

1. Because of Brother Charles of Jesus

To all who may be called to the community of the Little sisters of Jesus because of Brother Charles of Jesus

Little Sister,

You want to give your life to our Lord following the example of Brother Charles who was called the “*Little Brother of Jesus*” and who chose to call Jesus “*his beloved Brother and Lord.*” Perhaps you are wondering if our community really corresponds to your ideal and to the ideal of Brother Charles, whom you have chosen to lead you to the Lord.

“*Come and see,*” said Jesus to those he called. So you also, Little Sister, come and see.

We are not the only group inspired by Brother Charles of Jesus (Father de Foucauld). Another congregation already existed when we began and many other groups could follow. A new family is growing up, which the Lord has willed to answer new needs in a new century.

We chose Brother Charles of Jesus on purpose to be our father. He really is our founder, even if he died completely alone. In his suffering and solitude he was like Christ, and his death became a new seed of life.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest.” (Jn. 12:24).

Brother Charles did not found us through a written rule but rather

“by interceding prayer, self-sacrifice, dying, becoming holy - in short, by loving.” (Brother Charles of Jesus to Suzanne Perret, Dec. 15, 1904)



He alone is our founder, I am only trying to understand his thought and pass it on to you, looking more at the lessons of his life and of his death than at his rule. Brother Charles of Jesus cannot be confined or limited by a rule that he never actually lived himself, alone or with others.

In his first rule he spoke about strict enclosure, while he lived in the Sahara with only the desert as enclosure most of the time. In this rule he planned that the Sisters should be cloistered, leaving their monastery only to go from one community to another. He, on the

other hand, was above all a nomad, traveling all over the Sahara, going from tent to tent and showing us how to be totally available. He also left us an example of very generous and fraternal hospitality.

"The fraternity is a beehive from 5 to 9 a.m. and from 4 to 8 p.m...".

(Brother Charles of Jesus to Mme. De Bondy, July 12, 1902)

"I never stop meeting people and talking to them; slaves, poor people, soldiers, travellers, those who are ill or who come out of curiosity." (Ibid., August 29, 1902)

There was no limit to his love, and he was always ready to help or to listen to anyone without distinction. It is this love which I want to try to bring you to understand so that you can see if you can follow humbly after him.

2. Cry the Gospel with your life

Little Sister,

Do you really know what it means to follow Brother Charles of Jesus, 'the Universal Little Brother'? Like him, you must be prepared to love everyone throughout the world, making the salvation of all the work of your life - a work you will carry out above all by prayer and desire.

Do you realize just what this vocation demands and what its consequences are?

The Love of the Heart of Jesus was so great that it took in the whole world. To return this Love, you must be ready to go to the ends of the earth 'crying the Gospel' with your very life, rather than by your words.

'You ask me if I am ready to go elsewhere than to Beni-Abbes for the spreading of the Gospel. I am ready to go to the ends of the earth and to live till the last judgement.' (Brother Charles of Jesus, letter to Bishop Guerin, February 27, 1903)

To be a Saviour with Jesus and to 'cry his Gospel by your life,' you must be ready to leave your family, background, country, language, customs, way of thinking and all you hold dear. You will then be able to belong to those you have been sent to by making your own their language, customs, and even their mentality, however different from yours they may be.

You must become concretely one with your new people. Wanting to love is not enough, for you must become one with them in all the hard realities of life.

You will not always be understood. Your own people, your own race may hold it against you, saying you have deserted or betrayed them, and your new family, who you have chosen with so much love and loyalty, will find it difficult to believe in your sincerity.

To prepare yourself you will have to study, perhaps for years, the language, customs, religion and the authentic culture of the people God has chosen for you. And no one, absolutely no one, must be excluded from your love. You must not forget those who are the hardest to reach, in countries and also in situations that seem impenetrable or hostile.

Fear of failure or danger must never hold you back:

'... We must never hesitate to ask for the most dangerous posts, which call for the most sacrifice and self-denial. Leave honour to those who want it, but danger and suffering, let us ask for them always.' (Brother Charles of Jesus to Louis Massignon on the morning of his death, December 1, 1916)

You should choose to live among the poorest and most forgotten, where no one else would go » among nomads or other ignored or disregarded minorities. Look at the map of the world and see if you can find a handful of people scattered over a large territory and difficult to reach for those with a different form of apostolate. You must really choose to go there, otherwise no one else may ever come to tell them that Jesus loves them, that he suffered and died for them.

The Good Shepherd left the ninety-nine sheep to go after the one lost sheep.

So do not listen to those who tell you it is a waste of time to travel the world over looking for the lost sheep because there are huge numbers of people waiting for you elsewhere.

Christ died for the lost sheep. He paid for it with the price of his Blood.



In Alaska

'If there were only one Eskimo family far away, near the North Pole, and if it took two years to get there, I say to you, go to them, for they also have a right to redemption.' (Words of Pope Pius X) to a missionary)

This is in fact your vocation.

To live this vocation, you must be ready to do without and to follow Jesus,

'going where he would go in search of the lost sheep, the farthest away, the most forsaken brother of Jesus, the most disabled, the brother in the greatest spiritual need, in the deepest shadows of death,'

as Brother Charles wrote. Do not be afraid of all you will have to face in order to reach them: long, tiring and dangerous journeys and

'all that men may think, say or do against you.'

Have you realized what all this will mean in the way of physical suffering due to the change of climate, food or customs? You may also find spiritual disappointment, because you may never see the fruits of your labour. Most of the time you will sow and not reap; like Brother Charles of Jesus, perhaps you will never see a single person come to Christ because of you.

