In the world, even the poor little ignorant serving girl will know the difference between a mistress who arranges well for her, or the reverse. I have heard the remark made by one that she had not felt the cleaning of a large house; the mistress had arranged it so well for her. So much depends upon the one who directs. She cannot centre her mind upon one action. She must have the place and its various duties in her mind that she may have the power of arranging and directing it in the quietest and most orderly way. Like a general surveying a battle, viewing the weak parts etc. Now, arrange and plan as we may, there will be always something needing to be looked to. This is the place of the Superioress to make up and supply the gaps and see what wants looking to etc.

We will append here various faults found in one or two visitations, that others may learn from it.

Want of direction in the Superioress.

Thinking beforehand, giving directions in time, a thoughtful planning mind, putting up the watches for Exposition, letting each sister have [her] appointed charge and holding her responsible for it.

Not giving directions, not having method in the work of the house, certain hours for certain offices, speaking in a sharp manner with a tone of being better than those they are speaking to.

Leaving sacristy things about; not being sufficiently particular about altar cloths etc. Not seeing those under them were clean in person and tidy, clothes mended.

Not having pens, ink and matches in the rooms.

Matting wanting binding, chairs wanting mending.

Matters not sent up to Mother House that it was right to be let known.

Want of prudence – too much levity.

Books not kept in an orderly manner.

Want of motherly and child-like feeling one to the other. This is a grave fault, for love of...

(The following has the notation “not to be read yet!”)

I want it to be ever remembered that what appears such a good plan, one part coinciding with the other, as though some clever mind had seen the fitness of such an Order to the present times. [They] had seen what should be the principal features; had seen that a Confraternity that should spread itself throughout the Church as this will, offering to the Eternal Father the last words of Jesus dying. So that the Church, the Spouse, will mystically reproduce the crucifixion of her Lord, and from the Heart of the Church, as from the Heart of her Head and Master will emanate those wondrously sweet words. Let it be likewise ever remembered that even the various devotions to the dying, the Heart of Mary, the Precious Blood – the devotion to the Precious Blood, the Exposition and special adoration, does not that coincide with the thought of the present [as] being the time of the Church representing Our Lord's passion? This, however, did not strike that soul until after – the Mercy of God was impressed, one after another upon a mind unconsciously of what was to follow. A mind that was forming no plan, a mind that left itself to the working of God. It was likewise a childish mind; that almost child had not previously had those very devotions. [It] had no thought of the appropriateness of the Order to the present times, no thought of the appropriateness of the various devotions to this work of Calvary. No thought, until gradually, afterwards, it grew upon her and strengthened her when she saw the whole work.

This may be believed by those who knew her. They would see she had not a mind for organising, planning etc. It was not a disposition that could direct well. One who would leave herself to the guidance of Providence, rather than plan even the small occurrences of the day. One thus accustomed not to think or plan beforehand, but to follow what they could hope was God's Will, made known by others was not...

I say that soul was docile to the inspirations of grace. It was a soul God could speak to. It was one rather lazily disciplined to exert itself. One never made plans and wished to do anything for God, but hiddenly suffer, and be in close union with him alone. That soul came forward, against its own will, and at the bidding of God.

CONFERENCE -Feast of Saint Theresa

The Little Company of Mary is founded expressly to honour the Mother of God. Those who enter give themselves entirely to Mary in union with the Infant Jesus. They have to pass through the Hidden Life in the first part of the novitiate. They then, imitating Jesus, have to "go about everywhere doing good", instructing, healing by their intentions to the poor sick. They are finally united with him on Calvary. It is the spirit of Calvary they have henceforth to live.

Calvary is the model of the Little Company of Mary. The sisters have a special devotion to the Maternal Heart of Mary. They strive to imitate it, especially on Calvary. They plead as Mary for the whole world, for the Church, for the members who have greatest need, the dying. Night and day the sisters are by the sickbed, and by their prayers, penances and personal assistance save innumerable souls at the last hour. The sisters likewise undertake any charitable work, that by helping souls to

lead a good life, may help them to a good death. All their works tend to this end, the saving souls at the last hour.

They assist the poor priests by giving their services *gratis* to open poor schools, where a governess cannot be afforded, likewise assisting in mission work, visiting, instructing etc., and aiding to found new missions. There conversions are very numerous. By their attention to the sick they are able to go where a priest cannot, and baptise constantly adults as well as children. The sisters search for sick children. They find so many parents who think little of baptism.

The sisters have no funds. They are supported mainly by subscriptions from Protestants, who admire the sisters' work amongst the poor in whose houses, in time of sickness, they are as mothers, giving their services and any assistance they can afford. Likewise, the better classes pay the sisters for their services according to their means.

The sisters hope in the course of time, to have continual prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs of the Holy Church, especially the dying. The chant now [the] Office of Our Lady in church, making constant visits day and night. Over their work the sisters constantly recite the rosary, the litany, and other prayers. In the church and in the sick room the sisters have but one spirit. In union with Our Lady on Calvary they plead before the Blessed Sacrament; in union with Our Lady they strive to tend the dying members of Jesus.

The novices are taught useful knowledge. Those lacking a good education, it is in part supplied to them. It is hoped in time to have an entirely secluded Novitiate where the novices, who have hereafter to mix so much in the world, may be better trained for the purpose, and their talents made use [of] for the service of God.

All classes are admitted into the Little Company of Mary, and there are no lay sisters.

Whitsuntide

I wrote this not long before the Bishop gave us his Rule.

In the morning the sister calling awakens the others with the indulgenced prayer "Praised be Jesus Christ"; the sister answers "praised forever." All to be in bed by half past ten.

Rise at 6: in church by half past: morning offering: return to their cells to make beds or prepare breakfast: hand bell rung at five to seven: in church for Angelus at seven: meditation: Little Hours of Office: Holy Communion: Mass: breakfast: bell rung after Mass:

12 – examen: prayers: the sisters to place themselves in spirit on Calvary watching

with Our Lady repeating at intervals between the hours 12 and 3, the last words of Jesus on the cross. Those who are at liberty to make a short visit at three o'clock. Dinner: half past twelve: reading during dinner. Tea: half past four: recreation till half past five. Six (Sundays, five) Angelus and Matins together. Five to nine, hand bell rung. Nine: night prayers, Lauds, meditation. The sisters employed in the evening night school instruction etc. collation to be taken separately. Strict silence not to be observed at present except between the hours following night prayers until after Mass in the morning. The sisters may converse for the present likewise at breakfast. On Friday the sisters to watch alternately before the Blessed Sacrament from twelve to three. In course of time this to be extended to every day in the week except Sunday. A short visit to the Blessed Sacrament to be made before school and after, before leaving the house and upon returning. Five visits to the Blessed Sacrament to be made during the day. The indulgenced prayer "my Jesus mercy" and "sweet Heart of Mary be my salvation" to be often repeated during the day.

Public demonstrations being contrary to the spirit of Mary, and yet exactitude to even minor points of Rule being necessary, accusation of any breach of Rule should be made each day to ensure is strict observance. In the present absence of a spiritual father living on the spot, the sisters will accuse themselves simply to one another of any breach of Rule at the end of the day, or even at any other time if they wish. It must be done quietly, and to any sister they please, not necessarily always the same [one]. They will thus please Jesus, who desires we should become as little children. By performing acts of humility we shall become humble, and Our Lord's love for us will increase in proportion as we become more like himself and Mary, meek and humble of heart.

We desire to lead a simple, natural, seemingly (though really in the present state of natural supernatural life). We desire to avoid anything forced or constrained, therefore, we must act very simply. We may, and should help one another, by pointing out some fault or imperfection they may have committed, and no one should take offence at this. They may for truth's sake give explanation simply or excuse, if they have a reasonable one.

A 'religious' means one bound. Mary's Own, though possessing more liberty of spirit, are still more bound than other religious since they can neither dispose of their spiritual goods, their Communions etc., they having offered these as well as their temporal goods to Mary to be employed as she pleases for God's honour and glory. Therefore, as other religious cannot give even a picture without leave, so Mary's own religious should ask permission before disposing of even one recital of the rosary. This will bring home to themselves "True Devotion" and facilitate their advance in it.

Each sister must remember that she has come into religion to render herself dear to Jesus, to be the delight of his Heart. ("Have you considered my servant Job; how there is none on earth like to him" (Job 2:3) spoke God of old to Satan, and thus God

should be able to speak now of Mary's Own. Satan may answer now as then, that those on earth so pleasing to the eyes of God have not been tried, or they would not be faithful to him. Permission may be given from God that they should tried even more then Job of old, therefore, in time of trial, be brave, be faithful). That is her first, her principal work. God does not require her to give an account of the management of the house etc. He will require her to present herself to him a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to him. He will require her to set in order her own house. He will require from each sister a home in the place he loves best to dwell in on earth – the human heart.

He speaks, "I have given you an example, that as I have done you should do likewise" (Jn 13:15). Jesus, infinite, Incarnate Wisdom obeyed a poor illiterate, though good and holy man. St. Joseph commanded directed Jesus and Mary. There were three in the holy household at Nazareth, copy of all households and communities too. Jesus was best fitted to direct. He did not do so. Mary was next best fitted, but she was not chosen by God to do so. St. Joseph was least fitted, and he was chosen. The affairs of the Holy Family might have prospered better if managed by Jesus himself, by Mary, or by one more clever than the simple hearted Joseph. St. Joseph, however, was the appointed head of the Holy Family, and he was obeyed unquestionably by Jesus and Mary. Infinite Wisdom obeyed the directions given by a little finite creature. Mary, with her wonderful mind sought advice and direction upon matters which her science, the gift bestowed by God upon her would have showed her far more clearly how to perform than the dear St. Joseph. Mary, when reduced to want, never in her own mind complained that the directions of St. Joseph had been unwise. She never for one moment thought how much better she could herself have managed. No, she saw God's will in all things – she submitted in all things. Therefore, should Mary's Own imitate the subjection of Jesus and Mary. Own may have to direct them less fitted than any in the house. Contradictory commands or directions not according to human wisdom may be given, but God can and will draw good out of evil. Therefore, dear sisters, do simply what you are told. God will require of you an account of your own charge alone; that should be done as perfectly as possible, since it is the work of God, and "cursed is he who doth the work of the Lord negligently"(Pro 18:9).

Regarding the report of Council, I wish to note one or two things. Firstly, as the Bishop's wish had been sent to them that Sr. M... should not see me, it was not obedience to raise any other proposal. When the bishop says anything it is not to be discussed in Council. Secondly, the proposal that... is to be told her fate, the results likely to follow are to take place at the Mother House, savours somewhat of a selfishness not quite the spirit of Mary's Own. If St. Ann had been ill what would have been Our Lady's conduct? Would she not have carefully kept any case of anxiety or excitement from her? It is not for that I speak; only I wish to show you what I think the most perfect thing.

In the midst of our many exterior works we must carefully watch the interior

emotions of our hearts, lest any spirit foreign to the pure unselfish spirit of Mary creep in an unguarded moment and take root unperceived. You may judge your advancement in part at this moment. How have you taken this correction? Have you been ruffled a bit? Are you inclined to justify yourself or complain that it is not deserved?

Good people are sometimes disturbed at the most just correction (in fact, an unjust one they would take far better). They seem to have had unknown to themselves, a certain feeling that their conduct was so perfect that they are surprised to find there was anything in themselves to be corrected. They do not say this in words, but their evident disturbance shows some want of humility of heart.

Now, do take in good part what I have said. It is because I am anxious you should be perfect and get rid of all that is little and nasty. I am always thinking of and watching you all – absent ones the same. I believe I know the weak point of most of you!

God bless you. Do pray for the poor little mother who, having told others of their faults, turns to the good God to thank him for the great mercy that has saved her from being now in hell, and to beg that others may treat her as she deserves. A prayer sometimes heard in part, only we never could be treated as we deserve, unless we were put in hell.

Regarding professed sisters being contradicted or corrected before novices, it seems to me at times more necessary than to reprove a novice or postulant. If a professed sister should say or do anything manifestly wrong in the presence of the Mother, she is obliged to show her disapproval, otherwise the word or act might be regarded as a precedent or an excuse given for similar conduct by younger ones. I well remember as a postulant the edification I received from seeing the sweet gentle manner in which an old professed sister received a sharp reproof. I love her for it to the present day.

I certainly do not wish that the professed sisters' faults should be hidden as much as possible from the novices. I charge you all to help one another and to hide one another's faults. The great help in old established communities is the seeing put in practice by the professed what they hear read. We have a great responsibility upon us. Our Lord's words about those who scandalise his little ones are very strong (Mt 18:6-7).

I do not know whether the remark concerning professed sisters being reproved publicly refers to myself or some senior sister, but I wish the senior sisters in my absence to take my place. [They must] use great prudence and not noticing what may have occurred without necessity, and then in a kind way, and not with a tone of authority. If the young sisters' manner upon receiving reproof of even unjust [matters] does but teach the novices how they should receive reproof, she will have done great good, more than any disedification by the real or supposed fault. They cannot expect even professed sisters to be perfect.

We must all endeavour to keep up the spirit Our Lady expects from us, the greatest humility, generosity, self-sacrifice. We must not think we already possess it, but be ever aiming at it. It is the work of years. We shall not drift into it, but must diligently use violence with ourselves to attain it.

LETTER TO SISTERS (1)

Convent of the Maternal Heart of Mary

April 18th, 1882

My Very Dear Children,

Before reading this say a Hail Mary, and make a Spiritual Communion that you may receive it in a good spirit. It is a pain to me so constantly finding fault, but must watch as "having to give account" (Mt 12:36). Therefore, I write to warn you, each and all, of two growing evils in the Little Company of Mary. One is thoughtlessness. (This includes carelessness, untidiness, disorder etc.), and the other evil is a want of religious modesty.

With regard to the former I can only say what I have said so often. No work of any kind could do the good it should do, and is intended to, with thoughtless, careless workers. See how careful are the people of the world about their works – indeed, what catastrophes would happen if the people employed, for instance on the railway, were as careless as some of our sisters. Loss of life, loss of property would follow. This must be looked to. This must be prayed about.

The second point - want of religious modesty. Do the sisters forget they are solemnly consecrated to God, that they are set apart for his service alone? Why do they lower themselves before the world by their want of a proper reserve, by their want of a proper modesty of manner? I do not want any hypocrisy, anything affected, but the world expects something more from a religious, than from an ordinary person, and are disedified when they do not find it.

Pray, dear children, for prudence, Mary-like Prudence. Beg for it with earnest prayers and tears, perform penances to obtain it. May Our Dear Mother bless her children and come and keep them under her mantle that they may do good wherever they go, and prove themselves in work and word, true children of Mary.

LETTER TO SISTERS (2)

Via della Purificazione, 54

St. Philip's Day, 1883.

My Very Dear Children,

I have now to write to you upon a very serious matter. You know I always speak to you simply as a mother with her children, and have everything open with you. We are all part of a work very dear to the Heart of God; we must all do our part in it for we would give pleasure to Our Good God. Therefore, we must all be interested to know all we can about it and perform it in the most perfect manner. [We must] not be sorry when we have something appointed us contrary to our inclinations. But rather rejoice that we have a means of making a present to God most acceptable to him, since the essence of all good is in sacrifice.

Well, now, I am making a long preamble before I tell you a little change that is to take place, but I shall make it but a little longer. You know why I am in Rome, and why I am staying in Rome away from you all, whom I love so much, is because I want our Little Company to be so perfect. I want everything done in it to be in perfect harmony with the mind of the Church. Now, one of the Rules of the Church is that novices and professed should be separate. This is the Rule, but like many others, it is not enforced in non-Catholic missionary countries (they count England a mission country). Therefore, I am not obliged to do it, but it would be thought better if it could be done, and, after much prayer, counsel and reflection have decided to try and do it. But still, [I] am sorry to pain you, which I know it will, to separate you from the mothers, but you will make an offering of your wills to God in this matter and please him by your sacrifice.

Who will be your novice Mother? God alone knows. I cannot say. She will be chosen at the general elections which cannot yet take place, but as it is not expedient to wait we propose placing you under Mother Mary Michael temporarily until a Novice Mother has been elected. So be good children, be simple and obedient, please God, and you will be very happy. She will, I know, strive her best to make you so. When I tell you, you will henceforth be forbidden to speak to professed. I do not, of course, mean good Mother M. Elizabeth – you can speak to her whenever you please, but I know she has more than she can do. [I] also know her self-sacrificing spirit makes her labours sweet, but still we must spare and think for her more, as she does not for herself.

Now, dear children, it very often happens in religious houses that these kind of changes produce some little feelings not quite pleasing to God. Now, in the name of Our Dear Lord, the sweet name of Jesus, I beg of each individual sister to stifle immediately the least feeling that may arise in her mind not in harmony with God's mind. If any sister should be so imperfect as to permit any thought of murmuring or discontent, I positively forbid her giving any expression to her feelings to any sister but let her write to me. Now, dear children, perhaps this warning is quite unneeded; thank God if so, but human nature creeps in everywhere, and we must be ever searching to prevent its getting in and marring God's works.

I do hope the silence is strictly kept, because this is a fruitful source of evil. Where

two or three gather together for a little conversation out of recreation time, contrary to Rule, who is in the midst of them? The devil himself [is]. Yes, this is a fact. Think and weigh it well, and you [will make] fresh offerings to Jesus, you... desire to offer yourselves in special honour of the five dear wounds of Jesus. [You have] let your offering grow cool, lose its first freshness by neglect of grace, the grace that comes from observance of every minute rule, from the most exact obedience, obedience of act and will and thought. This breach of obedience brings coldness, tepidity, a whole host of evils. It cannot be too strongly written upon.

I want you to be ever growing in the Precious Blood of Jesus. Choose your wound, and keep ever close to it, loving it, and offering the Precious Blood from that wound as the Angels did. This must be your daily occupation. It is a grand work to imitate the Angels, to imitate indeed the priests in the offering of the Precious Blood to the Eternal Father. This is work for the Spouses of Jesus. This is what you wish to be. This is what, please God, you will be. God keep you. Mary watch over all my children. You will be yourself their Novice Mother. You will be their Mother, directing them in all things if they will be docile to your influence. Pray every hour for your loving mother,

MARY.

METHOD OF EXAMEN ESPECIALLY FOR RELIGIOUS (taught by a Jesuit Father)

Ask Our Lady to be with you while you kneel at Jesus' feet, and contemplate his five wounds. Taking his right hand kiss it reverently, and thank Our Lord for the graces that dear hand has bestowed upon you so liberally that day. What were they? Think briefly of each and especially recollect with joy. If you have that morning been to Holy Communion – think of your happiness, the Inmate of the Tabernacle, the host you love to gaze upon exposed, reposed in your breast. Break forth into thanksgiving saying, “Blessed be etc.”, “Glory be to thee.” Chant with the Angels their eternal “*Sanctus*”.

Then, kissing timidly the wound of the left hand, raising it on high recite the *Veni*, “come Holy Ghost”. The wounds of Jesus plead for me. Come, enlighten my darkness, make me know myself. Then prostrating at the feet of Jesus, kissing the wound in the right foot, see how you have that morning strayed away from the right path, failed in your resolution, or in any way displeased dear Jesus. When you have seen how ill you have corresponded with grace, and recall in the past how good God has been to you, still prostrate at his feet, kiss both sacred wounds as another Magdalen. Promise from pure love as you tell him how grieved you are for your coldness and carelessness in his service. Promise with his help that you will do better in future. You will walk more carefully. You will guard better your thoughts, your words, your acts. All shall be dipped in his Precious Blood; all shall be pure love. Repeat the Act of Consecration, “O Sweet Jesus” and the litany of the Precious

Blood. Then, looking to your Mother, you ask her to place you close to the sacred wound of Jesus' side, where you spiritually communicate, beseeching him to strengthen you by the Blood of his Sacred Heart. Then slowly recite the "*Anima Christi*", saying "soul of Christ sanctify me, etc." with the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart.

