

# THE SPIRIT OF MARY MACKILLOP

MOTHER MARY OF THE CROSS.

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## THE SPIRIT OF MOTHER MARY OF THE CROSS.

“God’s Will, the End of Life,” is the title of one of the most beautiful sermons of Cardinal [Blessed John Henry] Newman. As we seek for the dominating virtue of Mother Mary, we find immediately that the beacon of her life was the Will of God, that everything she did or said (and we might justly include everything she purposed, even in thought), was, under the directing force of God’s Will, revealed to Her in life’s happenings and in the ordinances of her lawful superiors. The Divine Master Himself thought it well to emphasis His own complete subservience to His Father’s Will: “Whatever is pleasing to my Father, that I do always.” (St John 8:29.) In proportion as we keep unswervingly to this attitude of mind, to this directing of our wills, so do we approximate to the command: “Be you all perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” (St. Matthew 5:48.)

An old Sister of St Joseph, who shared Mother Mary’s sorrows and trials, writes: “It seems to me that Mother Mary’s life, from the beginning of the Institute until her end, was one long martyrdom. Her endurance, both physical and mental, was very great. She was often treated unjustly, persecuted, and had to endure calumny and humiliations. This coming from those she loved made her feel it the more keenly. One time Mother Mary said: “When I am gone, our Congregation will flourish. I have made the way smooth for those who will come after me. I have had uphill work; but my sweet Jesus knew what was best for me, and I thank him for giving me something to suffer for His sake.”

### Firm in Her Resolve.

Thus, early in religious life – when she was barely 24 – Mary set before herself the fulfillment of God’s Will as the only motive that swayed her; and to the end she never faltered in her resolve to be guided ever by God’s Will. Thus we find that, when she was fighting the battle to keep the school’s free from Government help and interference, she wrote: “We know that He (God) will make His will known to His faithful servants who are troubled on your account, and perhaps, scandalized at what they do not understand of our spirit.”

At the time, many of the influential among the clergy objected to her refusing Government help, as Catholic resources were so meager. She was convinced that it was God’s Will that she should refuse Government help, that her teachers might be free to instruct the children in their Faith in a more complete way than the conditions of the Government help allowed.

That she was merely seeking to know God’s will is clear, from her accepting, without demur, the changes made at Rome in the original Constitutions touching on this very question of poverty.

Her circular letters are full of this seeking of the Will of God – indeed we may safely claim that it is the keynote to all of them. It was usually expressed in this form: “May God’s Holy Spirit direct all: that a pure intention of seeking His Glory in doing His Will may guide all – we must pray most earnestly.”

### God’s Will.

Often does the fulfilling of God’s Will demand real heroism of her: “I do indeed feel,” she writes, “such a grateful love of God when He denies me my natural desires – even when they sometimes seem best . . . I do so long to love God, and be grateful to Him when He denies me anything I expect.” In another letter we find: “At Mass, Communion prayers, and any duty I am engaged in, I can think of nothing but giving myself with my whole heart to the Will of God . . . and giving myself thus takes from me the power of even in the smallest thing repining at what He sends to myself or to those I love . . . . I am willing to be in darkness or suspense all my life, and to suffer eternal darkness in the next, provided I hate not my God there as well as serve Him so coldly here – anything, so long as the Will of God be done in me and in all my creatures . . . . It is only my own faults, my old coldness, that keep me back from Him, and yet, were the choice left to me, and I knew it to be His Will, I could ask Him to let me serve Him thus, as no other

suffering could be suffering to me with His Holy Will.”

When the news of the Holy Father’s troubles of 1870 reached Adelaide, Mother Mary exclaimed: “The Will of God is at work there too . . . God will be glorified.” When in 1871, she met with the outstanding cross of her own life, [Bishop Sheil’s hasty and ill-considered excommunication order,] she could write: “I do not know how to describe the feeling, but I was intensely happy, and felt nearer to God than I had ever felt before. The sensation of the calm, beautiful presence of God I shall never forget.” In 1872, after the death of Bishop Sheil [and his lifting of the excommunication], there were many sad happenings for the Church in South Australia. Mother Mary, in writing to Father Woods, said: “May God’s Holy ends be worked out in all these sad things.” Of herself she writes later in the same year: “Our good God sees that I must not have comfort, at least, not much, from those I know he loves; so I must go on praying that He may do what he pleases with me, and give me true comfort only in Himself in Heaven, and in His Will on earth.”