You will have to be able to accept insults and mistreatment. Do not be afraid of the difficulties and the sufferings inevitable in your life as an apostle. Be glad if you have the honour and joy of suffering, and of being disregarded and ill-treated for the love of your beloved Brother and Lord Jesus:

Then let us bless God and thank him for he gives us the grace of all graces, the favour of all favours, that of giving him proof of the greatest love.

'A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.' (John 15:13)

'It is the grace of all graces, the joy of all joys, the greatest joy that one can receive in this world and which will be followed immediately by the eternal joy of the other world.' Brother Charles of Jesus, meditation on Psalm 21 [22])

With this in mind you will not flee persecution and you must be prepared to die without putting up any resistance unless you are asked to do otherwise through obedience. You will give your life in union with Jesus' sacrifice as you offered it on the day of your religious profession.

3. Love for the people of Islam



Beni Abbes with a neighbour

Having spoken to you of the whole world, laid wide before you so that your love and your zeal may be without limit, we will then ask you to share the Fraternity's special consecration to the Moslems, your brothers and sisters of Islam. We will ask you this because of Brother Charles of Jesus. Though he wanted to be the 'Universal Little Brother' and to see fraternities spread all over the world, he chose to live among the people of Islam and he offered his life and death among them! Brother Charles of Jesus is your father and it is only right to share his consecration.

Perhaps you will not understand this immediately, for you may have felt called to give your life for another people whom you love particularly or maybe you are afraid that this will keep you from hearing the call of the

world as a whole. There is no need to be afraid. This special consecration will not put a limit on the universal scope of your zeal. Jesus, the Saviour, is your example. His Heart loves infinitely and without exception every human being, people of every walk of life, every nation, every race.

On the day of your religious profession you will offer your life united with Jesus, for the sake of the people of Islam and of the whole world. You will renew your offering every day at Mass, but this will not keep you from loving faithfully the people who have become yours by adoption. Jesus died to save all the people of the world, yet he too chose a certain people and lived, suffered and died among them.

This special consecration will be expressed not only by the formula of the Little Sisters' religious profession, but also by the presence of one fourth of their communities among Moslem people.

'I offer my life for the Tuaregs.' (Brother Charles of Jesus, Diary note, May 17, 1914)

Brother Charles gave his life in the land of Islam, and you must understand that he wanted his disciples to have the same love. **Algiers, working in a hospital** You must allow your faith and hope to grow, faith and love like that of the early Christian martyrs and apostles. Your love must be so strong that you will be able to give your life with joy united to the sacrifice of Christ on the altar, who died to redeem all peoples.

Your love must grow for these your brothers and sisters who still do not know Christ as saviour, just as it must grow for every person so that all may be united in Christ's plan for the world. And so by prayer and this daily offering of yourself you will be able to accomplish to the full your vocation.



4. Seeking the will of their Beloved Brother Jesus



Rome, Via Appia, In the footsteps of the martyrs

You will live in whole hearted obedience towards all those who share the authority of Christ in his Church and have responsibility over you. This will be one of the most serious and exacting points of your commitment. Think about it carefully before you start

off on a path where you will not be able to compromise or hold anything back.

Already by your vocation to religious life you are in God's hands and totally dependent on him. For a Little Sister this state of total dependency on God must be carried to the extreme. For Brother Charles of Jesus obedience meant

'the most perfect expression of self-surrender to Love,'

and throughout his writings he never tires of repeating the words Christ said to those he made his representatives on earth:

'Anyone who listens to you, listens to me.'(Luke 10:16)

Think it over carefully, because this form of obedience will often be one of the most difficult things that Love will ask of you. You will have to give up the possibility of organizing your own life and you will have to do something that you have probably never done so far: bend your will to that of another person whom you may consider neither very capable nor very holy. It is through her sharing in the authority of Christ present in his Church that the Will of God will be expressed for you.

For your obedience to be truly an act of love, you must obey intelligently and wholeheartedly. Try to understand what you have been asked to do, and do your best to meet the thought of those who make present the Lord's Will for you. That way you will be sure of doing the Will of your beloved Brother and Lord Jesus.

'There is no greater proof of love than to do the will of the one you love.' (Brother Charles of Jesus)

In a time when so many people want to dispute authority and decide for themselves, you must remain in the avant-garde and at the same time be childlike and docile towards the Church. You may hear others speaking disrespectfully about the representatives of the Church and taking lightly what they say. You, however, must be attentive to their words and have for the Holy Father and the hierarchy of the Church a love like that of a child for his father.

People around you may question the wisdom of certain Church directives. You must accept them humbly, loyally and with confidence because as quoted before, Jesus said,

'Anyone who listens to you listens to me.'

Only by such obedience will you be able to fulfil your vocation which is one of love.

'The more we are united to the Church, the more we are united to the Holy Spirit who animates her - the more we will love him whose Body she is, our beloved Lord Jesus.' (Rule of the Little Brothers)

Without this obedience, even your most lofty desires for holiness and love will come to nothing because they will lack a supernatural outlook.

'Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I say?'

(Luke 6:46)

Through obedience you will unite your will to the Will of our beloved Lord and remain in his Love and Friendship:

'You are my friends, if you do what I command you.' (John 15:14)

Like Christ you will sometimes have a struggle to conform your will to the Will of your Father in heaven. But if your love is real, you will have all the strength needed to say with Jesus:

'Father, Your Will be done, not mine.' (Luke 22:42}

5. Call to the lowest place

Are you really aware that to be a true follower of Brother Charles of Jesus, you must be a living witness of his thought and of his desire to be totally poor, humble and lowly? Like Brother Charles of Jesus, you will have to live as the poor do and among the poor, in line with the Gospel.