When making the examen out loud the following formula may be used. The Superior will commence. "We will honour the wound in the right hand of Jesus, thanking the Blessed Trinity for all the graces that have flowed upon our souls from that sacred wound. Sisters recited, "Blessed be, etc." "Glory be to thee", "*Sanctus etc.*" Kneel awhile in silent thanksgiving. "Let us honour the wound in the left hand, invoking through its merits the light of the Holy Ghost." "*Veni Creator*" together. Superior : "O Divine Spirit of light and truth, enlighten us that we may know ourselves." Sisters : "Oh God, illuminate our darkness." Silence... Superior : "Let us honour the wound of Our Lord's right foot, examining how we have not walked in his footsteps, or wandered from the path he marked out for us with his Blood." Silence for examen. Superior : "Let us with Magdalen grieve for our sins. Let us prostrate in spirit reverently kiss the Sacred Feet that were wearied seeking the lost sheep. Let us honour the wound in the left foot, promising to be more faithful to the future." "O sweet Jesus I grieve for my sins etc." Litany of the Precious Blood. Superior : "Let us, drawing close to Our Lord's sacred side, make a Spiritual Communion honouring the wound from which flowed the Blood of his Heart, who so loved us, who has drawn us to himself, and bound us with closest ties." "*Corpus Domini Nostrum etc.*" or "*Anima Christi.*"

ON VISITATION : Account of Visitation made September 1885 by M.M.Catherine.

Dear Sisters,

In giving to you [an] account of Visitation made by M.M.Catherine, I must premise a few remarks. Firstly, That there is no place so perfect that if a visitation were made no faults would be found. As a rule it is not allowable to look round about us with a critical eye, but rather with a charitable eye, that sees nothing without making an excuse. But, when looking round on purpose to discover all faults, in order that they may be remedied and a greater perfection reign in Our Lord's house, we necessarily discover much to be corrected. This is charity also in another form. It is from love of God and love of souls of those around us that we discover the least root of evil in the place where his glory dwelleth, "the zeal of thy house, O Lord, hath eaten me up" (Ps 69:9).

We trust then, dear sister that you will take in a proper spirit, in a true religious spirit what we have to write to you should be corrected, and what is even deserving of censure. You will consider what is said, is said from a motive of love – love of God and love of those young souls he has entrusted to our care. That they maybe brought

up according to his Holy Will, and that no pains should be spared to form all according to the “model shown us on the mount”(Heb 8:5).

Firstly and foremostly, there is a want of that without which no establishment, whether religious or secular, can succeed, viz. good order and strict discipline. This fault proceeds from two sources – from want of being well ruled, arranged for, or want of firmness in the Superioress in seeing rules and regulations are strictly carried out. Laxity must be avoided. Rules must be enforced from the pure motive that they are God’s Will for us, surely this should urge upon any Superioress to be particular in the most minute points. Bells unpunctual – two or three minutes, and sometimes ten between bells, instead of five. Sisters [are] not sitting in their places. Only two or three assemble at the Rosary Bell to assist in the washing up, and when obliged to be in some other part of the Convent at that time, for instance, kitchen, dormitory etc. not reciting the Rosary in answer to the bell. Sisters leave their work about untidily, not putting things in their appointed places, thus causing much waste of time and trouble to others. Also, the charges are not put up regularly, and the daily orders written on the slate. It is easier, certainly, to give verbal directions, but more religious and methodical (and saves much talking) that they should be written as far as is possible.

Besides, old customs should be continued. Superiors, by being careful to be obedient themselves, have a power to exact obedience from others, likewise a special grace would follow their directions. Another thing, one great means of keeping up discipline is by the enforcement of the penances. This is not to be done at the whim and fancy of anyone, but it is to be done according to the custom. The penances are to be given from the Penance Book, and must be rigorously enforced. So far about the discipline, as we cannot enter into further particulars on this point, though much more might be said.

How are the spiritualities progressing? Here again improvement must be made. The Office is not practised, and is, therefore, said badly, too quickly, badly pronounced, and in a low tone more like the office of the dead than a joyful chant of thanksgiving and praise it should be. There seems also to be rather too many vocal prayers said at times, hindering the evening’s meditation, and also the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament after dinner would be better employed in quiet communion with Our Lord than in reciting vocal prayers. The sisters must be led to view prayer as a means of uniting themselves to their God, rather than reciting quickly a number of distracted vocal prayers. Then the watching would be looked upon in a different light than now, when it seems to be regarded more as a penance than as a favour accorded to them, a time when they are left alone with dear Jesus to hold converse with him, to keep him company.

Whilst we disapprove of any more vocal prayers being introduced into the devotions in the Church, we also disapprove of their being discontinued over the work. This custom must be kept up, and the Rosary and other vocal prayers recited as formally over the different works, not alone the needlework, but the other work of the house.

There seems to be the present idea that the Rosary is only to be said over needlework, by a sister making the remark in excusing herself for not saying the Rosary, that she seldom sat at needlework.

Regarding the prayerful spirit in the house, the observance of the Rule which obliges each sister to have her mind constantly occupied with some thought – this seems to be very much disregarded in the Convent by some. It would be an abuse to consider that it only applies to novices, but this seems to be the practice, the Mother's setting little example of it.

The Rule of Silence seems to be pretty well observed in the strict silence hours, but some laxity appears at other times, especially with the Mothers. It must be remembered that the Rule of Silence does not apply to the Infirmary, or Mother's room, or parlour. It does to all other places, and when sisters are obliged to speak in other places it must be in a low tone. No long conversations may take place in any other part of the Convent but these three rooms.

When the Blessed Sacrament is taken to a sick sister the greatest reverence must be observed. The altar prepared with lights and flowers, sisters following with lights, and ringing solemnly a bell. The sick sister's bed covered with a clean counterpane. Prayers to be said daily in the Infirmary.

We have been pointing out faults to be corrected regarding religious spirit and God's worship in general, but we have now to speak of our particular spirit, simplicity and unity. Simplicity is doing our actions for God alone, letting them tend directly to him, walking, speaking, writing, doing whatever we are doing in God's presence, without consideration of creatures, is directly opposite to any kind of cunning and deceit. Therefore, how severely should any kind of duplicity be punished, as directly opposite to the very fundamental part of our Institute, but this has not been done – rather, it has seemed to be discouraged, and not discountenanced. A certain slyness, striving to hide what is being done, a mysterious way of speaking, hiding what is not at all necessary to be hid, and in very many ways acting directly opposite to simplicity, this must be stopped. Novices taught both by word and example that they are to act simply, act before God, considering what will please him, rather than what will please or displease creatures, though it is perfectly allowable to wish to please Superiors, by the eye of faith seeing they represent God to us.

Regarding unity, so long as we are infirm fallen creatures we shall necessarily disagree in many things. But, being religious, we have to give up our own opinions, our individual spirit, to live according to our rules and constitutions, and the will of our Superiors. Therefore, though we may have to do many things contrary to our own ideas, ways and wishes, still, imitating the subjection of Jesus we bend our wills to the yoke we have placed upon ourselves for love of him, and "are led whither we would not"(Jn 21:18). Therefore, any kind of jarring, questioning, murmuring etc. is forever done away with. How disedifying then to see Mothers wrangling before young professed and even novices, and to know that it is known to the youngest

postulant in the house that Mothers do not agree. There is no unity amongst them. If, unhappily, at any time a Superioress did not act in accordance with the rules, the Rule provides for what is to be done. There is a proper place and time to point this out, but no sister is allowed to show disrespect to her Superioress, though she may be wrong, or else the sister likewise breaks her Rule, which provides for the respect necessary to be shown to Superiors. She has to speak or send her opinions into Council, and strive to hide her Superioress' fault from all others, to pray much that the evil may be remedied. [She should] strive to set an example in her own person to those around of every minute point of the Rule that the evil she sees may not take root in the Community. But wrangle, argue with her Superioress, she may not.

In charity and love let the Mothers live together, edifying those under them, and giving example in their own person for their imitation. The novices, I am glad to say have a greater unity and spirit of love amongst them, but they certainly are wanting in religious obedience. But, then they have little example to copy from, to show them what blind unquestioning obedience is. They must be taught that they are to accept the work and other commands in absolute silence, not allowing themselves even a thought of discontent. Likewise, that criticism is sinful, and they are breaking the law of charity when they indulge in it, even in thought, but they must not see their seniors criticising, or they most certainly will follow their example.

We wish the novices corrected for their want of respect to Superiors, and professed generally. They must be altered, yet we pity the difficulty the Novice Mother will most certainly have unless the professed behave in a more religious manner so as to exact respect.

As far as possible it should be avoided, novices going out alone. Also, sisters, going out after dusk where it can be helped. Some sisters appear to use their own discretion saying a certain change is made for nursing. This is forbidden.

There seems to be a general decline in the good works, mission works etc. which we grieve about, as it would seem God's blessing is not now on the place as formerly.

The Council we have already reprimanded, but as a point of Visitation must be again mentioned. It is undermining all idea of sacred and religious in a community, if the Council sisters are found acting from human motive or human respect. [They] say what they thought right in Council, and then wanting to withhold what they have said from some human motive etc. The notice of Council must be put as was always done. The Sisters must prepare their minds... pray and assemble in an orderly manner. There must be no rude contradicting, no little talking, but quietly, religiously, and in a sisterly manner let each sister make her remarks. [She will] pray as she does so, considering herself what she should be – God's instrument, knowing that having prayed for light, God will give light if no impediment is placed in the way by our own self-will or obstinacy of opinion. May God either change the Councillors, or their manner of giving Council.

Sr.

Mary.

You have heard read the Visitatorial Decree, which the Bishop has forwarded to Rome. Also our letter to Propaganda, which is so far answered, that the Bishop was written to, that I was needed in Rome for many reasons as well as my health. Also, dear sisters, when you hear that the Holy Father gave the permission for a novitiate in Rome, on account of myself being abroad, you need none of you fear that there has been any transgression of Rule by your Superiors. My object of going abroad was that all things in our Mother's Little Company might be done in harmony with the mind of the Church – for this I live, for this, please God, I may die.

In 1888 I revisited England to open St. John's Hospital. The doctor advising me I must return the commencement of September, this was said again by Dr. Collins on arriving. I must leave the beginning of September, but the hospital not being ready I remained until November, when, the doctor in St. John's being preemptory, I had to leave.

Sorry I am, dear sisters, to mention such things as these, as if it is true that some sisters suspect the motives of the Mother placed over them. They cannot be in a happy state of mind, and will sooner or later lose their religious spirit as has been proved in the case of two [sisters] gone from us, who are now not of us. Their fall commenced in judging those placed over them, but we want not to dwell on the dark side of matters. We are here happily united, Mother and children, but it is still well for sisters who mix so much in the world to have an answer to give when they hear reports derogatory to their Community. For we are all one, and what affects the good name of one affects all.

What I have hitherto done has been under wise direction under the very eye of the Church. It was never doubted that where I had to be the majority of the Council should also be, but our good Bishop, having a different opinion, as you see by his decree. We have amicably agreed that Rome shall decide, and I have told him I am quite willing to recall the sisters who [are] Councillors, if Superiors in Rome give leave. This will account for the reason that we can make no arrangements regarding officials in the different houses at present, not knowing whether the Councillors will be here or abroad. As things are, they must remain at present, though as the question put in my letter to Propaganda was – that in consequence of my necessary residence abroad, my Councillors were stationed abroad also, and should we continue to act thus? This being the question, and my being sent for, the question of the Councillors seemed included, as the letter also mentioned their being stationed abroad.

It is well, my children, to know all these things, and be interested in the well being of the work, by being members of which our lives will so glorify God. We must love our work. We must love the post we are placed in by God's Providence, whether inferior or superior, to be faithful to our post. Which reminds me to remark also, that

when asked if I could not bring my Councillors here, could I not ask them to resign and choose others, which, of course, I could not do. It would be a bad precedence for future times, and the present Councillors have high authority for their Office, the voice of God on earth, the Vicar Christ.

In little more than a year the elections take place when both Mother and Councillors resign, according to the Rule. That Holy Rule, God's Church has given us to guide our every step, so that our lives may be beautiful in God's sight when thus God guided.

Dear sisters fear not. If you are in doubt, if you cannot understand certain things, ask – be simple... If you note anything for the good of the Community, send it to Council. Write it out and send it, without any name if you wish, but send it. And the same, if you note something that is contrary to Rule going on, it is your duty to speak about it and let Mother or Councilors know.

VISITATION PAPER

A Visitation is to community life what the annual retreat is to the interior life of each one. Its necessity is incontestable, and it is prescribed to us by our Constitutions. In order that the Visitation be accomplished with all the dignity desirable, we must not fail in observing the prescribed order. One must arrange that all the Houses be warned of their coming Visitation so that all may be ready with their accounts where the time is intimated to them. This precept, according to the canonical authority, inculcates the obligation of replying sincerely to the questions asked of them by the Visitors... Besides this, the one has always in virtue of the law of conscience, the moral obligation of acquainting the Visitor with things that are seriously prejudicial to the good of the community, and which enter into the sphere of her intervention.

A simple and serious preparation accompanying the Visitation will contribute to form in the minds of all a just and holy idea of this religious act. It is, in fact, a very great act. It is like a judgment and a solemn correction of the faults of all, inferior and Superiors. The good religious gains a salutary effect from it. She understands that if, even during the time of the Visitation the force of authority and the liberty of corrections make way to an unseasonable tolerance, this will be done for the dignity of religion, for the stability of the laws and the aspirations of the good religious towards the progress in perfection in the Institute.

The Visitor will, on her part, understand that she is fulfilling a very important duty, and that in making use of all her energies in accomplishing it, she defends the whole order, and has at heart all the true interests of the religious themselves. If she should be led to forget this by the influence of fear or negligence, the Constitutions should be there to recall her energetically to perform her duties. Of some of the most

notable violations (even though they have already ceased to exist) she must make a report of [them] to the Superior General, but the correction of flagrant faults by the means of sentence and coercion is only a part of the charge of the Visitor.

Often it is not necessary to use severity, greater breaches of the Rule not existing. One of the permanent objects of the Visitation is to remedy the daily faults which by habit would become inveterate, would increase, and cause great evil by the absence of good, and would prepare the way to deplorable disorders. To prevent this evil, the cooperation of the sisters is necessary to her, and one can say with regard to this, that they make the Visitation more than the actual Visitor. Then, in order to cooperate and prepare one's self to enlighten the Visitor, they will commence to pray to God to ask of him his grace to strip ourselves of self-love.

REMINDERS FOR A VISITOR

1. See if TITLE DEEDS and all documents are in a place accessible (but under lock) to anyone who might be in charge, or visiting for a time at the convent.
2. See if these and other places are LABELLED.
3. If every house has their REGISTRY BOOKS in order. Sisters who are often changed as at Commercial Road, it is sufficient to mention their arrival and departure, and in the Log Book.
4. See the dates for PERMITS and if they want reviewing. Even the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament has to be renewed.
5. SEE THE BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE. This is respect due to him.

DRAFT OF ANSWERS TO THE APOSTOLIC VISITATION 1904.

1. Convent of the Little Company of Mary. 81. Papa Leone XIII.
2. Hired house 5.
3. Not sufficient – landlord and ourselves.
4. Plenty of work. It may distract some; windows and balconies all round.
5. Our Blessed Lady. 76. Rome. Sister Mary and Council.
6. The Little Company of Mary had its own Rule approved firstly---finally---
7. To honour the Mother Heart of Mary on Calvary praying for the dying and attending the souls of the dying. It has been a fairly successful attempt to unite the old monastic spirit with the active life, and not under the ordinary General Council.
8. 9. 10. (no entry)
11. Not cloister.
12. The religious spirit is well kept, but there is a good deal of intercourse with seculars.
13. Superior – Reverend Mother Philip; Bursar – Mother Raphael. No – all clear.
14. There are only a few novices and postulants until we have more room.

15. Leone XIII – Novitiate separate in the stable of the Home a Casa di Salute.
16. Must be legitimate. Respectable family – not necessarily rich. A pension during novitiate. Dowry not obligatory.
17. Yes – 8 days- always examined by Bishop or delegate.
18. The Rule is observed. No change. Our lives are very far from perfect, but we aim at it. We seldom have a change except to another convent of the Order, but a few times have done so, generally at the wish and expense of a benefactor.
19. The Rule is read daily in the novitiate, weekly at Chapter, and occasionally at Professed Reading and in the refectory. The Decree given a year.
20. The Little Office three times daily chanted.
21. We have always daily Mass, and generally others.
22. The Chaplain is nominated by the Cardinal Vicar. He comes early to Mass and late in the afternoon. He lives in his home not far off.
23. Our Chapel is part finished. Seculars can hear their Mass of Obligation. We have as well an Oratory in honour of the Maternal Heart of Mary, but no Blessed Sacrament in it.
24. P. Tom, Trappist – written permit- extraordinary one, Cardinal Vicar.
25. There is one confessional in the Oratory spoken above, and an occasional one is put in the church.

SOME QUESTIONS

1. Can religious vows be dispensed without the religious herself asking?
2. Is it against Canon Law for a sister to wear secular clothes for a reasonable purpose?
3. Have superiors the power to take the religious habit off their subjects for any reason at all?
4. Can a sister be transferred from one Order to another by the simple consent of the heads of both Orders, the one transferring her right to obedience to another?
5. Does a novice break her novitiate (the Canonical Year) by being removed from one novitiate house to another, sleeping, perhaps in the train a night or two, or stopping on the way?
6. Have the Council the power of dispensing any days or weeks of the novitiate after the year's Canonical Novitiate is finished, for such reasons as to save two ceremonies, or because a professed novice is chosen for a new foundation?
7. If a professed sister asks to be dispensed her vows, is the community bound to support her when she is secularised?
8. If a professed sister is sent away by the community, is it bound to support her secularisation?
9. If a priest presents himself to say Mass – it must be remembered he must show his papers. In some places the Chaplain upon seeing the papers can, in the interim before the Bishop's permission is asked, allow the priest to say Mass in the convent?

Re Laurence and Archbishop Cashel (whose name I do not know). If a sister dies, the day after the news is received in the other house a Requiem Mass can be said, even though it be a double.

The first elections held were arranged by the Bishop. The majority of votes elected Mother Magdalen. The next election, also arranged by the Bishop, was a different plan. The closed votes were placed on Our Lady's altar then sent to the Bishop, who wrote to me, "You have the votes of the sisters and I elect you for..." (I do not feel quite sure how many years. The date of this last election we had, you can find by asking Sr. Theresa the day she arrived. We were placing the votes on Our Lady's altar when she, a little postulant, arrived). I am not sure you were home – you probably sent your vote by letter.

After the approbation in 1886, I spoke of the elections. But on account of Australia, it was thought we must have the elections without Australia. [This] I thought a bad precedent for the future, like cutting it off. So Cardinal Moran spoke at Propaganda, and a dispensation was obtained which was afterwards renewed and all confirmed in office until October 1894.

I have all papers safe, dispensations etc. I have carried them about with me for years. When we are settled in a house, as my gypsy going about seems now ended, they will be given to M. Magdalen's care and placed in the room appointed for the Archives etc.