An old-Sister quotes from notes of Mother Mary’s spiritual conferences: “We have no will of our own, but must do and follow the path which is traced out for us . . . so God’s Holy Will, more of the Cross, and a long, weary life and rest only when he will go to Him.” When worried and anxious, in 1877, she wrote: “Let us do the Will of Him we love, and not by one wilful sigh wish for life or death, but as He pleases; so that no shadow of earthly will or self remain in hearts chosen by the God of Love for Himself.”

### **Trust in God.**

“Don’t be troubled about the future of the Institute; I am not. He Whose work it is will take care of it.” How this reflects those beautiful words of Holy Writ: “Cast your care upon the Lord, for He has care of you.” (Ps. 54:23) “Let us all resign ourselves into His hands, and pray that in all things He may guide us to do His Holy Will . . . . When thoughts of this or that come I turn to Him and say: ‘Only what you will, my God. Use me as You will’.”

We have quoted enough from Mother Mary’s writings to show that, in all life’s happenings, she placed herself entirely and exclusively in God’s hands. Sorrows and trials in abundance were her lot; yet she saw in them the shadow of God’s hands, lifted in blessing.

### **THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES – FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY.**

The Church looks especially to the theological virtues in the soul of one for whom we may, with every deference to the supreme authority of the Church, claim special holiness. Hence we proceed to deal with these as revealed in Mother Mary, though they are really essential elements in all virtues and are thus shown throughout every phase of Mother Mary’s life.

### **Her Great Faith.**

Faith involves seeing God’s hand in everything that happens. This was Mother Mary’s invariable habit of mind, arising from her deep conviction that God is over all. Thus she writes from Sydney in 1883, whither she was compelled to go, far from her beloved daughters in Adelaide, under a cloud, which was as heavy and distressing as it was undeserved: “We have much sorrow and are still suffering but sorrow or trial lovingly submitted to does not prevent our being happy; it rather purifies our happiness, and in doing so draws our hearts nearer to God. That such may be the same with all of us, my dear Sisters, I earnestly pray. I think we can all honestly admit that we wanted some external cross to make us among ourselves what true Sisters of St. Joseph and humble spouses of a suffering and most charitable God should be.”

“You must know, dear ones, how often Charity was thoughtlessly wounded, how often deviations from obedience in little matters were made, how often criticism and murmuring were indulged in. These and similar faults had to be corrected, and our good God has chosen His own way. It is but right that He should let the heaviest part of the Cross fall upon your Mother, who was so little able to be to you what the Mother-General of such an Institute should be. I am glad that it should be so, and oh, my dearly-loved Sisters, listen to me now, and if you do what I ask you, you will indeed be happy, and my sorrow shall not have been in vain.”

Yet, as must be expected, she at times had to make heroic efforts to bear patiently the heavy crosses which, as

Mother Mary of the Cross, she was to have all her life. An old Sister said: "Mother sometimes would be in a state of depression (desolation of spirit is frequent with holy souls). I would ask her to tell me what was troubling her. On one of these occasions she said: 'Alas, I see that I have not made the best use of the means so lovingly placed at my disposal. Too sadly forgetful of the end of my creation, I have turned God's gifts against Himself by my impatience under trial, my not recognizing His Will on every occasion, my disturbance of heart when those I loved seemed to turn against me'."

### **Her Virtue of Hope.**

It is almost needless to make of this a separate heading, as her whole life was saturated with this theological virtue. The many difficulties which she faced courageously throughout her whole life; the insistent references of the solution to them to the God Whose interests alone she had at heart; her prayers to Him, which breathed confidence in His help and guidance: all bespeak the possession of the supernatural habit of hope in a marked degree. "One of the most remarkable features in the character of Mother Mary was her self-control under all circumstances. Despite the trials of government, poverty, debt, persecution, she was always uncomplaining, even-tempered, and approachable. It was so much easier to admire these virtues than to explain them with justice." So writes one who knew her well. We can surely explain them as being the obvious possessions of one who was grounded solidly in the theological virtues of Faith, and Hope and Charity.

To a Sister who was lacking in courage she writes: "Oh, do have more courage under your little disappointments and trials; they are intended by your Divine Spouse to do your soul much good and lead you closer to Him . . . . . I know that out of all our hearts' troubles He will bring glory to Himself." And again: "God is all-powerful, and can do all things, but of ourselves we can never be sure of that all which looks good is really so . . . . ." "We are in the hands of the Holy See. Let's all remember this and let none be afraid." Thus she writes from Rome in 1874, while waiting for the decision on the rule.