Prior Velho, Portugal Another reason for staying is that I can increase the feeling of worth that comes through work. Over the days, there are endless opportunities to say how worthwhile our work is, to thank colleagues, to encourage their good initiatives, to admire their skill or to resolve disputes. I seek to get them to formulate their thoughts, requests or proposals as a body, which I can then submit to the workplace committee or to the management. All these are also reflected in my prayers, either as

intercessions or in giving thanks to God.

In November I had the satisfying experience of leading a joint initiative by all the production workers (i. e. both manufacture and packaging, about thirty of us). Several of them had asked me to get the working hours changed, so that they could avoid road congestion and pick up the kids from school. We did a first survey and I saw the workshop foreman. As our request was rejected we did a second survey, then I saw the boss, there was a vote and we won. What pleased me was that I was acting for my mates; it was their initiative, and they

managed to find a working pattern which everyone could live with - which did not seem a very likely proposition at the start!

Three years ago, we delegates to the central workplace committee agreed to exercise our right to hire a chartered accountant to examine the company accounts with us. But the boss did all that was necessary, including threats and blackmail, to ensure that there was no majority agreement for this. My fellow delegates said to me, "It's all right for you, you don't have a family - we don't want to risk losing our jobs". This was hard to take.

Everything I go through at work makes me rather like the worker priests. When my mates discovered that I was a member of a religious order, the easiest way to explain what I was doing there was to mention the worker priests. And in fact, for the last 26 years I have been attending their regional meetings of the Nord/Pas de Calais region, as well as the national meetings. I find this gives me a good opportunity to deepen what I learn at work, or did previously when I didn't have a stable job. I do not work because I want to be a worker priest, but because I have chosen to be a Little Brother of Jesus. My vocation is to live fraternally with a small segment of the deprived urban population of the Lille region. That is why I live in a council flat and do a job at the bottom of the heap, so that I can live as the poor live, as far as possible on equal terms with them. So my primary concern at work is to live fraternally with my workmates. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of brothers and sisters.

When I meet the worker priests I am not the only religious, but I am often the only one who is not a priest. So what they say about ministry is of no direct concern to me, and I have no pastoral problem.

6. Little sisters 'of no importance at all'



Japan Wakkanai factory work

Kneeling before Pope Pius XII in 1944 we introduced ourselves officially as 'Little Sisters of no importance at all,' Little Sisters whom no one would even think of taking into consideration. We presented our Community as a working Congregation belonging to the social class of poor people and of ordinary manual workers, with no other aim than to follow our beloved Brother and Lord Jesus along the path of humility and

lowliness.

Our Constitutions and their commentary are full of paragraphs like these, all inspired by Brother Charles of Jesus:

- *Love poverty and abjection and desire them with all our might, so that like Jesus our beloved Brother and Lord, we may have the joy of being humiliated, ill-considered, and treated as worthless for him.*
- *Practise the virtue of poverty by taking the poverty and abjection of Jesus as our example. For love of us he chose the lowest place, was born in a stable, had no where to lay his head, died stripped of everything on a cross while soldiers cast lots for his clothes, and was buried in a borrowed tomb.*
- *Be happy each time we have to cut back on a necessity and suffer from poverty, which we will prefer to all the goods of the earth. We will rejoice much less over what we have than over what we lack.*
- *We should not possess dowries or investments or any other means that dispense us from living in the poverty of small craftsmen who eke out their living day by day as Jesus did.*
- *Esteem highly manual work, in union with Jesus the Divine Workman, Son of Mary and adoptive son of Joseph the carpenter.*
- *Love with special preference those who are humble and thought little of, remembering that the smallest act of kindness and love shown to the least of his brothers is addressed directly to Jesus. They are Jesus' suffering members, so always be very welcoming, full of respect and love and even more thoughtful and attentive to them.*
- *Share the life of poor people Live in the same kind of houses, eat the same kind of food, wear the same clothes, travel in the same class, receive the same hospital care, and be buried like them.*
- *Like Jesus who made himself last of all and the servant of all, do not let ourselves be waited on. Rather keep the most lowly and the most unattractive occupations for ourselves.*
- *Within the fraternities, we should always want to be less than the others. Be ready to accept humiliations without trying to find an excuse for our faults even if we are reproached unjustly, unless the honour of God or the cause of charity are directly at stake. Remember the meekness and humility of Jesus who was silent before his judges and had only prayers for his tormentors.*
- *Try to be humble in thought, word and action. Humble with the lowly as with the great, in the face of success as in the face of failure, on receiving praise as on receiving scorn. Always be very gentle and tolerant and avoid passing judgement on others.*
- *Through the virtue of poverty seek not so much the material hardships of exterior poverty as the lowliness of the humiliation and disregard that go with it, and deeper still, the self-dispossession of interior poverty, making us long to be more like Jesus each day.*

Do you realize when you have read these texts, just what your vocation requires? You will have to forget yourself; You will have to claim nothing as your own. Otherwise, instead of

living your vocation, you would just be admiring it as an ideal. You must follow through and be consistent, especially when you yourself are directly concerned.

Certain people form an idea about religious dignity. You, because of your vocation, will have to take a stand which does not correspond to their ideas, and this will be difficult, for these people may be among your close friends, among those whose advice you trusted. They will probably accuse you of foolishness, and like Christ you will sometimes be a cause of scandal.

And you will have to hold fast on account of your vocation!



Copiapo El Canelo

As a Little Sister of Brother Charles of Jesus, you are called to live a form of poverty which may not be that of others. In the name of Brother Charles, you will have to safeguard and defend your ideal from those who have not yet understood all the love contained in this desire for poverty and abjection, directly inspired by the mystery of Christ's Incarnation and Passion. You will have to hold your ground because you have chosen to give your life among the poorest and the most forsaken. How would you be able to be understanding and loving if you did not share a little in their sufferings and in their poverty? How could you bear to live in ease

and comfort, lacking nothing, while they lack everything, and not be the least bit disturbed by their condition?

