

CIRCULAR OF OUR VERY REVEREND MOTHER, AFTER THE GENERAL CHAPTER

Paris, September 30, 1854

My very dear Sisters,

In sending you the few regulations adapted in our General Chapter, I ask you to join our prayers, to thank the merciful God for all the graces received and the sisters He deigned to grant us during our chapter meetings. You will learn with pleasure that peace and charity have not ceased to reign among us, and that the sisters of our principal house have been as edified as they have been touched by the examples of regularity and all the religious virtues that your good local superiors have exemplified.

Let us therefore, our very dear Sisters, bless the triune God, and do all you can, I beseech you, to enter into the happy dispositions of union and charity. Love one another with sincere friendship, be gentle and considerate of one another; in a word, follow the touching advice given to us by our Good Father in his admirable letter inserted at the beginning of our Holy Rule. Penetrate well, my dearest sisters, all the sentiments recommended in this paternal letter: they are the same sentiments you had, no doubt, at the time you consecrated yourselves to God. If today you are obliged to admit that the religious spirit has been altered in you, do not be discouraged by this, but try to return to it. Be simple; abandon yourself, if unfortunately, you had that disastrous habit of examining the orders emanating from authority, of criticizing them perhaps, of comparing the permissions granted to you with those forgotten by others; all this is far removed from the spirit of simplicity with which you took your vows, and entirely opposed to your very temporal happiness. Return to feelings of trust in your superiors, of respect for their orders, of affection for their person, and never forget that they take the place of God, from whom all authority comes.

The Holy virtue of poverty also seems to me to have suffered serious damage in recent times. Since I am entirely convinced of your good will, my very dear Sisters, I have no doubt that a simple recommendation is not enough to remedy the evil and restore the good. Therefore, none of you will allow yourselves to ask for money from your parents any longer. Any money you may receive, from wherever it comes, you will hand over to your Superior without delay. I am far from believing, my dear Sisters, that you intended to violate your vow of poverty; I even know that you had obtained several permissions to do so in the past; but all these particularities, however, have a thousand disadvantages in the double aspect of poverty and obedience. Your religious spirit will do justice to this abuse; when you need something, you will simply ask your Superior: she will always give you everything you need; can the Spouse of a God born in a manger and died on a cross desire anything else?

You will not find it repulsive, either, my dear sisters, that I beg you not to do any more embroidery, and other fancy work, for your family. Your time belongs to the community. You need your recreation to relax. Therefore, unless you have special permission, you will never allow yourself to indulge in creating projects that are often more demanding than your responsibility. When you have occasions to gift your family, send small souvenirs to

your dear parents: nothing better than pious objects, such as crosses, medals, pictures, rosaries. This is what they will receive with pleasure from us; other gifts would edify them little; and believe me, my dear Sisters, we have no more severe judges than the people of the world; they take advantage of the weakness of certain religious, and share it among themselves. The more religious we are in everything, the happier we will be interiorly and respected exteriorly. So, you will not be surprised, my dear sisters, if I remind you here that enclosure is one of the essential points of our Rule, and that if we cannot observe this exact enclosure, given the difficulty of the times, it is a duty at least to imbue ourselves with its spirit. Thus, we must avoid all outings, all useless travel, all relations with strangers, which are not ordered by necessity or politeness. Many of our houses, I know, are too small, and it is necessary to go outside to find the fresh air and space that is lacking in the establishment. These places may be enjoyed when permissions are given, but always remember that our Rule prescribes enclosure, and remain as close as possible to its spirit. Fear relationships with the world, and consider good all that can help you to keep the spirit of your holy state, and therefore assure your salvation. Be all and everywhere devout observers of our Holy Rules.

All this may seem a little severe to you, my dearest sisters; but if for a moment you penetrate the depths of your conscience and reflect a little before God, will you not agree that I am not asking you for anything that you have not had the firm will to carry out by consecrating yourselves to the Divine Hearts? Courage, then, my dearest sisters, and believe that the happiness of a bride of Jesus Christ does not consist in flattering nature and receiving much, but in living, on the contrary, a supernatural and truly religious life. Your good superiors will see to your various needs; they know my affection and concern for you; their maternal kindness will know how to lighten what duty sometimes entails for you. For your part, you will strive to lighten, by the simplicity of your obedience and your good spirit, the heavy burden that we have to bear. In this way regularity, good order, religious spirit, peace, and charity will reign more and more among us. You will be happy in your holy state; the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, seeing in you the faithful imitators of the virtues of our venerated Founders, will recognize you for their children, and will pour upon our entire Congregation, and upon each of its members in particular, those precious blessings which will give us peace and happiness here on earth; heavenly joys and happiness in eternity.

It is in this hope, my dear Sisters, that I embrace you with all my heart and renew the assurance of my feelings of sincere affection.

Gabrielle Aymer de la Chevalerie
Superior General