Writing to Bishop Reynolds, Cardinal Simeoni, the Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, said: "Sister Mary conducted herself in Rome in such a manner as plainly to confirm the high opinion you expressed to us of her virtue." And as that meant Mother Mary had complete trust in Christ's Vicar, it again reveals how she had made her own the great virtue of hope in God.

### **Her Charity.**

True charity includes the love of God and the love of one's neighbour. Mother Mary's whole life was inspired, directed and controlled by the love of God. Her prayers, her writings, her advice to others are full of charity. Archbishop Vaughan dwelt especially on the charity of Christ in them, which found a way to meet the wants of the scattered population of the Australian bush, as it did to meet every want of suffering humanity, spiritual or temporal, as that want happened to arise.

An old Sister who knew her well said: "From the first I met Mother Mary, she greatly impressed me, for her manner was most lovable and courteous . . . . No matter how busy she was, she always found time to comfort all who came to her in difficulties and distress. Her love of the poor, especially poor children, was wonderful . . . . . When on visitation she found some Sisters badly off, sometimes bearing cold and hunger, the rain pouring into some of the rooms, Mother said: "Sisters, here I find you very good and happy, generously bearing your privations with a spirit of contentment.' But Mother quickly had things made more comfortable for them."

Another tells that Mother Mary's charity was in word and work right throughout her life. "I never knew her to be aware of trouble or distress that she did not make an effort to her relieve. Never did I hear her speak of or refer to the good that she had done for another; she did it solely for God. Mother's spirit was always to give place and preference to other Religious Orders, and this she embodied in her rule.

"When the Dominican Nuns came to Adelaide, she went to the Vicar-General and offered our convent in Franklin Street to them, while she went to reside in a little cottage in Gouger Street. And when the Sisters of Mercy came, Mother took them round our schools and offered any one of them to the new Order. They took the Russell Street School. Also Mother cheerfully gave the convent and school at Gawler to the Sisters of the Good Samaritan."

Another of the companions wrote: "Mother was always very charitable to her Sisters in hours of trial, as well as to outsiders. Sister Ita's mother was dying. Mother sent Sister Ita to look after her and to do whatever was necessary for her . . . . I was sent as a companion, and we stayed a week, as long as we were needed . . . . In the Mother House she was always most attentive to the sick; she would sit with them and help them in every way, besides doing whatever was necessary.

"I knew of some instances where Sisters laid aside their habits, through stress of trial or because of weak virtue and afterwards repented and applied to be received back into the Institute. If they had given no scandal by their defection, Mother Mary would receive them back with the consent of the Ordinary."

This same writer gives other instances like this one. No one can doubt that it was a great charity of Mother Mary to forgive such lapses, and to do all in her power to pour balm upon the wounds of the repentant ones. In this she surely shows that the love of God and of her neighbour was the directing influence of her life.

### **HER SPIRIT OF PRAYER.**

Mother Mary, who was so definitely the spiritual pupil of Father Woods, could scarcely avoid being a soul whose very life was that of prayer. One had but to glance through her spiritual writings to see that union with God in prayer is the keynote of them, just as the colourful sermons and spiritual exhortations of Father Woods reflect a soul soaked in prayer. That Mother Mary invariably was strengthened for her many staggering trials by God's grace, acquired in prayer, is abundantly evident. When word reached her that her mother had been drowned in the wreck of the *Ly-ee-Moon*, she immediately went to the Oratory and remained two hours before the Blessed Sacrament. Father O'Neill writes: "Mother Mary's love of prayer, her spirit of recollection, is praised by those that associated with her. Many have told us of her adoration occasions like the Holy Thursday Exposition as resembling ecstasy; her face seemed to beam with an unearthly light, her soul to have lost all consciousness of earthly surroundings."

It is in the colloquies, running like a golden thread through her book of meditations, that we get a glimpse at the richness of her union with God and her spirit of prayer. Thus, in the "Agony in the Garden", she cried out: "Still, prostrate in spirit, my soul, promising the agonizing Saviour, in this hour of lonely sorrow, that thou wilt try, with His Holy Grace, closely to imitate this holy resignation . . . My loving Redeemer, yes, I will, with Thy Holy Grace, at last to be true to Thee. I will no more cause Thee to suffer as I have done, and, O my Jesus, I will not sleep on in cruel forgetfulness of Thy deep, deep love for me and for the souls of men. I will now rouse myself, and in Thy Holy Name and that of Thy sweet Mother, try to lead all hearts to arise from the sleep of sin and watch for the love of Thee." This prayer is a consequence of the meditation on the Apostles sleeping when Our Lord was in His agony.