TO THE SISTERS IN OFFICE

A word of warning, there is a danger threatening that I must warn you all of. That when removed from some work or office, sisters should think themselves injured! Not that they will tell they want this particular work or office – Oh, no! They would be much relieved to be out – but their removal was not done in the right way, or at the right time. It was too soon or too slowly done. They had not sufficient notice.

My God! Is this the way we have kept our promise to place ourselves entirely at the disposal of our Superiors? The beauty of religious life would be gone if Superiors were weak enough to consult their subject, or humour them, giving them reasons why they do this or that. The old monastic glory of the Church would disappear, and a miserable show take its place.

If, unfortunately we allow injured feelings to rise when our occupations are changed, and we have others under us, or are even simply senior, we shall probably spread our own bad spirit. Thus [we would] infect the minds of others with what is opposed to the religious spirit – opposed to blind, unquestioning obedience. May God preserve his Mother's Little Company, and let religious discipline ever reign; submission of

will in those who, for pure love of God, have chosen to be abjects in the House of God. Thus prays,

Your loving Mother,

MARY.

BOOKS TO BE WRITTEN BY MARY'S LITTLE COMPANY

Motherhood. The great office of mothers. The little preparation made by young girls for so great an office. Their little knowledge even of the fact that they carry within them the soul as well as the body of their child. The importance, that when a young girl has decided upon her state of life she should be trained for it, and not marry, find herself with child. [She] knows next to nothing of the vast effect her own mind will have upon her child, and likewise, know the power she has, the fearful power to mar the disposition of her child, its very soul which she is the medium. The necessity of a young mother to learn all she can that will benefit both soul and body of her child both before birth as well as after... Particularly the responsibility that lays upon her of watching her children herself, remembering that she is in great part responsible for their sins in their earlier years, if they are committed through her negligence. The power a mother ever has when her children are grown up to intercede with God, and the manifest duty it is for her to do so. (Witness Job offering sacrifice).

A Christian mother has ever the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, works, sufferings etc. Ah, if the care and training were bestowed upon women to fit them for their grand office of mothers that is given to an artist, a sculptor, the world would be very different. The one thing (principally) women have to do, they are taught nothing about. They are not taught to value their high office, to look upon it as their great mission.

Companion Work. This has been treated... by many writers far more than the above subject (motherhood). It should simply be shown the great gift of grace virginity is, since many young girls are entirely ignorant there is a difference between one state and the other state. [They] enter one state in life to find afterwards they were more fitted to another.

Girlhood. This work practically consists of advice to young girls upon entering life, vocation etc. Vocation to [the] religious state, though it may be perhaps, so to speak, integral in some, is not so in others, who, however, may choose the better state if they please. Whoever writes this book should take advice as to whether young girls should be allowed to go out into the world (especially those of the lower order who are not so shielded as others from evil) in entire simplicity of the dangers to which they are exposed. This is a very important matter. I cannot say one way or the other, not being experienced enough. Some remarkable words were once spoken to me by an unfortunate girl. "Ah, miss" she said, "I should like to go to confession to

someone simple like you, but it doesn't do to be too simple!!”

A Few Words to the Serving Boy. Show how honoured he is. How he should understand the words he says and think of them. Remind him how close he is to the Precious Blood of Jesus; how he should adore as the Angels. Remind [him] how the Angels adored when [the Precious Blood] was shed, and that we have the same Blood in the chalice. (As a rule it is not well for the altar boy, a young one, to go to Holy Communion and serve the Mass too). It wants one well advanced in the spiritual life to keep their minds on the thought that God is indeed really within them if they have to distract themselves immediately, It is likely to beget in a boy an irreverent state of mind.

Translation from the Fathers. Some of Mary's Company should study Latin and translate theological works. Great, great service in the spiritual life. Wonderful good would be done by there being more generally read.

Gleaning from good books. A periodical after the plan of penny readings, with extracts from books people are unable to buy.

Anecdote for *Book upon the Dying*, p.426. St Francis de Sales – love of God.

The Heart of Mary. Let one be selected to write this after long prayer and penance. Dwell upon Our Lady by the title her servant and our patron, Ven. De Montfort loved “Our Lady of Pity”. The book will supply what Fr. Faber said was wanted, a work upon the interior dispositions of Mary.

Heads for Preface. Upon the usefulness of the work, there being no such work at present as far as I know. How needful for those aspiring to perfection, for union with God in the world, to have such a book. It is thought necessary for religious to have a retreat once every year. A priest is often provided in communities to give such retreats. Those in the world cannot always have such help. Likewise, in communities the want of such a book is often felt for a postulant before reception, and for a novice before profession. The present work is arranged to suit all. Members of Third Orders will find the present work especially useful. They are left much alone. The reference to Our Lady giving them their retreat [is] a great help.

Third week – to be devoted to endeavouring to know Our Dear Lord: “and this is eternal life and Jesus Christ whom thou have sent” (Jn 17:3).

Preparatory Consideration. “Who art thou, Lord?” was the question put by the glorious apostle of the Gentiles, and the answer given each one of us “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest” (Acts 22:8). That should be our first thought as we seek to know Our Lord better than we ever knew him before. “He is the sign that should be contradicted (Lk 2:34); the stone that the builders rejected”(Ps 118:22). It

is we who have contradicted him, who many times in our lives completely rejected him and put him from us. But, he has borne with us. This must be ever our thought as we seek to learn Our Lord. Patience, gentleness, pervades every action, unruffled by the greatest insults. Not patient and gentle because he did not feel those insults, not serenely indifferent to them. No, but feeling bitterly in his inmost Heart every gross neglect and outrage that those he so loved inflicted on him and yet, patient.

Jesus, before we dare venture to ask thee to open thy Sacred Heart and reveal its love, its beauties to us, we will kneel and make reparation to it for the many times we have grieved and wounded it. Forgive, dear Jesus, forgive, whilst we tell with thy Saints, that (prayer of St. Augustine here).

“Truly God is good”, and the children of men have done well to call him “the good God”; the dying words of a holy man were. “Yes, God is good, Goodness itself, without exaggeration.” This is our comfort in speaking of God; we cannot exaggerate, all words fall short of the real truth, far, far short, but still we must speak of him, though so unworthily. We must speak of his wonders; we must induce others to think of that vast ocean of unfathomable Beauty, Sweetness, Grace, Love, that Heart’s delight of Angels and Saints in Heaven, and of the Just on earth. We must speak of the Blessed Trinity. It is more to us than life; that grand Life is our joy. It is that grand Life we are endeavouring to understand a little more day by day. As we take Attribute after Attribute of God separately to consider it, more and more beautiful does God become to us.

What can we say as we think of God’s Eternity of Peace, Joy, Bliss in himself? What are our thoughts? Can we put them into words? No, fear not. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Father we rejoice with thee in the possession of Thy Eternal Word, the Son of Thy Love, in possession of the Holy Spirit, the love of Thy Son and his Love of thee. God! We are content. God is happy, everlastingly happy, unutterably joyous, unspeakably good. God, we rejoice in Thy Eternity of happiness. Eternal Word, we rejoice in thy Eternity of happiness before the world was, in the Bosom of Thy Father. Holy Spirit, link of love of the Father and Son, we rejoice; we joy in thee, the Source of Joy. We glory in thee Most High, Most Holy God – Most Glorious. We give thee thanks for Thy Great Glory. We have loved thee, O God on earth. We will love thee in heaven. Yes, God, we will hide ourselves within thee, Abyss of Love. We will live on thy breast forever. Thou wilt be for endless ages and ages what, blessed be thy Goodness, thou art now – Father, Mother, All in all to us. We love thee more than ourselves, far, far more. Our happiness is not in our own happiness but in thine, and our happiness for all eternity will be to know that thou art happy.

My God, tell me more of thee. Draw me closer to thee. Let me love thee and be ever more and more delighted in thee, thou art my life, for thee I am. Thou hast made me, made me for thyself alone. I call upon thee, my whole Love, my Life. I would be near thee, but where art thou, my Lord and God? Where shall I find thee, but, rather, where art thou not? Where couldst thou hide from me, oh, my God, my Mercy, my

best Beloved, my Most Beautiful? In God, protected by God, loved by God – that is the glorious life we lead. We are in the God of Peace, surrounded by God everywhere, folded in his loving embrace. He will give us whatever we ask. He listens whenever we speak. He loves with a love unknown to us. He gives as a God of Love would give, all that he has to us, and what does he ask in return?

He asks for our hearts. He asks us to love him. He asks us to think of him; to treat him as we would one who had done all for us, who loved us with an unearthly love, an unheard of love. If we did but feel the Presence of God as he really is near us, the very air would seem to us filled with God as it really is. We should live in his presence; deliberate sin would be almost an impossibility. There would be a certain reverential air in all we did, unconsciously night and day we should be as we should really be if in the presence of one we loved and revered, of one whom we were afraid of offending or of hurting in any way.

Do let us love the Good God! Oh, do let us overcome ourselves, that we may be able to give our whole hearts to him. How can we but love him? He is all lovable; he is all lovely. He loves us so! He is so intensely to be desired. He is the Desired of all Nations. O God, we say these things; we write...

Miss Doran tells me you are correcting a manuscript. Is it the missing one, or *Our Lady's Comfort*?

I should like you to read the conferences the Bishop, at your suggestion, told me to give upon our Institute etc. If I were to send them to you, could you have them copied and keep them to read at your leisure? I have a certain feeling I should like all my manuscripts to be in your hands. I do not at all feel sure if anything happened to me that they would be looked at here. Not much is attached to them, neither *The Message*, nor *Our Lady's Comfort* has yet been read.

I say this once for all. It is my special wish you have all my manuscripts, if you would kindly take charge of them if anything at any time happens to me.

Sister Joseph wishes me to thank you very much for your kind letter – is sorry to hear of the cross, and asks prayers for herself for which she says she has special need.

Poor children, I cannot say a word to them. I see their spiritual ills; I see the word that is wanted, but I may not speak it. Sister Joseph has got into trouble; I could have warned her of long since.

CONFERENCES ON THE CONSTITUTIONS

CONFERENCE ONE

(The first page of this conference appears to be missing).

...fervent in keeping our Rule. There will come a time when we will think some smaller points unimportant. It may be only on some such matter as that we will think it unnecessary to ask permission to use something – to go to some drawer, neglect some office without asking a formal dispensation, or even lie down without permission. These are not small matters, but they come first to my mind, and I mention them as they come.

Never neglect the habit of asking dispensations or permissions when wanted, for quickly would all religious life lose its savour, its sweetness for God. In many ways we find the strong fortress of religious life, its very life indeed, the Rule, broken through, through unwary, unguarded self taken dispensations or permissions. It is done first of all in no bad will, but from unguardedness or, we may say, a little sloth, some dislike to take a little trouble that is all; there is no harm meant. The matter is very small. The sister, who is Infirmarian, would think perhaps that she may take what will do herself good; or a Bursar think she may help herself. But, we are all of us subjects in religion. No one is free. Thanks be to God, or God would be indeed exposing those whom he places in offices to the danger of losing their own religious spirit.

We have always someone to ask dispensations from, to ask permission from. Let us now resolve to pick this as a precious flower for Jesus; the fruit of the Precious Blood, that we will all our lives show we are good religious before God and man, by never dispensing ourselves, by ever asking permissions. Let us ever make use of the words, "I will ask leave," "I will get permission." The seniors will impress upon the younger. It will keep up the spirit of religious life. Free words make free acts; independent acts, however good they may be in themselves, are unreligious, and they will indeed do no lasting good in the end.

Thus, dear sisters, our simplicity, our religious spirit, will be preserved by the simple custom of asking, on all occasions, permission. I am asking you to do this now and promise this as your thanksgiving and also the custom of constantly renewing our intention, making an offering saying, "I am doing this act because it is the Rule." Our Office, our Mass, our meals, we can unite our wills to God's, making an act of union with the will of God, because we are doing an exercise of Rule and, also let the spirit never be overlooked.

We may be engaged in the kitchen or the laundry, or we may be travelling with its many distractions; let us make an act of our Rule. What offering are we making now? Is our soul engaged? Constantly must we recur to our spirit. What are our hearts engaged in, echoing the prayer of Our Lady's Heart on Calvary? We are offering what we are doing for the dying. If we are doing this, if we are increasing the number, our actual intentions and offerings, then indeed are we doing on earth as

the Blessed do in Heaven, the Will of God. We are blessed; we are happy on this earth. We shall be crowned as glorious martyrs for the faith.

So now, any fainthearted, take up renewed strength, commence anew. Heaven is not for cowards! The temptation of the evil one at this time is to strive to darken the lives of those, who are striving to live for God, by dampening their hopes, by striving to make them take a gloomy view of life, by discouragement; that word, indeed, that a Christian should scarcely know. Let us shake off the dastardly attack of our enemy. Let us fortify ourselves with our Rule. Let us reassure ourselves that we are doing God's Will. So long as we can assure ourselves that we are keeping our Rule, keeping it in word, in deed and in truth. Blessed be Our Good God who, by drawing us into religion, has enabled us to be so sure of doing his Will, by simply keeping our Rule approved by Holy Church for a certain work.

Oh, happy are we to be so sure of doing what will save our souls for all eternity. No uncertainty, no doubt, if we but keep our Rule, and sweet Jesus, we will keep our Rule. We will keep the vows made so solemnly; we will, so help us God, we will. We will help one another. Is anyone in trouble in the house to which this letter comes? Has anyone lost the happiness they once had, or has an unaccountable burden? Let them examine and see are they keeping their Rule in spirit, in deed and in truth. Are they as proud of the vows as when they first made them, when their souls melted at the thought that they were God's only? Ah, let them begin in a dry matter of fact way to multiply acts of the Rule and their lost fervour will soon return.

We have all of us much to do. We, none of us, fulfill our Rule perfectly. If we are most punctilious to the letter of the Rule, how much we have still to do to keep ever in its spirit. 'Tis a life long work and we must not weary of it. Let no one of Mary's Company having put their hands to the plough look back – remember Lot's wife!! Do we ever remember having met religious who had broken their plight troth to God living in the world as seculars? What do we hear of them generally – that they have become hardened, reckless. May God preserve us. May the warmth of the Holy Spirit reanimate any who may have become at all cold. May the brightness of his light dispel the darkness of any in dangerous delusion, or who have grown lukewarm through neglecting, through not loving enough their Holy Rule.

Banded now together, cemented each individual member of this one body, this Little Company figuring Mary's Heart, we shall pray for, love one another, rejoice in one another's joy, and sorrow in one another's sorrows. When in sorrow ourselves pray for others of our sisters who are in similar or greater sorrow. How Our Dear Lord will love those who are thus unselfish, who are souls with one thought, one earnest purpose – to do his Will alone, to spread his Kingdom, live a life above nature, a life, the value of which we none of us shall know here. God give us strength that we may none of us fritter away our time, but that we may be in earnest.

Now we will be in earnest with our thanksgiving. We do not want a number of extraordinary acts, but we want a number of intentions made. A number of offerings

of acts, offering to perform them in order to do God's Will, and let the younger sisters write and tell me how they have increased these acts, these intentions. It would be like giving me so many flowers, that I may present to Our Lady. Indeed, a votive offering of a heart in each house to hang at Our Lady's altar, and be filled with these offerings as our thanksgiving, would be very well. We shall never come empty handed to Our Lady if we come in the spirit of our Rule.

Then, remember dear sisters, in the month of July we are going to be joined closer than ever together. The Precious Blood flowing as a river from house to house, shall bear upon its waters flowers, blossoms of exceeding beauty, the acts we perform, because they are our Rule. The very thoughts that are tinged with the spirit of our Rule will be as lilies of dazzling whiteness. They will be plants of the Precious Blood, evergreen, delightful to the eye of God. They lose not their beauty as some acts of virtue, by complacency, by praise. We may not indeed, always have sweetness in them. Self-love can scarce find them. We are simply doing our duty, and in this lies their beauty, We are doing the Will of God.

Ah, to hear the voice of Jesus saying, "thou hast fulfilled my Will." Ah, those [words] might ravish the soul from the body if they could be heard in this life, but, if we are faithful, they will be heard in the next. This poor little being will rejoice with exceeding great joy when, having fulfilled with Will of God on earth, for all eternity it will be in its place, the place God has prepared for it forever and ever. We shall never regain that place, we who are religious, unless we keep our Rule. We are not in our place on earth, if we are not keeping our Rule that we have promised to keep. Therefore, as a member of our body when out of place troubles us, pains us, so we are a trouble and a pain to ourselves and others when we are not walking in the path laid out for us by our Holy Rule.

If we respect not the written Rule and the living Rule, dangerous indeed is our state. Hardly shall we save our souls! But, following the guidance of the living Rule, the voice of Superiors, the written Rule given us by Holy Church, we are sure of our souls, we are predestined, and the predestination may be known by this sign. Now, let not one house or one individual, introduce disorder, mar the beauty of this new work, which God had created in his Church.

What marred God's work the creation of this earth? What was it? God has spoken and said, " 'Let there be light' and there was light" (Gen 1: 3). God had bid the earth bring forth fruit and flowers and they sprang into existence. The earth was carpeted with beauty, flowers of varied hue were on all sides rising from the green verdure; animals bounded into existence. Then man, for whom all was prepared with so much love of Our Good God, Adam and Eve. God's grandest works, delighted in their life and praised their God, and he their great Creator rejoiced himself in his work and saw that it was good and blessed it (Gen 1:31). Bright, beautiful was the earthly paradise. Order reigned. What changed this happy state? What came over the earth so fair? What marred the work of the Creator so that bitter words came from him, the Father of us all, the God of infinite, unending love spoke the sad words, ringing

daily in loving souls, "it repenteth me that I made man"(Gen 6:5). All was changed. God's children made to his image, to live by his Spirit in charity, joy and peace, placed in a world of beauty, to be proved for a time in fidelity, then taken to their God forever, lived not by God's Spirit, but lived more by the evil spirit. Thorns [and] briars sprang up in the inanimate creation. The blight was everywhere, all around distress [and] misery. What caused it? Disobedience, dear sisters. Disobedience – which has caused us every ill in our lives. Think... (unfinished)

CONFERENCE TWO : *Circular Letter.*

Dear Sisters,

You will have received the message to make your meditation of the various chapters of the Rule. I had intended sending you a few thoughts for each chapter, but as I have so often written chapter conferences upon the various sections of the Rule and one house may have what another may have not. Sometimes when I have been visiting a house I have written for that particular moment and left without any copy what was useful for the moment. So now I ask each Superior to bring forward and read to the sisters whatever she possesses of explanation of conferences on the Rule. Then forward it to me, so that I may make up what is wanting of the various chapters, so as not to repeat myself or write what I have written already.

May this little walk in the garden of our Rule refresh us all. May we gather sweet flowers on our way, which we will offer with gratitude to God. Flowers, which will be as sweet to him as those gathered by our first parents in the Garden of Eden. Our path will be strewn with flowers. It will be truly a path of perfection if we walk step by step the way the Rule teaches us. We find ever fresh beauties in it. We walk steadily, earnestly, securely when we walk in harmony with our Rule, God's Will to us, made known to us in a most marked manner.

O, let us love our Rule more and more, which makes us live such noble lives, makes us draw our every breath in union with Jesus and Mary, since our Rule teaches us to be, as it were, the very emanations of Our Lady's Heart. This wonderful, we might almost say, "mystical birth" is the very essence of our Rule. Study it at Mass, at meditation in quiet moments. Study it, begging light from the Holy Ghost to guide your thoughts. The soul must be still; the mind recollected to enter into this wonderful mind of Mary that God made for himself.