You will have to hold fast, and you will hold fast if you keep your eyes on your One and Only Model, Jesus the workman, Son of Mary and son of the carpenter Joseph. Jesus who was born, lived and died in the most abject conditions, who so completely chose the lowest place that no one has ever been able to take it from him; Jesus destined to be despised by the authorities, the Pharisees, the priests and rulers of the people. Jesus who was a scandal for the Jews and folly for the Gentiles.

Do you want to follow him as far as that?

7. This is my will and testament



1942 Little sister Magdeleine gives talks all over France

You may ask yourself why I have called this chapter my testament. It is because everything I have written up until now is inspired entirely by Brother Charles of Jesus. It is his thought and soul in all their purity, and as such, his testament that I have passed on to you. It is not mine. What follows is mine. I alone am responsible. The glory belongs to God for whatever is good in what I have said, and for whatever is wrong only I am to blame.

I have put all my heart into this work, and I am passing it on to you just as it is, in a simple clumsy way, as a mother who wants to pass on message to her

daughters.

I ask all those who may read these pages not to think that I am in the least way criticizing other forms of religious life, which for centuries have produced saints in the Church. This is just a different conception of religious life that is trying to answer the needs of our times. And that is why I am calling this my will and testament, submitting very humbly what may come of it to the authorities of the Church, of whom I wish to remain more than ever, a most loving and obedient daughter. Therefore I must ask all those who are drawn by the ideal of our community to follow after me, and to continue faithfully along this path.

8. As Leaven in the Dough

Little Sister,



Rwanda ,Working with neighbours in the fields

Do you understand what it means for a religious to have been called to live poor among the poor, leading an everyday life at the heart of the world, and to live it as “leaven in the dough?”

Until now it seemed as if religious life could not be lived in this way, because it was too different from the traditional idea that people have. But because I have been entrusted with founding a new congregation

to be called the Little Sisters of Jesus, I who am the least important and the last of all would say to you:

You have only One Model: Jesus Do not look for another.

Like Jesus during his life on earth, make yourself all things to all people an Arab in the midst of Arabs, a nomad among nomads, a worker among working people, but above all be human among your brothers and sisters. Do not think that living among people will hinder your life of union with God. Do not set up barriers between the world and yourself; do not think that as a religious you have a special dignity to safeguard.

Immerse yourself deeply among people by sharing their life, by friendship and by love. Give yourself to them completely, like Jesus who came to serve and not to be served; you, too, become one with them. Then you will be like leaven which must lose itself in the dough to make it rise.

9. Before being a religious, be human and a Christian



In Nigeria

And I would go even farther and say:

Before being religious, be human and Christian in all the strength and beauty of these terms. Christ was true God and true man, so do not be afraid of being human; for the more you are totally human, the more you be able to give glory to the Father, who is glorified in his creatures. Then your religious life will grow and develop on a solid,

well-balanced and normal basis.

And if I am so sure of what I say, in spite of the fact that such a form of religious life may seem rather daring, it is only because this life is in conformity with the Gospel and the Tradition of the Church, as St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians:

Though I am not the slave of any man, I have made myself the slave of everyone so as to win as many as I could. I made myself a Jew, to win the Jews. I made myself a subject to the Law, to win those who are subjects to the Law. To those who have no Law, I was free of the Law myself, to win those who have no Law For the weak I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save all. I still do this, for the sake of the Gospel, to have a share in its blessings. (1 Cor 9:19-24).

The reason why I insist on this so much is that Jesus, our one and only Model, God Incarnate, made himself one of us, making it his delight to dwell among the children of men. Jesus, although he was divine, exalted our human nature by taking on our humanity.

And yet, what an abyss between God and man. And if God took on a human form in spite of this abyss, did he not mean his humanity to serve as an example for us? Do we think that we could do better than our divine model, Jesus: Jesus, Son of Mary and foster son of the carpenter Joseph, Jesus at Bethlehem, Jesus the workman at Nazareth, Jesus going about Palestine, Jesus during his Passion, accepting out of love to die on a cross before a crowd that mocked him with jeers and insults?

You will have to know how to defend this high ideal. And above all, help those you live among to understand it, for you will sometimes be a sign of contradiction.

Help others to understand that we are all united in the love of the Lord as members of one body, and that this love can be expressed in many different ways and can allow for many different forms of religious life.

As a Little sister of Jesus, you must always subordinate the external rules of your religious life to living the Gospel. Your vocation will tell you to put charity above all rules, for it is the fundamental rule, the greatest commandment of Jesus.

The reason for keeping a minimum of enclosure and for observing silence is for you to keep closely united to Jesus. It is to make you grow in his love, and not to set you apart from his brothers and sisters, who are your brothers and sisters too. Often you will have to be ready to break the silence you have grown to love so as to receive someone who comes to knock at your door, no matter how inconvenient or unrewarding his visit may seem to you. In every person you welcome, you welcome Jesus.

10. The human virtues

Working on a Fairground in France

You must not set yourself apart from other people, thinking that this is how a religious must live. You will imitate Jesus, the perfect example for all human beings. Accept the hospitality of your neighbours in all simplicity, share their meals and rejoice with them. Through your respectful and kindly friendship the beauty and joy of a Christian life and a religious life will become familiar and alive.



And maybe some people will criticize you as they criticized Jesus for eating with known sinners and publicans, for becoming one with the masses, for letting yourself be bothered by children.

You may be criticized for lacking religious dignity, but do not let that worry you.