She reaches sublime heights in the meditations on the Crucifixion: "O mother of matchless love, and sweet Queen of Martyrs, look now with pity upon my sorrowing heart . . . . My heart is weary, and the sight of the injuries I have done to my God and to Thee would fill me with despair, but that I know thee to be a Mother, of compassion and pity . . . . Oh, my crucified God, behold me, the guilty cause of Thy most cruel death, oh, behold me now in true contrition of heart at the foot of Thy cross. See beneath thy mantle of compassion and love and tell my Jesus that no more will I cause him to suffer for my sins. I will hate and avoid them. I will mourn with thee, my Mother, over the wrongs they caused my Jesus; I will, indeed, love him now, and will show my love for Him by the undying confidence with which I will cling to thee, the sorrowing Mother of my crucified God."

Clearly a soul which could express itself so sublimely is a soul, immersed in God, living a life of prayer. She learnt well, from her director, Father Woods, to love Mary with an ardent love: "Mother, sweet Mother, oh, let us not ask in vain. We are thy children; we are in danger, weak, and ready to fall. We hold out our hands to thee. Oh, Mother, sweet Mother, forgiving, gentle Mother, thanks. We are in thine arms. Bless us, keep us there."

### **Devotion to St Joseph.**

She shows all the feeling of her heart in addressing her beloved patron, St Joseph: "God had chosen us to be placed in this Institute under the fostering care of His own dear Foster-Father. Ah, glorious saint, we are indeed favoured, and we have always been favoured. Even when many among us were almost strangers to my name, how little we thought that thou wert, with all a tender father's love, assisting the angels who had the charge of us, and

obtaining those graces for us which at last brought us safely into religion. Ah, what storms and dangers hast thou not, by thy constancy of heart, guided us through; and now that thou seest us here together, dost thou think that thy work is finished, and are we to believe that thou hast no more to do with us? Ah, no, most glorious Father; thou art still our father, and thy love for us, they poor, helpless children, is greater than ever . . . . We, in our turn, have thee as our guide and example in the pursuit of perfection. Thy humble and hidden life must be our model. We have to make ourselves perfect children of so perfect a Father, and we can do this only in imitating thy rare and hidden virtues.”

### **A Friend’s Impression.**

Father Francis Clune, C.P., told the writer that he learnt to know the spiritual life of Mother Mary well in the early years of this century. He assured us that, in his opinion, she had reached a high degree of sanctity. Never had he met a soul more solidly grounded in the love of God, or more Christ-like. Nothing seemed ever to disturb her calm. The most appalling happenings in no way shook her absolute conviction that all was for the best, as God ruled everything. Her confidence in prayer was a revelation. He knew her to spend six hours before the Blessed Sacrament after a particularly heavy cross came her way. She emerged from her long vigil before her Sacramental Lord in almost a cheerful frame of mind. She had so schooled herself trust in God’s loving care that she marveled that anyone could do otherwise. This gave her a remarkable stability and equability of temperament. Her life was ruled ever by the highest supernatural principles. When paralysed, she sometimes could not help dissolving in tears. Though she could not help it, and this weakness could in no sense be attributed to her conscious loss of control, she yet feared that the Sisters seeing her thus afflicted might be disedified. ‘She, the Mother Foundress, should give a better example’.”

Father Clune said that we must not omit to record her keen sense of humour. She was a genuine troubadour of the Lord, scattering joy whenever she went. Many’s the time she cheered up despondent Sisters. In this she imitated St. Ignatius Loyola, who once danced Spanish dances to drive away gloom from a despondent religious. This joy in the Lord is what St. Paul demanded: “Rejoice in the Lord always.” It is a sure sign that the joyous soul has cast all his care upon the Lord, Who has care of him.

### **United with God.**

The colloquies in meditation came naturally to this holy soul, and this is a sure sign that a soul thus favoured is closely knit to God. One would seek far before finding a prayer richer in theological truth and more indicative of union with God than her mediation on the Three Classes of Men. Passing to the Three Degrees of Humility of the Ignatian Exercises, she shows that she has, with God’s grace, reached the sublimest of them – the third degree.