Dear Sisters, are there some of you whose minds are full of distractions, worldliness or self so that God cannot speak as he would? What a waste of material that could be so beautiful, thoughts restrained - noble, bent on our Mother's business. Enter into the spirit of your Rule! Live with, live in Mary, act by the instincts of her Heart, which she will suggest to you, who are her very own. Do not fritter away time, precious time, with foolish, idle thoughts, gathering up idle gossip, retailing news, speaking rumours of things which, if not bad, are at any rate no service. Spend all the time you can in studying. Fill your mind with what is from Heaven, Jesus' own devotion to his Mother, his legacy to you. JESUS OWN DEVOTION. Mark the

words! How is yours? Tender as his?

My God, how many hours have I wasted in the past, grovelling in the mire, when I might have flown high, carolling songs to the God who is ever willing, nay, delighted to hear me! Think of it, dear sisters. Be wholly devoted to doing that for which God has called you to – imbibing the spirit of Mary, and filling others with it, spreading the knowledge of God by her means. This is our work. Let us be up and doing, for the hour cometh when no man can work. A great storm has arisen; souls are shipwrecked. Anchor them to the Maternal Heart, the Port of Salvation. Be Jesus' true spouse; be fruitful, save souls redeemed by the Precious Blood!

CONFERENCE THREE

Dear Sisters, you have just heard read the Rule on punctual observance. What words can we say to impress it upon you more strongly? If it would make them more forcible, gladly would we do so. The whole happiness of the life of a religious depends upon her observance of her Rule, that her very heart and soul is imbued with the spirit of her Rule. Not alone her own happiness, but the joy and glory her life gives to God depends on her punctual observance of [her] Rule.

Why is it so necessary to impress so constantly upon religious the necessity of most carefully, most minutely observing their Rule? Is it difficult? Is it very hard? Yes, perhaps, and yet – no. Why are not all religious, saints, since we know that if they faithfully observe their Rule, they are saints? Yet, we know very well that all religious are not saints. Therefore, it follows they do not perfectly observe their Rule. How is it? There are three reasons. One is, that an ardent love of souls, a desire for active exterior works of charity will lead them astray. In their anxiety perhaps to please God, or perhaps to please themselves, by performing these acts of charity, they will lose sight of their Rule. They will either forget, neglect or deliberately break their Rule. In their anxiety they will do a little more or a great deal more than they are told, or their mind is so full of their active works that they forget the little observances of religious life, and thus give disedification in the community and introduce relaxation.

Perhaps the very little observances that would remind them constantly that they are religious, that they are bound by their state to the will of another, these little rules and regulations they think most unimportant, so unimportant that they scarce recollect they are in existence.

The second class of imperfect religious are those who from slothfulness, immortification, are not as punctual and regular as they should be. They cannot exert themselves to make the necessary haste which, in active Orders is invariably necessary if we would do all that is to be done, and perform the Spiritual Exercises and other observances also. They do not exert themselves to make the necessary haste to fill up the spare minutes, and manage their time so as to be able to meet God

at the appointed hour. They too easily ask for dispensations, for little indispositions and so on, have too much care of their body, often too much self-love about the care of their soul, and so, they never [become] saints, unless they change by an extraordinary grace of God.

The third class of imperfect religious is the ignorant and stupid and these are the most incurable of all. Very often they mean to be good, but their ignorance is a terrible hindrance. Not that we mean to say that an unlearned person cannot be a saint. Ah, no! Far from it, but I do not class these simple, holy people without education, who are illuminated by God's Holy Spirit, amongst the ignorant and stupid – far from it. They are very wise. We speak not of these holy, saintly souls who, though unlearned, uneducated, have a wisdom far above the wise of the world, but we speak of the ignorant who are not so humble, and holy, as to obtain this supernatural wisdom. These ignorant religious will misinterpret the Rule, and as they are often very obstinate; they will scarcely allow their Superiors to interpret it to them. They would not say this, but it is really the case as they show by their conduct and we should see how very clearly, if we could look into their hearts. They will be very particular about one rule, and quite overlook the other, and though the rule they have neglected they have heard read, and have been told of over and over again, perhaps they will tell you they have never heard of it.

Again if they are told to leave their office or some other observance, they are very likely disturbed and think they are very perfect in this; all the time forgetting that their Rule binds them to obedience to their Superiors, and to regard her commands as coming from God. This they regard not, and are really guilty of rash judgment and disrespect to their Superiors by thus judging the purity of her intentions in dispensing this Rule, rather than leave it upon the consciences of those under her... If they are good religious, [they] will scruple to ask a dispensation, but who also if they are good religious will NOT scruple to do what their Superior tells them.

A Superior may prefer to give a general disposition for a day or days, under certain circumstances, rather than her religious should begin to think lightly of their Rule. [They may] get into a habit of not observing it, perhaps through a time of general sickness in the convent or out, and, in order that when it is kept, it may be kept properly. St. Vincent de Paul was so afraid of a relaxed Rule that he laid down no community exercises during the day for the Sisters of Charity, as he saw the constant necessity there would be for dispensing them.

Now, ignorant religious, not knowing themselves when a dispensation would be necessary or not, would judge these, and would never think that, perhaps, they themselves are one of the reasons why the dispensations are given. Some sisters perhaps, have had to do again what they have done badly, or set right some blunder and so on. Ah, if ignorant people would but be humble they might be very holy and good, but what harm they do; they misinterpret speeches; they take wrong messages; they are often making mischief in a most unconscious manner to themselves.

No wonder so many communities refuse to accept such members, but Our Lady's Heart is so kind, so tender. She loves all; she wishes well to all. She knows all can be rectified by those who are docile to her. So let us turn with all confidence to her. Let us tell her that she is Our Hope. Let us salute her saying, "*Salve Regina!* Hail, Holy Queen, Our life, Our Sweetness and Our Hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send forth our sighs, mourning and weeping [in] this vale of tears. Turn then, Most Gracious Advocate, thine eye of mercy towards us, and after this our exile ended, show unto us the Blessed Fruit of your womb, Jesus. O Clement, O Pius, O Most Sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God. That we maybe made worthy of the promises of Christ."

MEMORARE.

CONFERENCE FOUR

You have just heard read the first chapter of the Rule, by which we are told that our object in being in the Little Company of Mary, our end is – the glory of God and the sanctification of our own souls. "The Little Company of Mary has for its end the glory of God, and the salvation and sanctification of the sisters' own souls." The Rule, then defined the spirit we must have, if we would attain this end – namely the spirit of Mary, the spirit that animated her Maternal Heart. It described also, how our own perfection is attained by our works of charity to others. But this we will not dwell upon today, it being perfectly certain that we cannot do good to the souls of others, unless we have our own souls in good order, in harmony with the Will of God made known to us in our Rule.

Examine according to your Rule. Think well. Weigh the final words of the chapter we have read – "Happy the sisters, who by their ABSTINENCE, PRAYERS and SACRIFICES..." What abstinence do you practise? What is the fervour of your prayers? Where are the sacrifices? Be honest – be truthful. Are you not negligent in the practices that you were once fervent in? Have you not now to do by force what you did once voluntarily, cheerfully? If so, remember it is only to the faithful observer of the Rule that the rewards promised to the religious will be given.

Ah, me! Many, many wear the habit in various Orders of the Church... They may flatter themselves they have thus earned the grand privilege promised – Baptismal innocence renewed, to rank with the martyrs, to follow Our Lord, the Lamb of God in Heaven wheresoever he goeth, singing the song none but virgins may sing – but – nay! Not so! If their souls, instead of being animated with the spirit of their Rule were worldly, secular. All delusions will be unveiled in the grand reckoning day.

We are told of those who strive to gain indulgences. How many really gain them? The great privileges of the Church must be striven for, pains taken to gain them... The grand rewards granted to religious must be striven for. We must persevere to gain the prize, the crown of glory prepared in Heaven for the faithful souls, those who have made their souls beautiful by the loving observance of their Rule, and who persevered in pain, in penance to the end.

CONFERENCE FIVE – *August 1899.*

The study of our Rule is one of the most necessary of our daily duties. We will find ever some fresh expression of God's Will, something more we can do for him. Either something we have overlooked, or we have a new light upon, or something we have performed according to the letter, but without the spirit. Love finds sweet nourishment to the soul from the study of the Rule. It is such joy, the only joy in our life, to fulfill God's Will.

We say it is only joy of life. It is the joy of eternal life also, and those who, in Our Dear Lord's words make it "their meat and drink to do the Will of him who sent them" have begun their Heaven on earth (cf. Jn 4:34). It is the great pain of many good souls living on this earth, that they are so uncertain often what is God's Will for them. They cannot know it with the certainty of religious. How light trials appear to us, since we have not this trial. We do know God's Will. We have a Golden Rule of Life, blessed and approved by Holy Church. We are perfect; we perfectly fulfill God's Will, in so far as we perfectly fulfill our Rule in spirit and letter.

Dear sisters, each house had received the English printed copy of the Rule, and some have not noticed perhaps the change since the Final Approbation. We say "change" but it is really a return to the original state. The Rule was presented to Propaganda after having been compiled and arranged by Father Cardella. At the First Approbation some additions were made, principally regarding provinces. At the Final Approbation these additions were erased, and the Rule left as Father Cardella had arranged, even in small alterations such as in the first chapter. Father Cardella had put that "prayers for the dying was a work of charity most acceptable to..." This was changed to "ONE of..." Now it has its original wording.

But our purpose now is to point out two things, first, the General Chapter. A change has been made which has necessitated the postponement of the General Chapter. Before the Final Approbation we had given notice to the different countries that one sister should come from each, according to the existing Rule. But the Rule in its present form saying that two sisters from each house should be present at the General Chapter caused me much anxiety as to what would be the best thing to do. Dispensations, much as we would prefer not to have them, would be necessary, as we must either dispense the Chapter, or dispense sisters from attending it whose right it was to be present, and thus have an imperfect Chapter. After much prayer and counsel together, we took advice and obtained a year's prolongation.

The other point I would draw sisters' attention to is – the Provinces which had been inserted into the Rule, Father Cardella had put but one centre of government to which all the houses would turn. Now, though we may call Superiors in far off countries 'Provincial Superior', Provinces so-called with distinct government, we have not. Therefore, when we hear of Superiors being appointed for branch houses and withdrawn without our approval, we are obliged to note this as a fault... As we

know it is not done through any real fault, but an oversight. We are trying to explain more closely the Rule.

It is not seemly that I should write to the Superior of a house, and by the time my letter arrives, she is withdrawn. The advice I would give one Superior would not be suitable to another, and the fact of my writing would give the sisters a wrong impression of the government of the community... It would lead them to think that there was more power possessed by the Mother, who had appointed or withdrawn them, than she really possessed, and give a wrong idea of the Rule to the sisters; a wrong idea of the Rule is a great evil... We are bound to watch that it may not exist in that work entrusted to our care by the Good God.

My children, bear with me if I repeat to you again and again. Can you conceive the responsibility I feel that all things should be according to the pattern "shown on the mount" (Heb 8:5)? You may understand in part you, who are in office, how we strain every nerve, striving to leave nothing undone, or not done perfectly, and the only comfort is asking dear Jesus to make up and give grace to poor human nature to suffer, to make up. Strive and join in this feeling with your Mother and offer little contradictions, pains etc., that come to all, to make up for anything wanting to perfect the work of God, to which we are part, "Little Company of Mary."

By writing that there are no real Provinces, (though we may use the word "Provincial Superiors") we do not mean there is not a Council. We have instructed it, and desire it as most useful and necessary... I have given power to the Council to act at a distance, decisively in cases of necessity. But though we have allowed the Council to receive postulants, we do not approve of their being sent away without our knowledge, unless in certain cases, where it may be necessary to dismiss a subject once, but we do recommend all works receive the blessing of obedience. A letter takes only a month from the furthest point we have, and a telegram could be sent by return, as we should not need to wait for a Novena, which you yourselves could make, being part of the body. The Novena, one part of the world of the other, would be the same. Few works would have to be undertaken in such a hurry that you could not take a month to consider and obtain the blessing of obedience before accepting.

Strive to have greater and greater faith in obedience, and its miraculous power. I assure you, my children, if either of you were put "Mother", and I away from you, I would not feel easy at undertaking any work that I had not your approval and blessing upon. Council is good in every way – good for the community, and good for the individual; especially good for Superiors to retain their religious spirit, for it cannot be denied how easy it would be for a spirit of proprietorship to creep in with a local Superioress. She is left so much to herself and can use so much power. She indeed seems to have far more power than the Head Mothers, who form the Council. I have myself known local Superioresses use power I would not dream of using. Think over these things and pray over them. Do not be hurt if you find anything personal, most probably the only things we are ever hurt about are the very things

we most need!

We commenced with a thought, how sweet it is to live under a Rule, which we know is for us the Will of God. We must enter into the spirit. It is not the letter only, as we often say, it is the spirit that will give life to our souls and brighten and beautify all our acts. A sister a short time ago wrote asking me, was not the “heroic act” the same as the Act of Consecration we make? It shows the good of writing open and simple letters, or that sister’s spirituality might have been spoilt by not entering into the spirit of her Rule. The “heroic act” is an act of proprietorship.

We give all our spiritual goods for the benefit of the Holy Souls through the hands of Our Lady. Just as a pious secular might give all their property to a particular community, naming the trustee, the Reverend Mother. You see, I am trying to explain to you very simply. The Act of Consecration is an act by which we give all our goods, spiritual and temporal, to Our Blessed Lady, to do as she pleases with. She can dispose of ourselves and our goods, spiritual and temporal, as she pleases. Thanks be to God we cannot give them away for this object or that – they are hers. But, our Superiors, who represent Our Lady to us, may interpret for us Our Mother’s will. Our Lady, who so loves us to have faith in obedience, would, without a doubt, bless any simple demand we make to our Superiors.

My dear children, I may not delay longer, and this letter has been long hindered its termination, so I now only say a “*Salve*” together children with their loving Mother,
MARY.

CONFERENCE SIX

In our Rule we read that the “sisters will find their strength and repose in constantly visiting their Divine Spouse and Lover of their souls, and in reciting their Office and other prayers in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament with the adoration, love and respect most profound and tender.”

Dear children, I purposely choose these few lines to draw your attention to the words “ADORATION most profound, respect most tender.” There are many things I would wish to point out to you in which you fail but, dear Jesus has himself this month drawn our thoughts especially to this Sweet Sacrament in which he dwells so lovingly, ever with us... Mayhap, if we remain more lovingly in his presence, he will himself point out to us our faults and the obstacles, which hinder our closer union with him... Then we shall advance quickly and grow perfect in word and work when Jesus whispers to the soul. We see clearly what we are, and what we want, if we would be very near and dear to his Sacred Heart. But, what do we want – what can we do to grow dearer to Our Dear Lord? Mark the words that I have copied for you from the Rule. You want adoration the most profound; respect the most tender.

My children, examine yourselves. Which of you had this profound adoration? Which of you think, as you walk into church – you are going to adore God, and therefore, show by your exterior what is in your heart? What should be? That innate desire God himself has implanted in every human heart – a desire to adore. This desire we find even among the heathens, but, of course, corrupted, since they adored false gods, idols, but adore the human heart, will, for God its Creator so fashioned it. But, why have we not deeper adoration? How can we obtain it? We have it not; because we are so taken up with ourselves that we have it not – cannot have a right sense of God's presence. Our own selves, our own desires, wishes, trials – all this takes our minds from God.

How can we obtain a greater spirit of adoration? As all things – by practice. Commence with your exterior. Let your attitude be adoration. Let your exterior daily increase in reverence and tender respect. But as it is – what do we do? We come into Our Dear Lord's presence, not with the attitude of being honoured by being allowed in his presence, but rather, as though we did him an honour by coming into the chapel and then, how full of yourselves!! You want to please yourselves by your visits. How little do you think of giving dear Jesus pleasure? "Poor Jesus Christ", St. Alphonsus used to say.

How few there are who really love him with their whole hearts, and therefore, forget themselves striving to please their Love? How coarse we are with dear Jesus, if we could really see ourselves, how rude, how vulgar, if we could but see ourselves. He is so good, so compassionate, we do not disgust him, but we should disgust ourselves if we could see ourselves in our true light. We are too lazy to worship God rightly. We will not exert ourselves. We expect to be coaxed. We want to be noticed by Jesus. We will not trouble ourselves to pray unless we have some sensible devotion. Ah, me! We are so unutterably selfish, and what we will not do, what have I not known sisters do? I have known them to choose the chapel as a place where no one would see them for a little private conversation. Poor Jesus! He is listening; he is watching. What profanation of his Sacred Presence [this is], what want of lively faith. No wonder sisters show their want of realisation of God's Presence everywhere, by the way they neglect or perform carelessly their duties, when they can thus behave in the spot where the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, that most Sacred Body, that living, beating Sacred Heart is ever dwelling!!

Sisters, commence afresh. Commence to guard more carefully your exterior whilst in Jesus' Presence. Let your body worship the God who formed it. Let your soul strive its best to rival Angels, and imitate these blessed spirits who cover their faces with their wings as they prostrate before the throne pronouncing their eternal "*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus.*" Make it one of the objects of your life to worship and adore the Great Good God from whom you come to whom you go.

Go to your prayers by the side of your Mother Mary, and she will teach you adoration. You will find a new zest in prayer. I do not mean sensible devotion, which is very often no more than one's feelings affected, as they might be at a

theatre, or the reading of a sad story. But she will make you love prayer better, since you will find a contentment in the thought that you are fulfilling the end of your creation, namely to adore God.

We are speaking here of our duty to God in the chapel, and how we should adore him at prayer. We have not time to enter farther, or would show how our whole lives should be adoration... How the works of those who thus live are finished ones, perfect – fit to offer God, since performed purely for his love, in his presence and as perfectly as possible.

Think over what I have said, my children. Time is short, so very, very short. “Behold the night cometh wherein no one can work” (Jn 9:4). Waste not the precious time your Angel is giving out to you, but fill it with prayers and works of adoration. The world is cold enough to God – shall we, his own, be cold to him? God forbid. Mary, defend us and invoke the Holy Spirit that replenished with new zeal, we may in whatever part of God’s world we may be in, we may glorify him by praise and adoration... [May] give him joy by our unselfish worship, and be to him as most cherished earthly angels.

This is a life worth leading. My children – lead it, and you need not envy the Blessed in Heaven.

CONFERENCE SEVEN.

Dear sisters, in asking a compendium from you the other day of your various offices and charges, I found that my meaning had not been understood by most of you. The answers given were mostly regarding the spirit in which they ought to be performed. That is a thought that is constantly put before you in most of your spiritual readings, Chapters etc. etc.

What I wanted to know was the practical, not the theoretical part regarding your various offices. I should see then by this in what spirit you did perform them, without you telling me. The first thought on receiving an office is that it is from God. God given. God has appointed me to this work; I have to answer to him how I perform it. That is very well – that is necessary, the first consideration. The next is how am I, or how do I perform it? We have to practically learn how to perform various duties given us... We have to examine and make sure that we are neglecting nothing appertaining to our office and charge.

As God spoke, “Let there be light, and there was light” (Gen 1:3), so with every duty. God expects what he has ordered to be done – “Let there be light, and there was light.” Not a mistiness of white mingled matter, something like light. No, what God ordered appeared. So with an office – when given to us it has to be performed according to the Rule, and we have to read it and examine ourselves if we perform it according to the Rule. How often we hear sisters say they don’t know how to examine themselves. They have to examine their works and how they perform them

– with many this does not enter their mind.