'No pupil is greater than his teacher; but every pupil when he has completed his training, will be like his teacher.' (Lk. 6:40)

'I have set an example for you so that you will do just what I have done for you.' (Jn. 13:15)



In India

You will not only cultivate the virtues of religious life - poverty, chastity and obedience - but will graft these onto the human virtues, which you must develop to the fullest for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became a man. Your religious virtues would be unnatural if they were not based on solid human virtues.

Try to develop the human qualities of daring, courage, and vigor, and do away with the human defects of timidity and fear.

In the same way, do your best to root out the feminine defects of being too sensitive and too imaginative. On the other hand, be careful not to destroy the feminine qualities of gentleness and dedication, of knowing how to give yourself in complete self-forgetfulness.

To be a little sister you must develop good common sense, sound judgment, prudence and fairness. Practicing these qualities will help you to avoid all false ideas concerning charity. A religious formation like this should help you to be responsible, to have a sense of duty, and to be conscientious in your work - requirements that are essential to everyday life.

Your desire to become little and to remain in the background, to be lowly and humble would be an illusion if it prevented you from being open minded and truly understanding, and thus giving glory to God. Be careful not to be mean and petty; do not be too easily scandalized over unimportant things. Above all avoid being stiff or formal and acting like a Pharisee. Never be narrow minded for this can ruin true love.

Do not try to avoid difficulties and do not be afraid of danger or temptations They are a part of your vocation as way-maker.

On the other hand, do not be too passive, for you could deceive yourself into believing that you have surrendered yourself entirely to Providence simply because you are willing to do as someone else says without having to think for yourself. On the contrary you must develop your will to the maximum, and you will see that by uniting your will to the divine will of Jesus, the Master of the Impossible, you can go very far, counting on his all-powerfulness to make you strong and courageous.

With the boldness of a faith capable of moving mountains you will believe that united to Jesus you can overcome the most difficult obstacles. Then words such as impossible, worry, fear or danger will no longer have meaning for you.

'One thing we owe completely to our Lord is never to be afraid of anything.' (Br. Charles of Jesus)

And you will remind yourself constantly that what is folly in the eyes of others is very often wisdom in the eyes of God.

In moments of discouragement and weariness you must again exercise patience and perseverance, telling yourself over and over again:

'When you start out to do something, do not come back until you have done it.' (Br. Charles of Jesus to his sister)

11. Love and Friendship



In Austria

You will never be asked to keep your eyes lowered in the name of religious reserve, but instead keep them wide open so as to see very clearly the suffering and misery of the world, as well as the beauty of life and of the entire universe. Do not go around looking serious and austere, and likewise do not be too easily offended or put off by little things. Instead, try to be loving and

friendly, with a sense of humor and a spirit of cheerfulness, so that your joy may bear witness to the one who is the Author of all joys, the Source of all goodness. For the love of him you will manage to keep smiling in spite of difficulties and weariness which are a part of everyday life.

You will not be asked to give up your love for your family and friends. Rather you will be reminded that the fourth commandment is natural law as well as divine law, and no rule in religious life could replace or abolish it. Only your love for Jesus can be greater than the love you owe your parents.

You will also be told that pure and upright friendship is too beautiful to be diminished or destroyed. Rather your friendship with others must grow, by being constantly transformed and

purified in the love of Christ, who by becoming man has shown us the perfect ideal of friendship. In his name you will be told to have a great desire for universal friendship. A friendship that goes out to every person in the world, simply so that you may show your love, and not because you expect something in return, even in the way of apostolic satisfaction.

Under the pretext of humility, you will not be asked to stop thinking and acting for yourself, to stifle your personality, or to deny or hide your talents. Humility is truth, and a talent is above all a gift from God that he has entrusted to you so that you can make it grow and bear fruit. You are not the author of your talents so why be boastful? Do not dishonor the Lord by slighting the gift he has given you or by burying your talents, Instead, do your best to make them bear fruit to the fullest, for the glory of the Lord Jesus who gave you these talents. Develop your sense of responsibility, then submit it totally but intelligently to religious obedience. Develop your personality to the fullest, but only for the service of Christ. God does not give the same vocation, the same grace or enlightenment to everyone. You are not asked to be like anyone else. So try to discern your personal orientation in order to make it grow within the framework of the vocation common to all the Little Sisters of Jesus.

12. The Vows



Tre Fontane, formation time

You will often be told that your religious vocation and your vows are to consecrate you more completely to all the members of Christ's Mystical Body. They are not to separate you from your brothers and sisters and his, or to make you believe that you are someone exceptional. Under no pretext whatever must your religious life be an obstacle to your love for all.

Your vow of obedience must in no way lessen your responsibility or exempt you from taking certain initiatives. Such an attitude is of greater merit sometimes than taking refuge in passive obedience. However, your vow of obedience will liberate you from yourself and from the ties of your selfishness and the desire to do your own will, and it will make you completely free for the service of the Lord.

Your vow of chastity must not cause you to turn in on yourself in a self-centered pursuit of personal perfection. It must not lead you to become cold and distant, but will help you to be all the more open so as to love each person in the world with an even greater love. For the

more you love Jesus, your beloved Brother and Lord, the more you will love your brothers and sisters.

Your vow of poverty is never to limit the love you must have for everyone and it should mean privations only for you. Freed from all personal anxieties and worries, you will be ready to help all the people whom by the Lord's Providence you may meet.

If you want to give your life to the fullest, do as your one and only Model, Jesus in the Gospel - Jesus who on earth wanted to be just a common laborer lost among others - divine leaven in the human dough.

So then, if you want to follow this way, a way Jesus traced, you may not always be understood, and sometimes it will be difficult to keep on going.

It will be difficult because this way, more than others, is full of dangers and hardships. If it frightens or upsets you, maybe that is a sign that you are made for a more structured and regular life where you are less openly exposed to temptations or difficulties. This way can be dangerous because you will find no safeguards to protect you and to guarantee your security in all situations and circumstances. To replace such safeguards you will need sound training. Your intelligence must be enlightened, your judgment sound, and your heart and will strong. And above all, you will need boundless love.