“With this sweet exercise I had already determined to die rather than ever willingly offend God in any known matter, whether mortal or venial. But now I must not stop there. My Jesus wants more, and I have already determined, with the help of His grace; to give Him a perfect service, as perfect as my weakness and misery will allow. Thanks to Thy sweet love, for the grace also I desire, I long to come as near to Thee as I can. I feel ashamed of leading an easy, petted life. Thine was one of humiliation and self-denial. I long to share Thy sufferings, Thy humiliations. And, if it pleases Thee, I long to be despised by all the world for Thy sake. If Thou shouldst so favour me as to bring me nearer to Thee in sorrow and humiliation, I trust that, though nature may be tempted to rebel, Thy grace will prove stronger, and as it is in it that I put my trust, I fearlessly ask Thee again, my Jesus, to do with me what Thou pleasest. And I earnestly entreat my Immaculate Mother and dear Father St Joseph to plead for me that my past infidelities may not now deprive me of the joy and happiness of suffering as Thou, my Jesus, pleasest, through whom, and by what means, and under what circumstances, I care not. I make no conditions, I have no known reserves. If my heart should fail, if loved ones should turn against me, or if I have the pain of causing them sorrow, what matter, my Jesus, so there be no sin, and that we all, though, perhaps, working differently, seek Thee only, Thy Will and Thy good pleasure.”

### **Her Spiritual Life, Revealed in Retreats.**

Perhaps we shall more surely grasp Mother Mary’s spiritual life from the retreat notes lovingly preserved by one of her early companions, still living. Mother always began her meditations or examens with: “May Jesus and Mary be

praised! Let us place ourselves in the presence of our God, of Our God who created us, Our God Who redeemed us, Our God Who sanctified us. Let us bring to this great God all the powers of our minds, our memory, our understanding, our will. Let us humble ourselves before our God, in Whose presence we are not worthy to appear, our Great Creator. We dare not, of ourselves, so much as approach Thee, but, confiding in the merits of our Redeemer, we come to tell Thee that we wish to love Thee, that we wish to please and glorify Thee; we wish to serve Thee faithfully. But in order to do this, we desire to know ourselves, our complete nothingness, our entire dependence on Thee as our first beginning and our last end . . . . .

“O Jesus, Our Divine Model, now our Spouse, one day to be our Most Just Judge, may we never again willingly offend or disappoint Thy Sacred Heart in word, deed, or thought. Divine Spirit of Wisdom and Goodness, deign, I beseech Thee, to enlighten my mind, penetrate its blindness, guard it against the first, the faintest approach to anything sinful, to anything that can lessen its life of grace . . .

“O Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Blessed and Undivided Trinity, make me in all things what a child of the Institute and a Servant of the Cross ought to be.

“Mary, my Heavenly Mother, Mother of my Divine Spouse, Jesus, I kneel in spirit at thy feet, and entreat Thee to plead for me, that I may so act as to please thy Divine Son, and to merit His blessing and fresh grace. St Joseph, my loved patron, plead for me too. Sweet patron of the hidden life, obtain for me that I may walk in thy footsteps. Dear Angel, my faithful guide, point out to me my many faults, keep ever at my side.”

### **Resignation to God’s Will.**

There are revealed the highest aspirations after sanctity in prayers like this: “I resolve, with the help of thy grace, to die any kind of death, or to suffer any kind of pain, either of mind or body, or any other affliction that can befall me, sooner than for one moment commit a deliberate and known sin against God’s love, and the claims He has upon my duty and service. Hitherto I have sadly forgotten my great end, and allowed myself to go on in false security. Now I, with the Prodigal, will arise from my sluggishness; I will come back to Thee, my Eternal Father, restored to Thy love and friendship. I will seek, in the merits of my Saviour’s Passion, full pardon for the past, and such graces as Thou seest necessary for my fidelity in the future, and together with this fidelity, my advancement in the path Thou hast traced out for me.”

“I will not shrink from any cross or trial, but rather follow Him as closely as possible in the daily and hourly discharge of every duty of my state. If, now and then, some little sacrifice to nature is required, Oh then, my God, let me look up to Thee, and let my faint heart take courage. Let me not prove a coward in Thy service. Let me love to be humiliated and persecuted, and this that I may, during the remainder of this short life, remain as near to Thee, my Jesus, in the thickest of the strife, as in Thy Divine Wisdom Thou art pleased to permit.”