Take one of two, for example only, we will suppose it is the sacristan. She examines herself, and is very sorry she had distractions. She has been unrecollected, or something of this kind, relating to herself. Shall I examine you on one or two things? Do you always fill the Holy Water stoops? The Rule says this is the sacristan's place, and perhaps you never accuse yourself of that. Do you make known when the Novenas commence? I can say, with most of the sacristans I have had to do with (not all, but most) I would not trust such an important thing to them. They may look through the altar linen, as the Rule says, at regular intervals to see what wants repairing or replacing, but I doubt it! Of course, we cannot go through the whole of this important office – I pick out only a few items.

Turn to another, are you, infirmarian, and do you examine yourself upon your duty? Why? It is probable that the infirmarian may quite overlook that, by the Rule, she has to say prayers with her patient... She may also forget that when the Superior comes she has to retire – one may do it from native politeness, but without reference to the Rule.

Then again the bursar, what an important charge is this? Does the bursar often read her Rule, and see if she is acting in conformity with it? Oh – what confusion (and confusion always causes sin) is caused by one who is imperfect in this office. Things are not got in before they are wanted. They are not given out at the proper times, or are not given out at all. One may be wasteful – over lavish, and not troubling to see where she can best practise poverty. Another has mean little ideas, and seems to think that screwing is economy and poverty, and would be niggardly about some things – wasteful regarding others, and not looking to see when things are cheap, or when they are dear etc. etc.

We could continue from one office to another, but it should not be necessary. Our object is dear sisters, to draw your attention to the fact that your duties should be a point of examination.

One of the most serious faults of a bursar, and this we have mentioned many times before, and quite recently in a conference upon “How easy in religion it is to be accessory to the sins of others,” but we will touch upon it here only, to again strive and do what seems so difficult. Raise a just scruple in the minds of those, who are over others and commit this fault of not giving them what is necessary to fulfill obedience.

May God avert this fearful fault from us all, for it can entirely spoil the spirit of a house... In the novitiate, [it] would be the remote cause of the spirit of Order itself being deteriorated. For how many sisters have we not known commit deliberate sins of disobedience in a sort of desperate way saying, “I cannot help it.” I must go out without money, knowing it is a disobedience. I must wear my clothes torn – or, I must give my patient something that I am told not to – because I cannot get what I

want. It is no use trying to do what is right, and therefore, what is done reluctantly at first and with a certain amount of fear and scruple, is done quite easily afterwards without scruple.

This is the sanctuary of God desecrated. Though those would be horrified at the thought, who are good and hard working, [and] love their religious life. If they could but be convinced of the evil they are introducing into God's work, they would indeed be grieved.

If these few words I am writing touches anyone, I do not want them to be depressed and sad. There would not be so much wrong before they had this warning as now. Let them make a sincere act of sorrow for any past harm they may have done... Look out for the future, to be dear to the Heart of God, to be a delight, a bright spot on this earth whose steps he will follow, blessing them wherever they go if they walk and work with this one thought before them – duty.

Duty is before everything. Duty is God's Will. Giving way to sentiment, striving for imaginary virtues and a deal more I might say – delusion is quite possible in otherwise good souls. We are told that scrupulous people are those, who dispense themselves fighting for their real faults, whilst they are fighting with imaginary ones. So there are people in the world, and also in religion, who strive to attain certain virtues that please themselves and neglect attaining the real virtue that all must have – whether in the world or in religion, “faithful discharge of duty.”

That is a soul God loves. That is, I know, my children, what you wish to be – a soul beloved of God. I warn you in time that you may examine, and see if you fail in the matters that I have pointed out to you... It is in your examinations, whether particular or general examen, your particular office and how you perform it – for upon this God will examine you.

And now, one more advice concluding these words of warning – it is – do not make a burden of your charge. It is natural at times to lose something of the spirituality which we know so well, and the downward way which we know, when once commenced is so easy. We may climb up an ascent with much difficulty losing our breath over it, but, ah! How easy to run down! The sacredness of our office goes in part when we make a great burden of it. The feeling should be stopped like any other fault, as at its first appearance, for it is directly contrary to holiness. We fully believe our works are God's Will, and yet what an attitude we take towards that adorable Will which should be our delight.

Now for a practical resolution from our meeting together in God's presence, let us promise him to be more exact in performing our duties:

1. In the spirit of the rule,
2. Striving to learn all we can to perform them in the most perfect manner,
3. To perform them with joy; to go to each fresh act with fresh joy and urgent, as one who loves another does when they can do some service for the one they

love, but never let it seem a trouble or a burden, our service to God.

Ah, no! It is the sweetest thing in life to do something for God. It is sweet to live for him. It will be sweet to die, very, very sweet to those who have made all their labours, labours of love.

Send to M. Etheldreda who will send to M. Catherine, who will send to Commercial Road. M. de Sales will send to Charlotte Street, who will send to Hyson Green. Other houses will be sent to separately.

CONFERENCE EIGHT – May 10th 1890 (To be copied and sent to Limerick).

Over and over again we hear read that Rule that is to us God's Will. Over and over again we recall to mind that it is to be put into our hands when we are dead. Judge me, O God, the closed lips do not say – we say it now in life. Judge me, O God. Who does not fear as they say it? We must all fear. If we are wise, indeed we must fear. The most imperfect sister may not – and why? She may think she fulfills it to the letter – and to the letter she may, but the spirit? Who keeps it perfectly in spirit? Show me that sister and I tell you she is the happiest of beings on earth, a living saint, a joy to herself, to those around, to her God. The letter killeth, the spirit quickeneth.

The letter of our Rule has to be dispensed on many occasions. In new foundations, in times of moving, of general sickness out of the convent, or in the convent, or when sisters themselves are individually sick, but the spirit has never to be dispensed. The happy bright Mary-like spirit of a sister of the Little Company of Mary has never to be dispensed, but it shines the brighter and the better in the trying times we have named above. Then it is that virtue is proved. Then is shown the true spirit of the Rule. Then the spirit of ready obedience shows itself, when it is put to the test. When a sister is bid run hither and thither, to this or that, be here or there, obedient not only to the bell at a certain hour, not to an orderly routine (which an orderly mind naturally loves without regard to the supernatural love we have for our Rule). But obedient in the midst of bustle and confusion, charitable, self-sacrificing in endeavouring to help all and not repining when the happy clockwork order of the day is disturbed.

In these early days of our community we have often to have our virtue put to the test. Branch houses have ever been, and seem likely to be places where virtue is put to the test. Many and many have yet to be founded in different places of the world. Epidemics may occur in the towns where houses are well founded etc. etc. We are liable to every kind of vicissitude, to many changes – how wise are those who are ever aiming at a better, stronger, deeper spirit of their Rule as the letter has so often to be broken.

The sister, whose soul is (if we may so express it) steeped in the spirit of the Rule,

shows it on those occasions when another, who had aimed principally at keeping the letter of her Rule, fails. The sister, whose examination had been long made upon how she was progressing in the spirit of her Rule, is the same happy self-sacrificing sister in a branch house as in the Mother House. She finds the same work everywhere. She finds the same life, which God's ministers told her at the altar when she gave her life to God, was hard, but which she finds sweet, since she walks by means of her happy spirit, hand in hand with Jesus, going about everywhere doing good. "God bless her," Angels cry as they follow her, helping her. Joy be with her always. She is one of the blessed ones. They await the hour when her work in this world is over, and they will see her crowned. Yes, as we have rejoiced when we have been favoured to be present at some grand ceremony on earth, a beatification, a canonisation in God's Church on earth, so still more do the Angels rejoice with a great joy as they bring happy souls from earth to Heaven... [They] attend – their angelic spirits flooded with pure love of their younger brethren as Jesus blesses them, and his wounded hands crown them forevermore.

This, dear sisters, is what is waiting for you – is what is waiting for me. We work in hope for it. We wait for it. We can afford to wait, to work a little more. What, is it possible? After my poor little efforts to keep my Rule, to live in the spirit of Jesus and Mary, to keep my own selfish spirit down, I am to be so supremely happy as to be blessed by Jesus himself! Ah, what will it be? What thrill of ecstatic joy will be mine as Jesus' hands are laid upon my bowed head. In this life, could we live after that touch of those stigmatised hands? Think, dear sisters, if Jesus stood in the midst at this moment and raised his hands over one of us to bless, and we felt that touch of his dear human nature – what would that blessed, that happy sister feel? Would her life, her works, her labour... keep down her own spirit, and live in the spirit of her God whom she had chosen... [as] her only love; would it seem to her that she had done much? Ah, no! But wish (yet without anxiety or trouble) that she could have done ten thousand times more.

Let us realise this daily more and more, and, dear sisters, ours struggles with ourselves will not seem so hard. Let us judge ourselves, or rather, happy we who live in religion, let us allow those over us to judge us, and then we will look forward with a humble, yet happy hope that our meeting with Our Dear Lord will be happy, blissful to ourselves, glorious to him. Let us remember how we are watched by God's Angels and Saints, nay by God himself, every step we take, every word we speak, every act we do. We are watched and watched with love. In our very falls, if we humble over them, we are watched with compassion also then. In our tried moments, with what tender pity are the eyes of Jesus fixed on the tried, truly suffering soul, the one whose love of Jesus had made her suffer, whose heart suffered and strove to suffer unselfishly.

Dear Lord, he is contented with our striving, even though at times we may but partially succeed. Let us then strive on. Who would be cowardly and lay down their arms in the very face of Jesus? Who will be tired of working, and say it is hard to wage war constantly, thus not alone against sin, but self? It is a glorious fight. It is a

grand combat. It is for God we fight. It is for him we hope to win. It is for his love, his glory as well as our own good we hope to conquer. We look forward to be crowned.

Walk then, dear sisters, and weary not. Well for those who wear themselves working for Jesus. We all work, but again it must be repeated – it is the spirit in which we work, for which we shall be rewarded. First, yes even before charity, we must work in a spirit of obedience. We must strive to see God's Will in all we are told to do... Then we shall work with true charity, then our works will be love, then, as we ponder over the spirit of our Rule we shall see self must have no place in what we do. For if we are to aim at the spirit which animated our Mother Mary, if we are to endeavour that our very thoughts are to be united with those that emanated from the Holy Heart of Mary – where is there place for self? If we are to endeavour that our daily acts are to be performed in a spirit of self- sacrifice to save souls from losing God, from being lost to God forever – where is there room for a selfish act? If we are to be a united band, bound together under the banner of obedience, to obtain by our daily sacrifices and prayers mercy from God, how can we break this union by one not helping another, lovingly striving to supplant one another in the hardest works.

All this, and much more, is found in studying the spirit of the Rule. Let us not weary of it. Our different houses, this month of Mary, are making an offering to Our Lady – they are weaving a crown out of pure acts of obedience. Some of our houses can keep more of the letter of the Rule than others. As we have said, the spirit can never be dispensed. Likewise, in all, acts of obedience can be performed in a good spirit, a loving spirit, the spirit our Rule dictates to us. Then, let one sister vie with the other in her constant acts of obedience – obedient to those placed over us, and likewise, lovingly obedient to one another.

In this spirit we shall live in peace. In this spirit we shall live in love, and if we live in love we shall die in love, and Love Incarnate, Jesus, will gather the loving soul to himself... As the last breath of life leaves our body, he will gather to himself that spirit that did not belong to earth but Heaven, having striven to live in this world, a pure unselfish life divested of self and its own spirit – to live by God's Spirit.

May the Angels surrounding us now intercede before God's throne, that we may have so happy an end.

CONFERENCE NINE

The Little Company of Mary has no strict rules of penance etc. as it might be thought an Order especially devoted to Calvary should have. No, the individual soul with its Director will be left free and unencumbered by rules, which are so wise and prudently enforced in many ancient Orders. "Let every spirit praise the Lord" (Ps 150:6).

Why should there be a difference, it may be asked...? Though it could be easily shown that, as we have written elsewhere, that every Order is as a flower in God's garden, the Church, and meant to represent to him some particular beauty – that every flower should bloom after its kind. In our Little Company, the Holy Spirit will fashion its saints at will. The various members may be all alike, and yet all different. All alike in simplicity, in liberty, in love and yet differing in some particular way from another, or in a state from another, or in passing from one state of life from another, will altogether make up as a whole well pleasing to the Good God.

We see and love Our Blessed Lady at all times of her life, but do we all think enough of that time she passed after the resurrection. There are many souls who imitate Our Lady in a life long, quiet, peaceful sorrow... [They], at some time of their lives, pass through a fearful ordeal, a crucifixion, and then it has passed (though that terrible trial still lives in the soul till its last earthly breath)... The remainder of the life seems to pass without further... So in the Little Company there may be many who have passed through their crucifixion, who have bravely borne a fiery order, and... they remain stilled as one after a deep trial... They may then resemble Our Blessed Lady in her work in the Church after the resurrection.

See Mary among the young Catechumens, see her at the bed of death, see her working with the Apostles in her quiet, simple hidden way. How may we not imitate her if we would? There is so much could be done to help our over worked priest, if we would, but the lay help so frequently sought by priests, too often proves a source of worry to them. The pious ladies whom they engage to help them being too seldom changeable, capricious, and easily given to offence, or else fussy – taking up the time of the poor priests with long conversations, and talkative to a degree. Of what incalculable service would be sisters working in a quiet Mary-like way with the simple straight-forwardness of the true nun who has but one end in life. [She would desire only] to please her Love, to make “her Lord pleasing to all around,” to work earnestly, to work hiddenly, to work prayerfully, to work with Jesus... It is this we must note most carefully, for it is the absence of this union with him, which hinders the work of so many seculars being efficacious. They will work as if all the success could be obtained by themselves; they do not work with Jesus as their companion, for they make vainglory too often their companion.

I do not say this is the case with all, but it is with some ladies in the world... Neither do I say every nun is entirely free from these faults – my words were “every true nun,” – but whether the souls working for God on missionary work are in the convent or live in the world, they can do little good unless they are Spouses of Jesus... It is possible to be nuns and not to be a Spouse of Jesus... Likewise, thank God, it is possible not to be a nun and yet to be a Spouse of Our Dear Lord.

Then in our Little Company, this comes in – the work of instruction, catechising, teaching, as well as our primary motive, which we do not mention again, having elsewhere enlarged upon, viz., the assistance of the dying. We should not be like Mary is, if we were confined to one special devotion. We may have a leaning to one

more than another we may feel attracted to one with a special love. God's Holy Spirit may attract them to one more than another, but nevertheless they must love all. Each child of Mary may not be drawn to imitate their Mother in all her states of life – some may feel drawn to one, some to another, and thus the whole of her life be represented. Thus briefly we may draw some idea of the life to be led in Our Lady's home. It is a life of Jesus and Mary we wish to renew on earth. They were not religious, as the world generally understands religious, neither will Mary's Own be religious, as the world commonly understands the term. But again we say, the object of our Institute is not to represent in the Church a very perform form of monastic or convential life. But to represent as perfectly as may be for our frail nature, the life led on earth by Jesus and Mary, but again we repeat, this cannot be obtained as a rule without a strict novitiate.

The liberty of spirit practised by the professed would need strict, very strict previous observance, though God may himself often take a soul in hand and lead it through a strict novitiate himself, and souls thus led are favoured ones. God leads sometimes souls through a season of humiliation and trial that no succeeding prosperity, position or liberty can ever deprive them of its wholesome effects. They have reached their state of liberty of love, of union with himself, of freedom of spirit at the price of a broken heart – but it is well, and they know it. But God desires ever-human means should be used, and a certain training given to souls in a systematic way. He does not always do the work himself. He desires care and labour and prayer and suffering in the Father and Director of these souls, and the same in the Mother, who, under the direction of the Father, the representative of Our Lord, will watch over them in his absence and guide them according to his wishes.

We wish in Our Lady's Little Company to represent on earth the life of Our Lord and Our Lady. The greater part of Our Lord's life was filled with simple natural actions. Our Lady's too, was occupied with ordinary everyday actions, but whilst outwardly occupied like other persons, what a difference was there interiorly; what a life of love, suffering and sacrifice there was within. Calvary had already begun in each heart. Our Lord was ever the Man of Sorrows, even in his youth when employed in his manual labours. With the light of love, with the glory and grandeur of his Heavenly Father's face shining from his own, and the peace of Heaven beaming from his eyes – the eyes that hereafter would drop blood from the sharp thorns that would encircle that beautiful brow. Yes, Jesus was crucified from his youth upwards, and his Mother was crucified in heart with him, and yet, nothing exterior betrayed their sorrows. They did not show their sorrow. They did not show anything to their neighbours but an extraordinary love, an extraordinary peaceful gentle manner, a constant happy countenance.

Thus with Mary's Own, the united Company will together manifest to God the life of Jesus and Mary. Some of its members may be called by God to go through all the various states of life of Our Lord and Our Lady. Some more particularly [are] drawn to one. One may, like their Mother, be called to an intense interior unseen crucifixion of soul – it may be known to none but the Director of that soul, the outward behaviour never betraying what is going on within. Another may be called

to both severe interior and exterior sufferings. Soul and body may be crucified together with their Crucified Lord; their body may be wounded with the Wounded Body of Jesus. They may live in a constant union with Jesus on the cross; suffering may be their delight, poverty a pleasure, humiliation a joy and yet. This soul, so closely united with its Lord on Calvary, may differ exteriorly but a little from the soul united with Jesus at Bethlehem, resting with the Infant Jesus on Mary's breast.

The difference between the two would be principally seen in time of trouble and contradiction. The more the soul [is] united with Jesus, bearing heroically what the soul at Bethlehem with its arms round Mary's neck, would probably fret and complain of. It seems that Calvary is the only seminary where perfect patience under injustice is taught. How many souls give way complaining of the human agents through whom the injustice comes to them, excusing their indignation by wrongly applying the words of the Holy Ghost that they should "be angry and sin not" (Eph 4:26)? It is on Calvary that we learn as we look upon Jesus and Mary, that there cannot be injustice for us. That we have none with whom we can be angry but ourselves; that it is impossible we could receive an injustice.

Ah, how happy we should be when an opportunity occurs for suffering, seeming injustice presents itself. The soul united with Jesus on the cross is prepared for this. It is not taken by surprise; it is hardly aware that it had anything to bear and would be ashamed to think it is undergoing what others see that soul is undergoing. Ah, it is happy! There are some who would dread the thought of living all their life on Calvary, and yet view the soul that has chosen that place for its abode and see – is it not the happiest, most constantly cheerful upon this earth? Is there anything austere or sombre or sad about it? No, indeed! It is ever joyous. It is the first to enliven the recreation, the first to cheer those who are sad, the last to complain of its suffering. Since indeed it can hardly acknowledge to itself, much less to others in the face of Jesus agonising, united to Jesus' loving Heart that it is really suffering. It might discouraged those who have never tasted the sweetness of Calvary; it might make them think their future life would be weary and sad – but how little they know. How little they know what the embrace of Jesus agonising is like. Ah, yes!

CONFERENCE TEN : (Read Rule regarding Spiritual Exercises)

These are the words of our Rule regarding our spiritual exercises, that is, our direct communion, intercourse with God. Before we entered religion we loved our intercourse with the unseen world; we loved conversation with God. But now we love our exercises because they are our Rule, that is, the known Will of God for us. That dear Will that wills we should pray for our own soul's sake as well as, because Our Good Creator loves the creatures he created with such great love, to speak with himself, to think of him, to seek to know him, and all he has done for us.