And to keep you from going off the track, you will have as a reminder everything that this beautiful ideal of Brother Charles of Jesus can mean for you. Following him, your strongest protection will be your desire for the lowest place and all that your contemplative life will ask of you personally. Above all you will have the requirements of your vocation which is one of love.

And then, you will hold fast, your eyes fixed on your one and only Model Jesus, Jesus the perfect example of the human and of the divine!

13. Contemplative Vocation in everyday life



Vietnam Hochiminville

You must bring your Contemplative Vocation into the midst of the everyday life of ordinary people.

Are you fully aware that despite the outer appearances of leading

an apostolic life, you must be a true contemplative? Your contemplative life will have to be all the more luminous and fruitful, precisely because you have chosen to be plunged in the activity of everyday life like leaven in the dough.

It takes well-prepared leaven to keep its strength when it comes into contact with the dough, and to make it rise. And so, in order that you may be kneaded deeply into the midst of mankind without imprudence, you will have to be filled to overflowing with Christ. He will be the leaven, working through you.

In order that the fraternities may always be open and welcoming without this being a drawback but rather an advantage, they must be homes radiant with prayer and love, simplicity and peace, gentleness and joy. Your homes must be like the house of Nazareth, with Jesus living among you. Through prayer and love, Jesus must so fill your heart and your soul that others may see him and find him through you.

Hospitality and charity are vital duties for you, and keeping to the observances of your daily community life and the rule of silence must be subordinate to them. But you must know how to keep interior silence and how to practice interior prayer in the midst of all that is going on around you. Otherwise you would go adrift, and you would no longer be lovingly united with Jesus in all you do. Then too you will have to know how to come back with joy to outer silence whenever the Lord's will does not call you to another duty.

14. Jesus the greatest contemplative



Poland, at work

The spiritual dangers of a vocation plunged into the everyday life of people around you are many. Such a vocation calls for a very deep interior life, a very deep fellowship with Jesus.

It is a contemplative vocation. Brother Charles of Jesus, your father, was a great man of prayer. If you were made for action only and did not have this contemplative vocation, you would not be able to live up to all that he asks of

you.

Contemplatives in the midst of the world, daring to say that their contemplative life can be lived to the full in the crowded cities or on the highways as well as in a monastery. Some people are surprised at this, but think of Jesus, the greatest contemplative of all, think of his hidden life at Bethlehem and Nazareth, of his public life on the roads. Jesus retired into the desert for only 40 days far from the crowds while he live 33 years among his people, simply as one of them He was God, that is true but he became man to show us the way. We cannot go wrong if we follow Jesus and seek to imitate him:

I have set an example for you so that you will do just what I have done for you. (Jn 13:15)

15. The essence of prayer

Afghanistan

Do not these words “contemplative” and “contemplative vocation” frighten you. Do not picture an exceptional vocation so high that most people can never come near it.

Brother Charles of Jesus tells you what it means. It is a completely simple, trusting and loving attitude of someone talking intimately with Jesus. It is the affection of a little child for his father, the confident sharing of a friend with a friend:

When we love someone, we want to speak to him endlessly. Prayer is nothing else: a familiar conversation with our Beloved. We gaze at him, we tell him we love him, we rejoice to be at his feet. (Brother Charles of Jesus)

Praising God means to lose ourselves at his feet in words of admiration and love. It means to tell him in all the ways we know that he is infinitely perfect, infinitely worthy of love. It means to tell him over and over again and never to stop saying that he is beautiful and that we love him. (Ibid.)

This is the essence of prayer and the meaning of contemplation.

As you work, as you come and go, as you pass among the crowds, to be a contemplative will mean simply that you try to turn to Jesus within you and to enter into conversation with him, as with the one you love most in the world:

May God be the King of our thoughts, the Lord of our thoughts. May the thought of him never leave us, and so everything we say or do or think will be for him and will be guided by his love. (Brother Charles)

Then you will not lose your way in the midst of the world's activity:

When you love, you do not lose sight of the one you love. When you love you think of only one thing, the one you love. You worry about only one thing, the good of the one you love and possessing him. When you love, only one thing exists, the one you love. When someone loves God, can there be room in his heart for material cares and worries? To pray is to think of Jesus and love him. The more you love him, the better you pray. (Ibid.)

16. The Eucharist and the Gospel



In Egypt

But a contemplative life like this requires a training.

You will become a contemplative through your life of adoration, “*the most complete expression of perfect love.*” It will be a life of prayer entirely centered on Jesus living and present in the Eucharist and the Gospel. You will become contemplative through your eucharistic life. Trying to make your days one long thanksgiving. Only the limit of your love

will put a limit to your communion with the Lord.

Holy Communion will be your way of participating fully in the eucharistic sacrifice. There you will draw your daily strength and fervour. The sacrifice of the Mass will give you the means to join the prayer and work and suffering of your day to the redeeming Passion of the Savior.

You will go to the Sacrament of Penance as you would go to Christ. Courageously you will bring him all of your shortcomings and your failings, knowing in faith that through Jesus' Blood you will receive not only the pardon of your sins but the grace of Redemption which is the source of life and holiness.

Your treasure will be the Gospel. It is the Book of Life and contains the science of Love. Let it penetrate your mind and heart so that your life itself will preach the Gospel and you may become a Gospel in action.

You will make your community another Nazareth with the tabernacle for its center, where Jesus is present in the Eucharist. What joy it will be to go to Jesus often and receive from him his charity and his life. Then you will be a channel through which he reaches others.