### **Help with God’s Grace.**

Her realization that God’s grace would enable her to triumph over human weakness runs like a theme throughout her prayers at time of retreat. In this she has learnt from St Paul: “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13.) “In my present position I am bound to guard Thy interests faithfully (she was then Mother-General), not only to follow Thee myself, but also to help bring all I can to Thee. Cost weak nature it will, I must be faithful to Thee, my Divine Master; but I must watch Thee well, and regulate my conduct by Thine. Help my weakness, O my Jesus. Help me, my sweet Jesus, with Thy grace, that I may be faithful in the hour of trial. Whatever crosses, trials, or contradictions await me, whatever humiliations or contempt, all are alike when, with the help of Thy grace, they will, I trust, all lead me nearer to Thee.”

Her striving after holiness is shown by such prayers as the following: “I shall not give Thee desires only, my Jesus; neither shall I give myself conditionally to Thee. With all my heart I give myself entirely and without any known reserve unto Thee and thy sweet service.”

“Not only do I wish to save my soul, but, if it be Thy Will, I wish to sanctify it, and this by any means Thou choosest to adopt for me. I have no wish other than to do those things and to follow the path, however rugged, Thou tracest out for me. Be thou my soul’s Physician. Cut, probe, treat me as Thou pleasest. Not trusting in my own

strength, not in my present resolution, but in Thy grace, do I make this offering. Dear Jesus, Thou hast every right to my perfect service. I deem it an honour above all honours to leave myself in Thy hands. And I confidently trust Thee for grace to be faithful.

### **Her Obedience to the Pope.**

Mother Mary instinctively looked to the Father of Christendom for light and guidance in her work. With her, a descendant of Highlanders, who had suffered for the Faith, and for their loyalty to the Vicar of Christ, the old slogan (“Roma locuta est, causa finita est” (“Rome has spoken, the case is finished”), was paramount.

In 1873, she undertook the long wearisome pilgrimage to the centre of Christendom, humbly to ask Christ’s Vicar for approval or disapproval of her work. She wrote to her mother: “I go in the discharge of a most sacred and important duty, and have much more to give me courage in this than I can tell you. I am not afraid of the difficulties; they rather make my courage rise. I shall be strengthened, too, by the prayers of my dear Sisters, and of many holy priests.” . . . . (She invariably put her trust in prayer – indeed, her whole life was one round of prayer, confident, as she was, that Our Lord’s promise, “Ask and you shall receive”, would be fulfilled.)

From Rome she wrote: “I had not a friend here when I left Adelaide . . . . I knew that our dear Lord would not let his work want a friend to advance His interests here, but Monsignor Kirby (Rector of the Irish College) is more than I dared expect. Cardinal Barnabo enquired minutely into many things connected with my voyage, spoke of my title ‘of the Cross’ and of its signification, and altogether, warmly encouraged me. He said that he was much pleased with our struggles, that we had struggled for things of which he highly approved . . . . On Sunday, the Feast of Pentecost, I had the happiness of seeing the Holy Father (Pius IX) and of obtaining a warm blessing from him for myself and my dear Sisters . . . . He let me see that the Pope had a father’s heart, and when he laid his loved hand upon my head, I felt more than I will attempt to say.”

### **Rome’s Decision.**

She had to remain in Europe for nearly a year before Rome’s decision was made known to her. There was a serene patience about her waiting which arose from her perfect confidence in the Holy Father’s judgment, which, as she knew, would be the expression of God’s Will. Had she been moved by any motive less spiritual, she would most assuredly have shown it in her correspondence at the time. There is not the slightest hint of anxiety or impatience. Clearly this complete casting of her care upon God, Who had care of her and her Sisters, contributed to her peace of mind during those long months of waiting. It was not till April 21, 1874, that she received from Cardinal Franchi, Minister of Propaganda, the following letter:

“Reverend Mother, - I forward to your maternity the plan of the new rules to be adopted by your Institute, according to the judgment of the learned Consultor of this Sacred Congregation, to whom was committed the examination of those Rules which you forwarded to me. In truth, the former rules, not having being in accordance with the end which the Sisters of St. Joseph have in view, could not have been approved by the Holy See . . . . In the meantime, I cannot abstain from praising the Sisters of St. Joseph for the good they hope to do in Australia, and for what they have already done in that great Colony.”