We thought last week of the absolute necessity of meditating if we would be good religious. That the sacraments, even without meditating, might be dangerous since we might approach them without reverence, without regard to their sacredness.

Indeed, all our spiritual exercises are a great risk. We know what good they may do us. We have felt it in special times of grace, of retreat etc. But likewise, we must not forget that they may do us harm if we approach them carelessly. We must remember also, that it is a wrong thing to attend an exercise without attending to it, paying attention, and this some overlook. They would know very well if they were sent to scrub a room and then, when they had prepared everything for doing so, they sat down and looked it and did nothing. They would know this was wrong, and yet, there are some who will go to the chapel, prepare their meditation, and then, what do they do? Certainly they do not trouble to exert that beautiful part of their being, their mind, which, when well used moves the heart, which when touched, evokes a melody which is delightful to the ears of God, and our hearts by this prayer are united to our God.

Some sisters think not of the danger of a carelessly made meditation, or the wrong of being present at a reading and not listening and trying to recollect what is read. Worse for them. Sad for them, for though they may have begun well, they will end badly. Yes, by continued negligent acts, by carelessly performing their religious exercises, they disunite their souls from God to whom they were once united with such joy. They may with great humility and love, have gone to God saying they were all his, but they neglected their religious exercises. They forgot their God, and though once they felt his presence, though once they seemed to walk this earth with him, though once they seemed truly hand in hand, heart to heart with Jesus. Though once his voice seemed almost audible as he told them, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore, have I drawn thee to myself taking pity on thee" (Isa 54:8; Jer 31:3). Though words of love and tenderness sunk deeply into their hearts – through neglect of spiritual exercises the light around us faded away.

They forgot Jesus first in small things – then in greater, and those who, in their fervour, gave themselves to God and cried, "Hosanna! Holy, Holy God!" [They] decry him after by their conduct, when for their negligence he no longer manifests himself to them, when he withdraws, for their souls became barren, cold to him. This has been the sad fate of many. History tells us of it. The Scriptures in sad warning words tell us of it, and sisters, if this has been the fate of others, may it not be the fate of us. Let it not be, O God – let it not be. I pray thee. Pour [out] thy Spirit upon us. Lead us into thy unseen world in our meditations and drawing our souls to love thy beauty, to admire the wonder of thy ways, let us live as thy children – children of light, in this world but not of it. Mother, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, help our weak endeavour, till with thee and Jesus we rejoice forever.

Now, my children for awhile for a few moments left us, meditate here as we are assembled together. Let us lend our minds, heart, wills. Let us concentrate them for a few moments upon some subject, some ordinary subject of meditation. Let it be the passion of Jesus. This is a spiritual communion in itself, and those who live in thought, in daily meditation upon the passion of Jesus, live in a consecrated sanctuary, a place of grace. Yes, but only when it is real meditation, that meditation that leads to imitation, to living in union with Jesus, by bearing generously and

lovingly sufferings of heart, soul and body. These happy ones who thus live are thrice blessed. They are blessed even in this world before they are pronounced blessed by Jesus

We will meditate on the flagellation of Jesus. We will go in spirit to that terrible scene enacted over 1800 years ago on this earth. It really happened – it is not a tale; it is no fiction. Jesus is no imaginary person – he is the Son of God made man for us, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. We will view Jesus bound to the pillar. We will view the motley crowd heartlessly gazing on. We will see the rude soldiers with their instruments of torture, their scourges prepared for action, prepared to bruise, to wound, to cut the sacred flesh of Jesus, and we – we will have no bruise if we can help it, no wound. We love our bodies, are tender over them though we know our Jesus was wounded, bruised for us.

Jesus scourged! Can we look upon him thus? Can we bring our thoughts to ponder that fearful mystery? Come by the side of your Mother. Come – look. His shoulders are bared. Does Mary see? We read that she heard the sound of the scourges on that flesh, that beautiful flesh she had handled so sacredly, so tenderly. What would this be to the Virgin Mother of the Child Divine? We, with our poor love of Jesus, we who know him but darkly, in a dim manner, we feel, as we contemplate that scene, that we could not have borne it. We look – come away from the world and its distractions. Close your ears to earthly present sounds open them to sounds that once were heard in this world. Shut your eyes to sights that you have seen view what you have not seen.

If your ears had heard, if your eyes had seen this sight – Ah me, different indeed would be...our lives. The Lamb of God is dragged to the column. Meekly he goes. It is Mary's Son, the Babe of Bethlehem, the author of our Christmas joys, the Jesus of our First Communion. Gently he walks to that column. Look at that face. It is white. It has the sweat of that night's agony still on it. There is suffering such, as no man has ever known. His Heart is throbbing with love of men, and his Heart is pierced to the quick that those he so loves are thus leading him to the slaughter. Yet, he speaks not of his pain.

“As a lamb is led to the slaughter he opened not his mouth” (Isa 53:7). My God, my God! What do I see? Ruffian hands approach; those tender shoulders are bared. Thy hands are tied for the treatment is cruel. Thy executioners know that ordinary human endurance could not stand the agony. Jesus, sweet Jesus, is thy Mother near? If she is, if she sees, if she hears – how is she mortal? O God that the whips rend the air; they descend upon the flesh, the adorable flesh of Jesus. Blood, Precious Blood issues – Ah, look and see. You who love to look upon the Sacred Host raised in Benediction over you; you who love to watch trembling the priest as he raises the chalice of Precious Blood offered to the Eternal Father, look now. What is done to this Body, this sacred flesh? What is done to this Blood? Look – and see what sin is. Whose sin? Say it with bowed head – my own sin!

Whiter grows the face of Jesus. Pain marked on that venerable face; the body quivers in very agony, for he is truly human. The lashes descend upon the shoulders that will so soon bear the cross, upon which the sacrifice will be consummated, those shoulders of the Good Shepherd. Ah, Jesus can we look longer? Can we think more? Thou didst call thyself by that tender name. Thou didst represent thyself as going about seeking the lost sheep and placing them on thy shoulders, rejoicingly calling those who loved thee to rejoice with thee, in that thou hadst found the sheep that was lost.

Behold! How the sheep have turned against the Shepherd, and yet, they know he is good; they could not help but know it, if they know not he is their God. He, who represented himself under this simile of the Good Shepherd, when he found the lost sheep, placing it upon his shoulders and carrying it with joyfully home. How are those sacred shoulders treated by those who should be his own? The lashes fall. The sacred flesh is torn.

My God! My God! More terrible is this scourging than the cross! We sink into our place in creation as we view the flagellation of Jesus... We yearn with a holy desire, a loving yearning, to suffer something for and with our Love. Let us cultivate this thirst for suffering and well will it be for us – well indeed, happiness indeed. Holier our lives, happier, more beautiful our souls, and more glorious to God hereafter in eternity if bruised, wounded for love of Jesus in time.

We have little in which to make our eternity more glorious. It is passing so quickly – the last moment will soon be here. Not one should be wasted; all should be put to profit. Let us work while it is now day, because the night cometh in which no one can work!

CONFERENCE ELEVEN : *Sacraments – Rule.*

It has been remarked to me that I had never written upon this point of our Rule. Some points have been written and rewritten upon and this, the most important point of all omitted – the Rule referring to the sacraments. If it had been my omission that may have hindered grace to my children's souls, indeed I am sorry, but it is a matter of more than ordinary import, and this conference will be reviewed and receive the approbation of a learned priest before it is read to you.

The first point the Rule points out to us, is that we must go to the priest the Bishop appoints. Secondly, we may exceptionally for certain reasons, go to another priest with permission of our Superior... Upon this point a Jesuit Priest once said to me, “how am I to know, Mother, when the sisters have leave to come to me or not, because, if you have not given them permission, the confessions are not valid”. This showed me that there was a probability that some sisters had been without permission. In this as in other things, God shows how he supports those whom he puts in office, and brings to their knowledge in a most marvellous way what it is useful for them in their difficult task of guiding the community.

We know this, then we understand that sisters are bound to go to an appointed priest. They may ask permission for an Extraordinary Confessor, but that does not exempt them going to the Ordinary at stated times. Special injunctions of the Church have been issued regarding the sisters asking in all simplicity for an Extraordinary Confessor oftener than the four times prescribed by the Church. Ask in all simplicity. This is right, but you cannot want an Extraordinary Confessor every week, and the Church does not expect that religious houses should be in continual confession, by Extraordinary Confessors being constantly required. Imagine in a community of twelve, if six required different priests sent for? The thing would be utterly unreasonable, and the Church never contemplated it. For their ordinary confessions then, the sisters have their Ordinary Confessor, but they would be wrong if human respect should hold them back when they need an Extraordinary Confessor, or when they need extraordinary advice or directions, asking for such besides four times a year when the Rule prescribes.

The Extraordinary Confessor should be sent for, and to whom the sisters must present themselves whether they have anything to say or not. Another point the Rule points out to us regarding how we can make this great sacrament the means of sanctification God intends it to be. The Rule tells us most exactly what virtues we are to practise in this sacrament, if we would obtain the fruits he wishes us to from this magnificent channel of grace. "Let the sisters take care that their confessions are short, humble, sincere and animated with true contrition; they should avoid probisty and scruples." Here we will pause and consider, dear sisters, a holy priest, a canon and theologian, told me to his surprise that some women thought that in the Sacred Tribunal the law of charity need not be observed, and that they sinned against it in the confessional. How hard it was for the priest – but who can stop a woman's tongue?!

Breaches of charity being in the confessional did not cease to be breaches of charity! The sin is not the less, but worse, for being committed in such a holy spot. In the instructions given regarding confession, we are carefully warned no to mention the names of another person; this is for fear of wounding charity. Ah, those who would turn the confessional into a gossip shop, realise little of the grandeur of the sacrament, of the meeting it is with God. They do not even know their Rule which tells them they should be "humble, sincere and animated with true contrition," and this certainly cannot be when we are easing our wounded feeling by advertising others. We certainly hinder true contrition springing up in our souls. Ah, if we realised how this sacrament is indeed sin, entry into that unseen world which we cannot see with our mortal eyes, as we can see and touch and handle things of sense. The soul is a spirit and the spiritual world is opened to it by certain wonderful operations of grace which admit us closer in the company of our God, in whose presence we ever are, in whom we live, move and have our being (cf. Acts 17:28).

The Sacrament of Penance, a special reference, a special individuality, it is for our own soul. We are alone with God; we are before him in a manner, which [must]

touch his Heart. We have come to acknowledge we are sinners and to plead with him for mercy. Animadversions upon others then are out of place, real distractions. In our prayers with God at other times, whilst assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, bring others before us. We pray for their needs, we look at their wants, their failings that we may intercede for them, but here, here in the Tribunal of Penance we have entered a sanctuary where we find God waiting, and ever waiting with a tenderness that the most loving Mother has not. We kneel humbly, we remember what we are; we seek not to hide it – a culprit before its Creator. My God, I have sinned. I deserve no more to be called thy child. Jesus, my Jesus mercy. We need not enter here into particulars regarding our accusations nor the old reminders taught you in your novitiate, to ever accuse yourself of some past deliberate sin.

Our object in writing is to show what is lost by not approaching the Sacrament of Penance with the dispositions that will enable us to receive the outpouring of grace that it is the property of the Sacrament to give. And to show that channel of grace, vast channel that the sacrament is, it is possible for us to plug up this channel and thus hinder the water of grace being poured upon us. How sad, and we are quite unconscious of it. As we said to you on another occasion, the sacraments are not charms acting without correspondence on our side. They give us grace according to our correspondence. We have to prepare before hand. We have to be humble and sincere at the time, and we have to do many acts afterwards to derive the grace we should receive from this grand Sacrament of Penance

Why is it that we certainly lose more grace though our confession is good, and we receive the Sacrament worthily? Still we lose an amount of grace and strength that God desires to give us, and that in other sacraments and sacramentals we do not lose in the same measure. How is this? This is the only sacrament where we ourselves can talk as much as we please, and this liberty we use often beyond the limits of charity and probity. The Church has counselled, legislated in the wisest way to hinder the Sacrament being used unlawfully. We are counselled not to mention names, the wisdom of which we see easily, for what is said in the confession to the prejudice of another, that other will never have an opportunity of showing the other side... Another side there is to most tales, and the old adage, “one tale is good until the other is told” was never more necessary to be remembered than in the present day. The nervous system of some people [today] seems so unstrung that their imagination seems as disordered as their body. Self-love has their mind also, and causes a one-sided illogical view of things... The Divine Law of Charity, which does not allow a thought as well as a word against charity, seems almost forgotten.

God’s grand Sacrament was never intended to be an instrument by which charity could be broken *ad libitum*. Ah, me, but in my own mind, I make excuse for those who indulge in this habit. They do not mean to do harm, do not know they are doing harm. They may be simply pouring out their mind as they would to God, but God sees ever the two sides. We are bound to inquire two sides of a matter to come to a just judgment, but the priest from the confessional and his light extends to the one soul kneeling before him for the Sacrament. He might form a wrong judgment upon

people who are spoken of. He could easily come to a wrong conclusion from the one-sided story presented to him, and very much harm ensue.

I must confess, dear sisters, that I myself do not know when a priest is no longer bound by the seal of the confessional; some say when he takes off his stole. I have never been accustomed to bearing tales in the Sacrament of Penance, so have not until lately troubled about this matter. It is to me next to Holy Communion. The Holy Ghost above; Angels hover round with joy; the Precious Blood bathing to a glorious whiteness a soul; the Mother above all mothers is rejoicing with her child. A marvel of grace takes place. The soul becomes less worldly, leaves the earth for a time in this meeting with God and comes again, as it were, into this world of sense to live in it indeed. But not to be of it – a more spiritual being from this intercourse with God, grateful, humble, charitable, desiring to do good to all, and to bring to God his vast family to find at his feet the strength and grace they themselves experience.

Thank God for this Sacrament of Power. How we revere the Almighty Power of God, and rejoice that he can do all. He, the same voice that commanded “Lazarus, come forth”(Jn 11:43), speaks ever on, on through the ages; “come forth,” and souls dead in sin arise, souls in a far worse state than Lazarus, souls defiled, rotten to the core. Ah, in our confessions let us have compassion for those deformed, lame, blind, leprous souls, who have so much need of the Divine Power to bring them again to life and strength. Ah, in our preparations made in peace, let us think of these unfortunate ones who have no peace, who have not how to obtain it, or will not trouble, they are so sunk in the mire of the earth with its passions that they seem bound. Let us beg the Angels whisper; let us lend a helping hand to drag them from out this dreadful state, and offer our own preparation to help those who cannot prepare for their Sacrament with the peace and quiet. Thanks be to God we are able to.

And now, dear sisters, we must finish our few thoughts upon the Rule relating to the Sacrament of Penance. It has been a delicate matter, so delicate that this conference will not be read to you until revised by an able theologian. In conclusion, dear sisters, let me remark that if the sacraments are such wonderful channels of grace to our souls. If they lead us into that unseen world which is God. If they give us power to hold converse with the most primitive and happy manner, so that we need not envy the visits paid by their Creator to those happy souls he visited, when they were yet unfallen... [They] looked for him with their whole heart and soul, and the welcome of his unfallen innocent creatures, so delighted their God. Surely, surely, dear sisters, we understand not as we should understand the splendour of the sacraments, and the manner in which they bring us into God's presence, unite us with him, guard us from evil.

We do not understand; we do not receive the abundance of grace we might, but why? Ah, me, we are not mortified enough. We cling to the things of sense. Why? Why is this, since we all know there is no joy on earth like the pure joy of those who

lead wholly spiritual lives? We know this, and yet we cling to the flesh-pots of Egypt. Would that the Angels, those bright intelligences of God, might visit our minds with one ray of their light and that we now, prostrate before the throne of God, might promise to value the sacraments, to receive them as often as possible, and with greater faith and love.

Let us not be cowardly; let us stir ourselves up. Let us exert ourselves. Spiritual sloth is one of the growing evils of the day. We find in the writing of many holy ones, cautions given about long prayers and giving way to sentiment etc. etc. Well, really, in these days there seems little fear of prayers being indiscreetly long and sentiment indulged in. We feel not the least inclined to stop a soul from their prayers, but to encourage in every way an inclination to spirituality. Frequently the sacraments will help us pray, keep us recollected, give us relish for spirituality, an appetite for all that is holy, and make us hate all that is unholy. They will keep bright the fire of Divine Love within us and that means, love one another. Love of souls; love for sinners.

The sacraments will keep us close to Jesus' Heart and fill us with its loving emanations... Then we shall understand better all that Jesus has done, all that he would have done for us if we had let him. We shall trust his desire to help us, and thus be as supremely happy as we can be in this world, knowing, realising that the desires and intentions of the Divine Heart are inexhaustible.

Eternal Father look upon the desires, the loving intentions of our brother, Jesus. Show mercy Father in Heaven, show mercy to this earth for Jesus' Sacred Heart. For his Heart is ours and his intentions for our good are beyond our ken, but they are known to thee Our God. Give then, according to thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out our iniquities... Jesus, Lord and God, kneeling at thy feet, we promise thee that we will value more, we will frequent with ever increasing reverence the channels of grace, thy sacraments... Thus we will discover more and more of the depths of love of thy Sacred Heart.

Does not the voice of Jesus speak to us at this moment asking us "what is there more he could do for us?" And we timidly on our part, tell Our Love, "what is there that thou wouldest ask of me, my Jesus that I would refuse to do for thee?" And if now sincerely we tax our hearts to ask "is there anything Jesus asks of me that I refuse him?" And if we can looking up with love tell dear Jesus frankly – "Lord, all that I am and have is thine – I desire nought but that Thy Holy Will be fulfilled in me." Ah, then will Jesus reply as we hold this loving colloquy with him, "if thou, little one, then so lovest me; if thou art desirous to show they love to me, how couldest thou doubt what my Infinite Love would do for thee? Ask and thou shalt receive, and believe my desire to give to thee is greater than thou canst know. Seek for all good gifts from my bounty, and then Angels as they surround thee will chant with joy as you walk your way from earth to Heaven, "Blessed art thou that hast believed, for these things shall be done to thee according to thy faith" (cf. Lk 1: 45).

Credo –speak Mother with thy child – *credo*, I believe. *Spero* – I hope. *Amo* – I love. Faith, hope charity – bloom, fructify in those souls who frequent the sacraments with reverence and humility. Let us then renew in our souls all that is so glorious to God, those fruits of Christ's passion, by means of the sacraments. We are constantly lamenting our weakness. We want. Oh! We want to do so much, and we feel at times it is so difficult. It seems almost impossible to do what we want to. We want to be true, noble, loving, generous, and we fail and feel disheartened. We could almost give up trying. You come and tell me, my children, and indeed you need not, for I see at times how dispirited you are, and that is why I wonder that you dare neglect the sacraments.

I assure you, my children, I wonder, I marvel at the way you neglect the sacraments. The very ones, who so feel their want of power to still their passions, are the ones who seem to think the least of losing grace. Do lay this thought to heart – that God had not been wanting on his side. He would have helped you, but you did not let him. You say you have tried and tried, and you cannot succeed. You have yes, yes, but now – let God act. Lean upon grace. Taste and see how sweet is God to those who love him. Obtain the plenitude of grace from this Sacrament that perhaps hitherto you have not sufficiently venerated, and from which you have not derived the grace you might. This Grand Sacrament, [is] the outcome of the tenderness of Jesus' Heart. Follow its dictates and let this Magnificent Sacrament be what Jesus intended – consolation, strength, courage, the means by which a new heart is created in us.