This is the way to accomplish the mission Brother Charles has given you. This is how to make the communities howt he wanted them to be:

Little families so burning with the love of the heart of Jesus that the fire Jesus brought to earth is kindled... Zaouias of prayer and hospitality radiant with such love of the Lord that the community is lighted and warmed... A little family imitating so perfectly the virtues of Jesus that all those around will come to love Jesus too. (Brother Charles of Jesus to Henri de Castries, March 12, 1902).

17. One Model, Jesus Love



You will have only One model Jesus, Jesus-Caritas Jesus-Love

Offering your life in self-sacrifice for the world's redemption - stripping yourself of everything in total poverty - leading a life plunged in the midst of mankind like leaven in the dough - a contemplative life in the midst of the world. All these are means for making your vocation as a little sister of Jesus a reality.

But to give your vocation all its meaning and to unify all its aspects, you will need to live to the fullest the motto that was so dear to Brother Charles of Jesus. It sums up everything: Jesus-Caritas - Jesus-Love.

It will simplify and bring light to your whole life.

The way that Little Brother Charles of Jesus leads us is not new, unless we think that to follow Jesus as he did is something new. He chose One Model: Jesus. He had one leader, one Master only: Jesus. He will tell you to have but one thought, one Love, one desire: Jesus. He will tell you that only one thing is necessary: to love Jesus.

He will tell you to “*walk with your feet in his footprints*”, “*your hand in his hand*” - to “*live his life*” - “*lovingly to reproduce his likeness.*” He will ask you by the grace of God you let yourself be so penetrated by Jesus’ Spirit that “you think his thoughts, speak his words, do as he did; in short that you disappear so that through you he may speak and act with his own Heart and Will.”

Brother Charles will teach you all the virtues, but always with reference to Jesus so that you may become more and more like him.

When he speaks to you of obedience, he will ask you to become one with Jesus, as Jesus was one with his Father:

The Father and I are one. (Jn 10:30)

I always do what pleases my Father. (Jn 8:29)

When he speaks to you of gentleness, he will ask you to imitate the Lamb of God. He will tell you to “*cultivate gentle, tender, charitable thoughts*”, the thoughts Jesus had. He will tell you to avoid anything that could weaken the charity which must reign among us, for we are all Jesus’ brothers and sisters, “*children of our Father in Heaven.*” “*Yield your rights and let yourself be wronged rather than defending yourself*”, he will say, so that you may imitate Jesus, “*who kept silence before his judges and had only prayers for his tormenters*”.

When he speaks to you of poverty and humility, he will speak of the poverty and humility of Jesus, who made himself the last of all and the servant of all.

“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life for the redemption of many.” (Mt 20:28)

When he speaks to you of chastity, he will ask you to give yourself completely to your beloved Brother and Lord Jesus. Then your capacities for loving, freed from all ties, will find total fulfillment in Divine Love.

When he speaks to you of truly loving and universal charity, he will ask you to be very loving in thought, word and action, as you would have been in the company of the Holy Family at Nazareth. He will ask you this so that through your love people will recognize in you true disciples of the Lord and be able to say, *“See how they love one another.”*

It is by the love that you have for one another that all will recognize that you are my disciples. (Jn 13:35)

18. A life with Jesus at the centre



Naples

He wants your community to be Jesus' house, the home of the Good Shepherd, where poor people, the unfortunate, the sick and the homeless are welcomed as brothers, as *“persons in whom Jesus lives.”*

When he speaks to you of zeal, he will ask you to spend yourself without counting: you must be followers of Jesus, your one and only Model, and go looking as he did for the lost sheep. Your great joy will be to give everything to serve him and to serve his brothers and, if he should will it, to die for his name.

He will tell you to have unshakeable faith in Jesus, who is the all-powerful Master of the Impossible, to have unshakeable faith that Jesus will triumph through his Love and his Presence.

Brother Charles will remind you that Jesus laid down his life for all people and that he gave his life for his brothers and sisters of Islam and for the whole world.

When he speaks to you of spiritual joy, he will tell you to build your joy essentially on the Glory and the eternal Beatitude of Jesus.

He is in bliss. We love him. What more could we ask for? (Br Charles of Jesus, Meditation on Ps 20)

When he speaks to you of love, he will want you to share in Jesus' love. He will ask you to love him alone, to be the place of his rest and the garden of his delight, as says the Song of Songs, to have one desire: to think only of him, to live only for him, to work and suffer with him.

When he speaks to you of immolation, he will want you to give your life in sacrifice in deep union with Jesus. He will ask you to desire, in total submission to the Will of God, the highest of graces, martyrdom, so that like Jesus you may give the greatest proof of love. More than

all else, he will ask you to die to yourself in sacrifice day after day, hour after hour, as you carry out the duties of your everyday life, which is the hidden immolation everyone can attain.

There was one word that he repeated constantly and which is continually found in his writings, for there was one being who had taken possession of his whole soul and who became his all-consuming passion: Jesus, Jesus-Caritas, Jesus-Love.

This is the greatest secret of his holiness and the reason why the work of his life has borne so much fruit. This is what drew people to him and made them recognize him as a man of God. To understand Brother Charles of Jesus totally, you need to forget him and through him see only Jesus.

Brother Charles' rule is essentially the Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount.

He understood that if Jesus took flesh and came to live among his people, if he left us all his teachings in the Gospel, it was to become our one and only Model, the living personification of what he was teaching. Brother Charles understood that the way for him to become perfect was simply to see how Jesus had lived, then to imitate and follow him: *"our love can be measured by how closely we imitate the one we love"*.

And he understood that nothing lasting can be built without Jesus, and that he would lose his way unless he followed Jesus.