What is to be noted for our purpose is this: Mother Mary not only submitted joyfully to the radical changes in the old rule, made by Rome, but hurried to communicate what she called her good news to many Australian friends, whose feelings, as she trusted, would be in complete consonance with her own. Father O’Neill expressed the situation well when he wrote: “Mary had come to Rome to obtain the approval, as far as Rome saw good, of those old Constitutions. She had not been consulted as to the alteration of any of them. She awaited, from the hand of God, whatever Pontifical authority should determine respecting herself and her Institute. Now that an approval, together with serious alterations, had come, she welcomed the whole with abounding joy. She saw the young Institute blessed solemnly by the hand of the Church, and in a manner provisioned for a voyage through the centuries to come upon the waves of the world.”

### **Further Difficulties.**

Fortified by this approval of Rome, Mother Mary was to pursue her troubled way with unswerving confidence. Every new Religious Order must face difficulties. Hers were to be especially severe. Old friends, who had inspired and encouraged her, fell away, because the new rules did not meet with their approval; but they did meet with the approval of the Holy Father, and that was the only approval she appreciated. "Well dear Sisters," she wrote, "you find many changes; a new rule, in fact, drawn up . . . . We know, and fondly believe, that God inspired the idea of the Institute. He did this as he does also every good and holy thought which comes into our minds. But it does not follow that one's own peculiar ideas do not become mixed up with what is purely God's in the way of carrying a thing out. How many instances have we not had among ourselves and those dear to us of such a mistake being made! God is all-powerful and can do all things, but of ourselves we can never be sure that all which looks good is really so. We can never pronounce, with a certainty of being right; but when we submit our difficulty to the Holy See, we may be sure that we are right in following its light in the matter rather than our own, or that of anyone dear to us."

### **Loyalty to the Holy Father.**

Her love of the Holy Father was shown later, when the troubles in Rome were causing him grief and anxiety. She wrote thus to Monsignor Kirby: "I wish to express to you our very great sorrow at the continued troubles of our Holy Father. The saintly Pontiff is an object of admiration and astonishment even to his enemies. Oh, how I longed to give him some expression of the sorrow and love of this Institute! May I dare ask, kneeling in spirit at his venerated feet, for one more blessing from him for myself and Sisters? We have arranged to have a novena in all our convents and schools before the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, and this for our Holy Father's intention at that time."

Mother Mary received from Dr Grant, at the close of June, 1877, a letter which gave her great joy: "Now . . . I have only one thing to say, namely, that your conduct is thoroughly approved at Rome. Cardinal Franchi, who received your letter, has charged me to answer for him, and to say from him that what you are doing is well done, and that you shall have his support and encouragement in carrying out plans as to your Order, they being quite in conformity with what he thinks just and right, and for the best in all the circumstances."

### **Some Characteristic Sayings.**

#### *True Charity:*

"My own dear Sisters, do all you can to bear with one another and to love one another in God and for God. We must expect to receive crosses; we know that we give them. What poor, faulty nature finds hard to bear, the love of God and zeal in His service will make sweet and easy. Try always to be generous with God."

#### *The Institute God's Work:*

"Don't be troubled about the future of the Institute; I am not. He Whose work it is will take care of it. Let us all resign ourselves into His hands, and pray that in all things He may guide us to do His holy will. When thoughts of this or that will come, I turn to Him and say: 'Only what You will, my God. Use me as You will'."

#### *A Welcome to the Cross:*

My only anxiety is lest I should fall in a sorrow or humiliation He should put upon me. I cannot say with God's faithful servants that I love humiliations; but I know they are good for me, and if He sends them I hope I shall be grateful."

#### *Simple Obedience:*

"Beware of self mixing up with the work of God. Fear your own judgement; never let reasonings come between you and obedience."



*Respect for Priests:*

“I had rather a dagger were thrust into my heart than hear a word said amongst us against priests — the anointed of God.”

*All for God Only:*

“Let us do the will of Him we love, and not by one wilful sigh wish for life or death but as He pleases, and when He pleases; so that no shadow of earthly will or self remain in hearts chosen by the God of Love for Himself.”

**PRAYER.**

O God, who wills not that any soul should perish, but that all should be converted and live, grant, we beseech You, success to good work begun for Your Name by Your servant Mary of the Cross, and deign so to glorify her name before men that an increasing multitude of souls may by her means be brought to eternal salvation. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

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