Would that the world knew the love, the tenderness that Jesus felt for his poor children when he created these marvellous works of his Spirit – the sacraments... This Sacrament, in which after Baptism, the various graces of so many others seem contained or are renewed. There would not be such hard thoughts of God. Hard thoughts – we shudder at the words, but it is true. God's creatures do have hard judging thoughts of their God. My Jesus, I am in pain at this thought – Jesus, thou art Goodness itself, let it not be that thy children should thus wrong thee. Let them love let them know thy love. Reveal thyself more, my Lord, and let thy love move, as it should, the hardest heart.

I wonder at thy wonderful works but my God, I wonder not at thy sweetness, thy tenderness, thy compassion for it is Jesus, and I cannot connect aught but sweetness with thee. I have no power to think thee aught else. Thou hast taught me, and in the sacraments do I find thee, hidden it is true. But, Oh, so surely, the God of my heart for whom my soul yearns, Jesus, the giver of grace, the sweet Saviour giving sacraments of

Divine Power, Jesus, Prince of Peace. Sisters, we really we must revere...I

CONFERENCE TWELVE

We have spoken of the meditation the soul should make at the feet of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. But, my children, you leave the sanctuary of the Blessed

Sacrament and wend your way in the world to imitate your Love, going about everywhere doing good. Still, you are not without a sanctuary; there is the vast temple of God's immensity. In this Temple you must prostrate and adore God, and with prayer and a great effort of will forget all created things to be alone for awhile with your Creator. You must do this to keep unworldly. No matter where you are, you can send the world with its noise and bustle far away. It will all appear as smoke, the world's applause, the pleasure of pleasure of pleasing what is thought of you, even by the good. What they think of you will be valueless. What God thinks of you will be beyond value.

Human nature will always be the same – that is to say, it ever asserts itself, though in different ways in different people. It is meditation alone that will keep us from giving way to this poor human nature. It is simply impossible to keep the body in order without nourishment, unless by miracle and, likewise, impossible to keep the soul in order, healthy, without nourishment. If we look at it in a natural manner, we see that the body, through contact with the things around, must in a certain sense be affected by them. So the invisible soul, through being brought in contact with the invisible must be affected by it. Meditation on what is infinite must make us value less what is finite, and therefore, we learn to value the opinion of God more than the opinion of men. We are sorry if we have given God reason to think less of us, when we see how valuable is God's good opinion of us.

We are speaking in a very human way, and our souls can be better touched on these things than our words can express them. At any rate, try and see and learn how withdrawing into God's presence strengthens the soul, and clothes it with an armour which is able to resist the attacks of our exterior enemy, and the still more dangerous wounds inflicted by our interior enemy. You may think you have excuse for not making your meditation, but excuse you have not.

Be assured that it has to be made, and by management, time will be found to make it. The place or the occupation will not really hinder, though some places and some occupations are more favourable to meditation than others... As with regard to the nourishment of the body, though we can better digest our food in healthy bracing air, we do not leave it off when confined to the close air of the city. So, our soul, no matter in what place or occupation, needs it nourishment, and must have it. We cannot repeat this too earnestly, and the oft quoted words, "we will" again are out forth. But let them convey a new meaning, let them sink into the soul with great force.

"With desolation is the whole land made desolate, because no one thinketh in his heart." So now, let us set to work, take the talent from out of the napkin in which it is wrapped, bring it to light and bring it our to interest. You may have a very good will, and intend to be noble and true, but you are human and your good will will not keep you from giving way to that superior force which is brought to bear upon you from the enemies, which you have both within and without. Let the soul find its proper climate and be filled with the pure air of spirituality derived from thinking of

what is invisible, and it will be ever fresh. It will exult in a perpetual spring tide. It will be buoyant with the joy of youth impregnating it.

We see souls lagging, wearied and pressed down. It is the physical nature, the physical surroundings that are stifling and crushing it to the earth. It wants to breathe, but it is the choked air of earthliness it has collected so quickly that the soul itself knows not when it began. It was suddenly taken off its guard, one day in surprise at its weakness. But it knows not when it began, but the words of Scripture might be used, "and my tongue clove to my mouth because I forgot to eat my bread." The poor body could not act because it had not received its proper food, so the soul could be described in the same way, because it had not received its spiritual food. The body received from created things – visible. The soul receives what is similar to itself; it is invisible and nourished by what is invisible. And if we would keep it in proper order it must be nourished. It must be used for the purpose for which it was created. We should be dragged to earth; we shall be grovelling on the ground unless we use part of this living thing as God intended us.

So now, the exertion has to be made, and the memory, and understanding well used, whether the occupation is pleasing to us or not. It must be a study, and we shall derive profit even when we do not feel that we have benefited by the time spent. We have derived profit as the body receives strength from nourishment taken which, from a variety of reasons; we have had no enjoyment in.

As religious, as sisters of the Little Company of Mary, we are bound to have two half- hour meditations in the day. We have not to consider whether we wish, or do not wish to give these two half hours to God by thinking of him or his works. It is our duty; that is sufficient. It is God's Will.

Now, the meditation upon Our Blessed Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is the soundest, most solid devotion one can have. But we are not always, as we have said, near the Blessed Sacrament. We have pointed out another method by which we withdraw into God, into the solitude of the soul where we find God. The creature, prostrate before the Creator in adoration learns its own littleness as it vainly tried to fathom the immensity of God. But, there is that other simple meditation in which we view some work of God and praise and love him for its creation, and that is how Christian souls love to linger in contemplation – on God's Immaculate Conception. We look, admire and are entranced. We have found something which soothes our spirits, as we see these works of God's Spirit – the Virgin Mother and the Divine Child.

People of different beliefs wonder how the unlearned, as well as the learned, find such intense delight in the contemplation of the Immaculate Conception. They speak of it as "Mariolatry". I will not say with reverence with which they speak of some science, though it would be more logical if they spoke of it at least in the tone they speak of some science, which they do not understand themselves. And, as they do not, they logically conclude they cannot sneer at it. The one, who does not understand

the art of painting, nevertheless admires the man who does, and finds such delight in gazing upon a painting that his study of art has given him a knowledge of its beauty. The artist is well pleased to hear his work praised, its colour, its life, its depth etc. admired, and the Divine Artist is glorified when we praise his work. How admirable! We exclaim. How beautiful! And we think of all that God can do, all that we would wish him to do for one we loved.

Granted first the Immaculate Conception, and there is nothing too much for God to give to form a perfect work. For, as our minds have no idea of perfection, far, far beyond, God's mighty mind has projected and put forth the power of his right hand to perfect the Mother of his Son. And yet, people say it is difficult to meditate upon Our Lady.

We take a flight to the Holy House of Loretto. It is sunset. Most of the pilgrims have gone. A few devote souls remain, who cannot tear themselves away. Some are inhabitants of the place, and the monk in charge of the Holy House allows them to remain. He goes about his duty, he sweeps [and] dusts. He has come to the holy statue and, as he dusts, pours forth his meditation in loving aspirations. We hear that litany of Loretto as it was first composed. The simple monk contemplated God's works, which the image he is dusting represents. The All-holy God must be mirrored in the object of his love, and he calls upon her as "Holy Mary", and the worshippers that have remained hear him respond, "pray for us". Then, this "Holy Mary" – who is she? "Mother of God" he explains, and the voices echo "pray for us".

Night after night the faith and love of the monk's heart seems to overflow and some fresh epitaph of wondrous love come from his lips. "Mother most admirable!" It seems that he cannot exhaust his terms of endearment. He looks around the earth and finds the place of God's work in creation. Yes! She is the Mother of all – she is the refuge of sinners; she is the help of Christians.

But that is not sufficient for him. Higher, still soars the soul of the monk and he finds fresh grandeurs in that work of God – Mary! He looks upon her place in God's Church Triumphant, and his heart exults still more as he proclaims her "Queen of Angels", "Queen of Patriarchs", "Queen of Prophets" ... The hearts echo in unison with his as they cry out. As his voice sounds more exultant their cry grows stronger amid the "pray for us" still echoes on... Every night the litany of Loretto, composed in this simple way, is repeated, and thus is formed that prayer of praise of God's most perfect work which we make to the Divine Artist.

When at many times, not especially at that time when Our Dear Lord is exposed and gives us his benediction, we strive to please him in our poor little way... We praise him for his beautiful conception of Mary, as they who praise a work of art for its design, colour, or depth. We say what we can, though we know we never can say or praise or understand – as neither can we love his wondrous, his spotless Mother as he does himself – though he is pleased at our feeble attempt to know him through his work. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands" (Ps 19:1).

So we have wandered from one form of prayer to another. At times God makes it easy to pray, but we must still always bear it in mind that we must use our own endeavours. We must cultivate a spirit of prayer, for though in this our present fallen state, contact with the spiritual world is continually an effort. Yet, we are so formed that we are not really contented and at ease when we are not using our minds and hearts for the purpose for which God gave them – namely, to know and love himself. We weary, and the world is a waste when we neglect this practice; it is as the earth was before Adam and Eve. We reenter Paradise by prayer. We meet our God there and hold commune with him, not with the ease with which Adam and Eve unfallen, but still we do find him... At times his presence is passing sweet, and we catch a glimpse of what that far off Paradise must have been, and we, as it were, pluck flowers which had an odour and perfume when we return to the world, reminding us of our meeting with God.

The morning's meditation should be, as it were, a morning walk with God, and when we are weary during the day we can come and rest with Our Dear Lord, "and Jesus, being weary, sat down by the well" (Jn 4:6). We are weary and rest for a while, and we find again rest in the thought of God. The mind is employed on what it was created for. The heart finds its centre in loving the lawful object of its love, God. We have mentioned these things coolly and perhaps callously, but we could exclaim with holy... "who will give me..."

Yes! We wish to engrave in indelible letters upon the human heart that to be at peace it must love the Author of its existence, and the love of God comes from knowledge of him. To know him we must use our minds. Alas! There is one picture that has continued clear, that has never faded away in creation, but it is a sad picture. It is Adam and Eve after their fall, hiding themselves from God. They did not want then that old commune with God, that conversation with him. So we see in the present day, and man keeps away from the Creator, not only the bad, but the good; honest creatures of God feel afraid to face him. They have to be forced to go to the sacraments. They have to be entreated to listen to sermons. A good book is an effort to many, who are, nevertheless, not bad by any means, but this repugnance to meet their God once; one comes in contact within so many. It seems the same picture as Adam and Eve hiding themselves, which was the product of the Evil One in the beginning.

Would that we could bring back that vision of this world which God saw, and proclaiming it good blessed it. We are now so used to its present attitude, so accustomed to getting up people to church, to sermons, missions and the like, or to the sacraments, that the sadness of it is not always perceived by the active ones working in God's vineyard. Those in prayer (perhaps it is strange to say) realise the state of the world and really suffer in their soul, seeing indeed how God comes to his own, and they receive him not.

This little talk which we have had together, and it has really taken this form, will

urge you to seek God's company, abnormal state though it may seem. It is true; therefore, we cannot shut our eyes to it. If we are ourselves full of prayer we shall be able to shed a spirit of prayer around us.

CONFERENCE THIRTEEN

The sisters at Mass daily unite their sacrifice with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, in union with the spirit of Mary, and under her patronage, consecrate themselves to attend with maternal care upon the sick and dying... With this object [they] direct their whole religious life... In particular their assiduous prayer, their devout adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament, and their frequent offerings of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, and all their works of charity and their sacrifices to the end of imploring the Divine Mercy for the dying. Always in company with Mary at the foot of the cross, and as it were, taking with humility, simplicity her maternal office at the deathbeds of the faithful who are her children (Rule – Part 1, Chapter 1).

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do – do it with all thy might” (Ecc 9:10).

Sweet Jesus! How happy our work for thee makes our present suffering human life. Is it possible that anyone would do work for thee in a careless and indifferent manner? We shudder at what has been said – “That sister takes pains with what pleases herself.” We try to fathom the state of heart and soul of such a sister, but break down in the attempt. Why did she leave home and country to be a failure? To lose the merit of the great sacrifice by not living up to it?

May God help us. We are indeed poor creatures. We do little that is truly noble, honourable. We grovel upon the earth when we might rise with the eagle to sublime heights, and gaze upon thy works, becoming then less worldly, having less of earth and less of self. We look around sorrowfully at the half-hearted religious supposed to be walking the way of the blessed on earth. Is he saying to each, “Blessed art thou?” Ask yourself, dear sister.

Ah, my children, my children! Children of Our Lady, what is a sad retrospect there is for some? How different to those who first walked the way of Mary? We have quoted a passage from the first Chapter of the Rule, as we have often done before, but we must remind you of your obligation of offering your daily devotions, works and sufferings for the dying – even your life. Do you do this, I asked a young sister? “No,” she answered, “I do not feel good enough.” “But it is your Rule! You undertook to practise this devotion.” But a shake of the head shows a determination not to make this daily offering at Mass.

So, my children, there may be more parts of the Rule you may overlook, neglect for awhile, then find it difficult to pick up again. It is so easy to drift – so easy to relax. It is a good habit to constantly offer the acts you are performing directly, an offering most pleasing to God because it is an act of the Rule. Therefore, [it is] God's Will

and we cannot go higher in perfection than to aim at God's Holy Will in all things. This should be the pivot of our lives – ever seeking the Holy Will of God in all things.

Father Faber says in one of his most beautiful spiritual books that in these days we should almost need fresh spiritual books for Valetudinarians. But, how happy is the religious in that she can, when sick, continue her Rule of life in her illness in so many many ways – in fact, every act can be an act of the Rule since it can be an act of obedience to the living rule – her Superior. Moreover, no matter what Order she belongs to, she can always make her suffering profitable. If she belongs to a Teaching Order she can in a maternal spirit offer up her sufferings for the children she teaches. If a Missionary Order she can still follow her sisters in spirit and assist them by her prayers.

Need I point out again, that whether sick or well your place is at the gates of Holy Church. That no souls should pass through those portals of time into eternity for whom we have not prayed. All have this work, whether we are in the kitchen or the laundry, or in the sick room or on the sick bed ourselves. We must still keep to our post – the post that Holy Church has assigned to us that we may help the poor dying. We must be as sentinels faithful to death.

In reading our Rule, or having it explained to us, we may find we did not realise all that it requires of us. Then, no matter what stage of the religious life we have arrived at, we must set to work at once to acquire those points which we have hitherto neglected. I think many of you will find that the Rule says: “in union with the sacrifice of Mary at the foot of the cross where Jesus shed his Precious Blood for the salvation of the world” (Rule, Part1, Chap.1)... This has not been sufficiently thought of and practised, that you have not distinctly offered yourselves victims in union with the Great Victim for us all.

Now, you must commence at once. Tomorrow's Mass will find you offering to die that day for some sinner who is not prepared. Those who do make this act according to their Rule, looking it seriously in the face with the thought that some day God may take them at their word, saying to themselves: “I may die suddenly, I know not how, or when, or where – but I am to die to save some sinner from dying in mortal sin.”

O grand vocation God has given me, may I value it, and may I ever be “faithful to death.”

CONFERENCE FOURTEEN

It is a very true saying that the things we know best we often put the least in practice. We know that according to our Rule, the sisters of the Little Company of Mary have to live in harmony and in union with the Heart of Our Lady. That they have to form

one united body united in the heart and soul of their Mother, as it were, to reproduce Our Lady's life on earth. The Rule says: "the sisters seek to be moulded by Mary, so as to become the perfect likeness of her Maternal Heart, wishing for what it wishes and conforming themselves to her spirit."

Now, we must not take our Rule as something that is to be read and there it ends. We are to form ourselves upon it, and conform our lives to it. We are not to do as many people do with the catechism – learn it in youth and forget what it taught in after years. From the young novice to the old professed, the Rule must be studied and their lives formed upon it to the day of their death.

Thus, dear sisters, though you all know well that you are bound together to honour in a special manner the Heart of Mary? Are we daily meditating on this point of our Rule, and putting it in practise to the best of our abilities? Let us think a little more. Why do we so love the Heart of Our Lady? We love it first because it is pure [and] immaculate. We love I secondly because it is the heart of a virgin. We love it thirdly because it is the heart of a mother, and it is to this especially we are all bound together to honour – the Heart of Our Lady. We are specially bound to honour the Heart of Our Lady as Our Mother. You know, we so often tell you that our perfection consists in conformity with our state, that the various Orders are as various as the various flowers in God's garden, the Church. The Foundress of the Sisters of Marie Reparatrice [met] with some opposition even from people who were high in office in the Church... [She was] told that there were sufficient Orders in the Church, and that no more were needed. [She] went in her trouble to the one who was known in life, and would be known in death, as the father of his people, the loving warm-hearted Pius IX. He comforted her, as he comforted all who went to him, and blessing her said to her: "My child, they are wrong who say this – do I not love every fresh flower in my garden?"

No, dear sisters, we know different flowers need different positions. Some are placed in the sun, some need the shade. Now, we must recollect that we have to follow our vocation. We must form ourselves on our Rule, which tells us our special work and devotion is to honour, and to honour by imitation, Our Lady as a mother. Not necessarily as the Mother of Jesus, but more especially as the Mother of us, and we know the place where she was made our Mother – it was Calvary. There are other Orders devoted to other parts of Our Lady's life. Some may honour her as a Virgin in the Temple, some may honour her in the ineffable mystery of the Annunciation, in the Visitation, or any other portion of her lovely life, all of which was beautiful.

Let us make our meditations often upon it. Let those meditations ever turn upon how ours resemble it. I am not going to write much; I want you to meditate yourselves upon it. I have written enough and spoken enough, and my principal object now is simply to draw your attention to examine yourselves. How do your own hearts resemble mothers' hearts? Much more – how do they resemble the Mother Heart of Mary? Take each point, and principally love – that self-sacrificing, generous, patient, hopeful love that a good mother possesses, and then, looking upon Our Mother

Mary, see how this love extends to all mankind. How much we shall find to fill us with confusion! How shall we find that we never considered this in our daily work for souls? Have we worked with the love of a mother, with the patience of a mother, with the hope of a mother? Ah, it is here we give up. A mother ever hopes, and we, how soon we give up and lose hope – if we hoped more how much we should do? Look at the Canaanite's mother, how she hoped and persevered in her request, even though Our Lord seemed to repel her (cf. Mt 15:21-28). So must we hope and persevere and then much good shall we do.

What would have become of some of us if Our Lady had not hoped on and prayed for us, hoping against hope? Thus, as we view Our Sweet Mother Mary, hoping thus, praying from her Heart of hearts, persevering in prayer more than Abraham, the father of the faithful, who would implore pardon and mercy from God, even when God said to him: "Let me alone that I may punish." As this thought sinks into our minds in quiet meditation, we feel ourselves urged to imitate Our Sweet Mother.

We enter then into the spirit of our Rule, which tells us how our lives are to be spent in imitation of the Maternal Heart of Mary. May we pursue this study with unflagging vigour? May Our Sweet Mother come herself and live in us, inspiring us with her own sweet spirit and blessing our every step, our every thought, word and act, since they are performed in union with, and are but in harmony with the emanations of Mary's Sweet Heart.

CONFERENCE FIFTEEN

"Happy those sisters who force themselves to correspond with perfection to the grace of their vocation. Happy indeed those sisters, for they will render themselves thus more acceptable to God and to their Spouse, Jesus, and always more worthy of the affection of their Dear Mother Mary, and thus also will they enrich the diadem of glory, which is prepared for them in heaven."

Mark well the words, "the sisters will force themselves." Yes, "the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent alone bear it away" (Mt 11:12). We have to force ourselves onward to our way to Heaven. How then are we to force ourselves, we who have to save our own souls in saving others, we who are to carry others with us? We must use a holy violence with ourselves, with others, and this violence with others must be more example than words, and the result of this holy violence, this forcing ourselves up the narrow path – what will the result be? Heaven forever, for ourselves, for others. Use then daily greater and greater violence, strive more and more – do not relax. Do not idle precious moments, do not waste time, time so precious, since souls need you every moment of that time. God has made their salvation, in a certain measure, depend upon your good use of time.

And now, what are you to be doing to force yourself thus on, on to God, with your burden (the souls for whom you have given up your life)? What is the violence you

are to use? Is it to be in praying? No, not alone praying. That is one of your duties, but it is but a part. It is not alone the earnest prayer that will bring God's grace abundantly as you need it, to arrive at the perfection of your state, to do your duties well. No, you need to put your heart, your soul, your mind in all.

To do this is a strain upon human nature. It cannot be denied at times it needs a great effort, and this effort has to be used not only with ourselves, but with those under us, those of whom we have care. Oh, the force of the human will upon pliable souls, but for his force to be used well, there is necessary two things – firmness in those in office, docility in those under their care – respect in both.

Yes, the one who gives the force, the violence, the influence, however we call it, must do with energy, earnestness, firmness, and the subject to be influenced must be pliable, amenable to the good influence. Both must have for their end, God. Those who have the painful duty of exercising force upon the human will, those to whom the human wills of others have been made over by the free will of the owners, these have indeed need of grace. They indeed need to live in union with the Will of God, and then with the assurance of their conscience that they are fulfilling God's Will, they will be firm in their constraint, their severity over the wills of those under their care. And this is kindness. This is indeed love, true love, as at times we find the human will so strong that we feel impotent to move it. So, let us dread that those under our care, by using at liberty that will which they have once by a noble act put into subjection, let us not allow an infringement of obedience in the slightest particular. Let us not allow the will to wildly wander, idly speculate, carelessly direct the various movements of the body, but let us watch that all is in subjection all is religious... To do this, how great, how constant must be our efforts. But what happiness attends the brave one who, despite the temptations laid at her right hand and left by her enemies, by those who are busy all over the world plotting their evil plots, perseveres bravely, constantly daily, nay, hourly fighting the good fight... This good fight is fought in the small minute matters of the day.

Can we enter upon them here? No, it is not necessary. Over and over again have you been told of them. I am putting before you now the one thought necessary, of doing violence to your own will, your own inclinations, your own desires, and of also allowing those over you to exercise force, this constraint, if you would be true religious.

Being in the world and being in religion implies quite two different states, two different exercises of will. You have to think so much for yourself, to decide upon your line of conduct, so much, so much more difficult is your path – but, in religion you have to walk by the will of another, and that other, a creature like yourself. May God's Holy Spirit enlighten our minds upon the beauty of our state and how we may so walk in it as not to mar its beauty in God's sight.

The more beautiful a thing is the more easily often is it spoiled. Let us not soil our souls by our want of care, by carelessness about our daily duties, by want of prompt

exact obedience. Let us not think to ourselves – we cannot be ever on watch, we cannot be always thus on our guard; it is too much. No, no this is our tie; this is our bondage. In the observance of the smallest particulars we show we are true religious or imperfect ones. We show if we are really nailed to the cross with Jesus; we show our love for our God.

Ah, God! Take all. Take the produce of our hearts, our hands, our minds, all is too little to offer thee. Would that it were more, but the best it shall be, with the help of Our Mother. What we have we will give thee, and we will work, labour, love only for God. All around we will love, all for God; for all around will we labour, and all for God, whose voice whispered to us once “Leave what thou hast and come... follow me” (cf. Mk 10:21).

Behold. O God, we have left all things to follow thee. We await thy promise, spoken on the day that bound us to thee, that having left all things, we shall IF FAITHFUL possess eternal life with thee in Heaven.

CONFERENCE SIXTEEN : *The Spirit of the Little Company of Mary.*

Continuing this subject and the all-importance of watching to see that no foreign spirit creep in and tarnish or damage what is so precious, for without the proper spirit all our works are vain. We see there is a declension in spirit, and we have long sought to find the root, and having found some, we think, reasons for this decline of the beautiful spirit that should animate us. We hasten to speak to you who are in positions of trust to examine and see, if in that part of Our Lady’s domain entrusted to you within her Little Company there should be no abuse allowed, but promptly put down. So that may be said of Our Lady’s children, “never reformed, because never deformed.”

But we are told that we must crush the enemy in the bud, that after, remedies come too late. It is easier to correct a visible evil. The letter of the Rule, than the spirit, and it is easier to transgress in spirit without noticing it ourselves, or its being noticed by others, than to transgress the letter – we must know in doing that, that we are wrong.

It is easier to fail in keeping the spirit of our Rule than to fail in keeping the letter. The latter we cannot but know, but a foreign spirit can be so easily introduced, but, oh! With what difficulty is it to be got rid of! Now, certainly, we have traced from house to house an increasing evil and the result of it is making itself manifest. For we all sadly notice a decline in obedience, and a want of honour, that would be really death to such a work as ours, where sisters have to be trusted, and where they would rather do harm than good if they could not be so trusted.

The spirit of the early years and the simplicity with which sisters did their works for love of God, and were never threatened if they did not do this or that, what penance they should have, is fast dwindling. If sisters do their works well and are punctual etc. because they are afraid of getting into trouble, they are building their spiritual

edifice without foundation. The foundation of the religious edifice, and of all spirituality, is that we work in God's presence. That he sees us, that he indeed is with us, helping us to work... One of the worst evils of this forcing and pressure by means of threats is that, we get into the habit of doing things from fear rather than with the pure motive of the love of God... [This] engenders a habit of not acting in the presence of God, of putting creatures before him.

Oh, let us be honourable and noble and get out of our pettiness and mean ways! Let us both by word and example help all to keep up our spirit, so that God's work in the Little Company of Mary may never be frustrated. That he may look down with pleasure upon that garden of his Mother's he founded with such special predilection, having designed, as he walked this earth in his sacred manhood, that his Mother's Heart should be specially honoured amongst men. And when the fullness of time had come, he brought forth into his Church this work especially dear to his Heart. For Jesus is truly man as he is truly God, and what good man is there who does not love to honour, and see honoured his mother?

Now, if those, who are to make known the beauties of this Heart by acting according to its emanations, being animated by its instincts, reflecting it in their lives, in their conduct to one another, and their intercourse with the world, lost this spirit and introduced a foreign one – what harm will they not do? And how difficult to repair this harm, and therefore, those who have been placed in office...

We now have simply thrown out a few thoughts, dear sisters, to whom God has given that responsible task of being in his place to his children. I want you to continue the thoughts and work them out by constant examination. For your examen needs to be as much, or perhaps more, upon your office when you are placed over others, than upon yourselves and your interior life. 'Tis a trick of the Evil One to disturb your mind so that you should not have your thoughts free to be able to receive from God in peace, and give to God's children when you have received from him for them.

A soul, scrupulous, distracted, with a conflict going on within, is likely to be thoughtless and neglect most important points of their office, to misunderstand what is said to them from being taken up with their interior trials... We know not what harm we do when we are found by those under us making wrong statements, misunderstanding what has been said, and thinking they have given directions they have not given etc. We lose power immediately with those under us when they find we are making incorrect statements, and they do not believe when we are making correct ones. We have not time to see if the spirit of our Institute is progressing, in fact it may be retarding us, and we, preoccupied, may not be aware of it.

So with the present evil that appears to be creeping in. No one seems to have observed it, in various houses, or have noticed it to me. They certainly notice that there is a change in the novices and young sisters, but fail to find the root of the evil. If the root of the evil is in part discovered, we should be grateful, and most earnestly

seek to eradicate it. Reliable, trustworthy sisters will not be formed by being threatened and stormed at. We can be led to love to do our works, to lead noble lives for love of God, but we cannot be forced to it.

Another thing – those who are constantly reproached in a hard manner are not raised to respect themselves and their state, and a great many sisters need raising and refining. They may have been threatened in the world, and have acquired a habit thereby of working for the eye of man to see. How can they be stripped of this, which is so necessary? [How] taught to love in another atmosphere – a fresh groove of thought implanted in their minds, if they are treated in this worldly way? If we want to raise them to a higher range of thought, and let them be inspired with the great idea of their dignity as Spouse of Jesus, that they may strive to keep up to that dignity, show them great respect... [This] any tone bordering on contempt would be likely to injure.

Indignation is one thing – combined with gentleness, it does great good, but anything unmotherly must be avoided. Let all remember that their special Rule binds them to a particular maternity, an exemplification of this beautiful conception of God's mind. A mother is severe but there is no contemning her child, and the severity is an effect of her love, and has no disdain for it. Now again, I ask you to pray and meditate on the few thoughts presented... [I ask you] to be honest, acknowledging to yourself if you have wandered from the path, and if in word or manner you have diverged, as it is so easy to do from this important section of the Rule.

We always find something useful to remember by only a few minutes perusal of the Rule. Only the other day a new thought was presented to my mind where it said, "A Superior in her daily visits to the sick." This I had not noticed before. A Superior was expected to go daily to the sick. But, most certainly, the reading of the Rule shows the same beautiful spirit running all through, and to tamper with this spirit, to injure it would be an evil work, and one, we cannot too much dread. We are like a flock of sheep...

The letter indeed killeth, as we have so often said, but the spirit quickeneth. The spirit gives life. The spirit of everything is love, no matter what form it takes. We may have an ascetic spirit, a poor spirit, a spirit of labour. But, whatever spirit we have we have been led to it to please God, for love of God... If we thought that he desired another spirit from us, our love for him would induce us to strive to attain it. When the Apostles, fired with indignation, wished to draw down fire from Heaven to punish those who were faulty, the gentle voice of Jesus spoke saying, "You know not of what spirit you are" (cf. Lk 9:54-55).

Dear sisters, how often are we not like the Apostles, only we do know of what spirit we are. Plainly it is put from the beginning to the end of our Rule. Our spirit is the highest form of love known amongst men – a mother's love. The beautiful conception of God that he created in this world, and which is more like himself than aught else in the world. How carefully then should we guard this treasure God has

given us?

We bring forth fruit after our own kind – and what we are to do is to show a mother's love, a maternal care to all around – first in the convent, and then outside it... If we tamper with this, it is so Godlike, the most beautiful thing on earth, should we not indeed do an evil thing and a bitter thing? Let us not think that we do not need this reminder. We all need it, without exception, and I do not mean by this that we are not to be severe. Who is more so than a good mother? But how well the child knows that the severity is love.

Now we must all examine and make resolutions for the future. We have all failed, and we want to see exactly how, why, when and where that we may avoid it in the future. Grieved indeed would be we to introduce our nasty spirit in to what is so dear to God. God helping us, what has been in the past shall be rooted out, and our failures will only serve to make us more humble and on our guard in the future.

CONFERENCE SEVENTEEN

We strongly urge the necessity of visiting sisters' cases. The very thought that someone may be coming is good... Many suggestions may be made [by] a second sister visiting, who of course would never do so before the patient or their friends. One sister cannot too carefully preserve the name of another, and thus keep up the good name of the community... Whilst writing so many minute particulars, it comes into my mind – why is it necessary?

Ah, dear sisters, it would not be necessary if we were walking hand in hand with Jesus. He would remind us of the golden rule to “do unto others as we would they should do unto us” (Mt 7:12), and union with Jesus brings wisdom, and prudence, justice and fortitude. We avoid all excesses, temperate in word and speech, and with a chaste fear of offending God. Why do we not keep closer to God? It is because of venial sin. I have just received a little message from a little one, who has just been anointed. “Tell Mother I felt when I was anointed I was in Heaven.” This is the ordinary feeling of those who are anointed and why the soul is so purified.

So, when a young soul enters the religious life, for awhile they feel they have cast off all cares and trials, but it is only to learn that they have indeed taken upon themselves more responsibilities than they would ever have had in the world. For the acts of charity they might have performed, there would have been good works but not duties. Even a message not delivered may produce the most serious consequences. We know through a young sister not delivering a message a sad case occurred of someone dying without the sacraments. We know through carelessness putting out brandy instead of wine, there is no Mass.

This is one thing I most earnestly require to know. Can the novices and young sisters be trusted with a message? Do they promptly obey when they receive an order? In

late years in one or two places, I have noticed that in telling a sister to do something they seemed inclined to do something different first. Ask for a tray to be removed, and you will find a sister going to shut a window or something of that kind. Then again – the writing down [of] addresses, the taking of notes of different things you are told to do, is sadly relaxed. It seems to me that it is really laziness that has caused this, but the note book and pencil used to be in constant requisition, and now, when most people's memories are not improving, but deteriorating, we find sisters trusting in them, forgetting, and then declaring they never were told... It may even then go further and cause much uncharitableness --the one retorting to the other that she is not speaking the truth, that she knows very well she was told to do so... [This] of course, causes injured feelings in the mind of the other, who had entirely forgotten that she was even told, or had the order given her, which she certainly had had given to her, and had entirely forgotten.

This kind of thing is of constant occurrence and causing discord and disunion amongst hearts that should be as one. Anything that can be done to foster and increase mutual love should be earnestly tried, because without it, no house could please God. I do not mean to say that certain disagreements be called disunion, not at all – but I do want an increase of that mutual love which shows itself both in word and deed and that makes us pained, not angry. When a sister commits a fault another sister telling her of it will only make two faults. But a kind reminder, I cannot think, that sisters would rebel against. Occasionally we come across a sister who, wherever she goes, has the some complaint – the sisters are rude to her, and it is certainly true. Something in her seemed to have this power of bringing forth the worst qualities in those around. To her utter surprise, not long since, a novice was reported to me as having answered a professed sister “that she was not a machine”... Upon the professed sister rightly correcting her for it, said she would say it again! Now this novice had gone through in a most patient and edifying manner, and I was really surprised, and I wondered what there was in the sister who always produced this kind of thing?

On the other hand, you find sisters who bring out the best qualities in sisters, and this is a faculty to be prayed for and sought for and especially in a community where people of various characters and nations different bringing up etc. are thrown together... [They] must therefore, occasionally rug against one another, and very often, when a wound has been made, those who should pour oil, pour vinegar, and only cause pain and encourage the irritation.

Now we will look at the books – ordinary address book, sick casebooks, the confinement cases being in a separate book from the ordinary sick book, but both of them certainly private. I was very much displeased some time ago at hearing a gentleman being allowed to look through a book of confinement cases, and making a remark on certain friends, and the sister thought...

...that brave battle against the devil, the world, the flesh. Ah, how insidiously we are led off the battlefield. We carry our arms with us as we retreat, not only leave them

to ourselves. How cowardly we are, and then, by and by, we throw away our arms – they weary us, and we throw off the mask of self-deception, and unless some great grace reaches us, we are a spoilt work of God.

So, this is the word I want to impress upon you all – WATCH AND PRAY. It is more than ever necessary, for we read of many sad ages in the history of the world, but none like the present. We look through the life scenes that have been performed in the arenas of this earth. We see sinner and we see saint, but scarcely do we see the mixture of the sinner and the saint in one person as now.

We sometimes like not to think that it is the person at all, but rather some spirit that has temporally taken possession of the soul of its victim. My dear children, it is in kindness, it is in love that I warn you. Watch and pray and do penance, for the reign of terror is at hand nay, it has already commenced. It has been prophesied that Satan would appear in human form, and this prophecy struck horror into the hearts of those who heard it. What could it mean? Me thinks we see the mystery unravelled, as we see in the conduct of those whom we love and revere, behaviour so strange, that we are chilled to the heart's core, and wonder what can this mean. That person we think is a holy person. How can they behave in such an unseemly manner? Are they deluded? We are relieved as we think we have solved this problem. That certainly the Evil One has a strange power in this age, and we want to be well armed and to keep our arms bright, to fight with him and baffle his attacks... The only way is to keep very close to God and ask his assistance in this fearful fight, in which the enemy with such power is coming down, knowing that he has but a short time.

Be on your guard and watch the emanations of your hearts, for whilst your enemy is in the bud, you may crush him, but remember [other] remedies come too late. Yes, dear sisters, look at the emanations of your heart. What reigns there? The Spirit of God entirely, or do you allow another spirit to live there, as we are told, "in caverns of darkness whilst the rays of grace are bright in the soul."

Watch and pray and do penance, again and again...

CONFERENCE EIGHTEEN: *For Postulants Specially.*

I find many souls who enter religion that they may please dear Jesus, and grow beautiful by certain practices, are rather taken aback when they see what some of these practices are. If they were told to fast, watch, discipline themselves, they would not be surprised, but this is for the higher walks up the mountain of perfection, not the first steps. The first steps are more UN-learning than learning. Just as those going to climb a mountain divest themselves of some of their attire, and put on peculiar apparel fitted for the journey. Therefore, on entering in God's House to be formed into a certain work of beauty and loveliness that even in our present fallen state the human soul is capable of. The very first thing is to UNlearn the ways of he world.

In society what a thralldom we are under! Human respect rules with a rod of iron. We dread to do something not "*comme il faut*" and if discovered in some act that would expose us to ridicule, how ashamed we are. So, in entering religion the foundation we have to build upon is humility, truth, sincerity, simplicity – the simplicity of children who are so lovable in their absence of human respect, [not] thinking what will be thought. They are so attractive in their lovable ways as they play about, utterly unconscious of being watched, or seeking to attract notice.

But, besides this simplicity, we have to lay a groundwork of strength [and] fortitude. We must be able to bear hard things, to be meek under correction, to be reviled, and even rejoice when untrue things are said against us. All this is no light matter, but we have undertaken this work for love of Jesus, and nothing in this world will induce us to look back. We must make up our minds then, first, that we are to do what is repulsive to us; that we see no reason in that we even think useless and waste of time – but hereafter, we shall see how beneficial our novitiate exercises had been to us.

Let no false philosophy or human reasoning ever bias our minds against the great teachers of monastic discipline, those religious of the early ages of the Church; let us not think that what was good for them is not needed for us. Even the ancient philosophers knew that to acquire solid virtue, they must be able to bear hard things that they must be above public opinion. To use people's opinion of [them] as a guide to what is wrong or right, would be sure to lead [them] into some pitfall, therefore, they harden themselves.

Does the experience of the present day prove it? The novitiates of many communities are relaxed and many false sophisms are used. But in the old times, did we meet monks and nuns wandering about the world? A scandal, with broken vows, with inconceivable deceit and plausible excuse, why they left God's Sanctuary, or were expelled from it. Ah me, my children, at this moment of your entering into religion, lift up your hearts and souls to God and give him all he asks of you. Question not what it is – give. Consecrate your faculties of mind and body. My God, my mind I offer thee. Let it be crushed, humbled. Let it lie low. Let me ever remember how it has led thy people astray from thee, the Living Truth. My body also – it must labour, and let my labours be labours of love. All for thee, for thy love – pain of mind, shame, confusion may be that I may glorify thee forever. This body must do penance, and I offer willingly what thou shalt appoint, what thou shalt think well to assign me. Give me strength to fulfill what I have promised, what I hope one day to vow.

I am thine, my God – all thine. Nothing shall come to hinder fulfilling this compact with thee, for thou wilt not exact from me more than thou dost give me grace to bear. This, my hope, is laid up in my heart. In thee I place my trust, I shall never be confounded.