Your rule: to follow me and to do what I would do. Ask yourself in everything, "What would our Lord do?" and do it. This is your only but absolute rule. (Brother Charles of Jesus, Spiritual Writings)

19. Little sister of Jesus



Perou praying together

What about you? Do you too want to follow the one and only Way, the Way of Jesus? Do you want to have only one Master, a Master who is all love and gentleness, light, strength, peace and joy?

Your community will have to be a home bright with love like the first community where Jesus lived at Nazareth. It will have to be a home where he is the center: the intimate Friend, the Brother, and at

the same time the Sovereign Master and Beloved Lord. You will pray at his feet; you will work along side him; you will rest in his company.

Your spiritual way will be love incarnate in the Person of Jesus.

Your mission will be to bring about the kingdom of Jesus and his love in your own heart and all around you. You will carry out your mission through him, with him and in him.

Your name, *“Little Sister of Jesus”*, will be the symbol of your love.

Your emblem will be the heart of Jesus and his Cross united. It will symbolize your mission of love and self-offering.

The offering of your life in self-sacrifice for the people of the whole world will be joined in deep union to the sacrifice of Jesus on the altar. Your love will give you a thirst to share Jesus’ sufferings and his cross.

You will begin each day with Jesus’ first prayer to his Father and end it with his last: *“Father, here I am to do your will,”* and *“Father, into your hands I commend my soul.”*

Your charity will be the result of your life of deep fellowship with Jesus, the source of all love. Your apostolate will be to bear witness to Jesus, letting your life express his love and his presence in the Blessed Sacrament and in the Gospel.

Your method will be the method of Jesus, your one Model. It will be the method of kindness, of friendship and of love.

And Jesus will become the one passion of your life, as he became the one passion of the life of Little Brother Charles of Jesus. This boundless love, summed up in his motto, *“Jesus-Caritas - Jesus-Love will identify you with Jesus to the point of becoming one with him.*

He in you and you in him, you will be able to say with St. Paul the Apostle:

“It is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me.” (Gal 2:20)

And like the Apostle you will be able to say too:

Who then can separate us from the love of Christ? Neither death nor life, neither angels nor heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below. There is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours

20. Childlike in Heart



Tre fontane Grotto chapel

Childlike in Heart

***You will receive the little infant
Jesus of the Manger***

from the Virgin Mary his Mother

This will be the crowning point.

This crowning point could have been the beginning for you just as it was for Jesus, who is your only model and who became a tiny infant.

But maybe you forgot to turn to him lovingly

enough and maybe you did not contemplate him long enough in this humble aspect, without grandeur or majesty. At first you probably did not know quite what to think.

Up till then you were trying to do great and beautiful things, and you were disappointed.

One way or another we are always disappointed when we try to do something admirable by ourselves, even when we claim to be wholly disinterested, insisting so much that we believe it ourselves.

Trough Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rm 8:35, 38-39).

21. Look at the crib



Perhaps you were all the more disappointed because you had put so much of yourself into these efforts to do great and beautiful things; probably you had the most upright and purest intentions and set to the task with your whole mind, heart and will.

If you had not experienced these apparent failures you would not be a true disciple of Jesus who died on the cross, betrayed and forsaken by those he had loved and called

his friends, those he had guided and prepared by sharing everything with them and by keeping them close to him in his love. You would not be a true daughter of Brother Charles who died, "violently and painfully killed," after he too was betrayed by one of those he deeply loved, without a friend or a follower to receive the teachings of his last hour.

You had put your whole self into your effort and were so proud and happy each time you felt you had in some way succeeded.

You wanted to present the Lord the results of your enterprises, coming happily to him, your hands full. But you forgot to turn towards Jesus, your only Model. He could show you only hands pierced by the nails of the cross, or the callused hands of a workman, or again the tiny, helpless hands of a newborn baby in a crib.

Perhaps you did not really stop to look at the crib, or maybe you just looked at it disdainfully, as an adult who thinks that the crib is for children and that outside Christmastime it has no real meaning.

You looked longer at the cross. There you found something bigger and more satisfying, but perhaps you were seeking after suffering and abjection still with a certain pride. It is so easy to believe ourselves heroic as soon as we have suffered a little with courage.

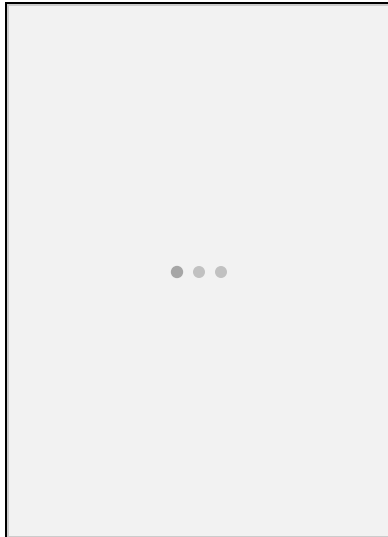
22. Look at the whole of Christ's life

You looked at the workshop of the Carpenter, admiring the beauty that always results from the efforts of work that is well done. For even if the worker is poor and lowly, he has the pride of doing something to earn his daily bread.

You looked at Christ as he went from place to place healing and blessing, and it made you want to go and do likewise. You wanted to reproduce his gestures in every corner of the world and to be a true apostle. In his work the apostle is often rewarded for his efforts. He finds great joy when he senses among those he meets the beginning of true understanding and acceptance.

And with all this you forgot to look lovingly enough at the whole of Christ's life, which began in a manger. He was a little infant like any other with nothing unusual about him, just a little infant like you yourself were, without much charm those first hours and first days. He

became a tiny baby crying from the cold as he lay there on the straw in a state of total helplessness which he took on out of love.



That is how our God first appeared, and he wants to be contemplated and adored in this state not only by the lowly but also by the great, for he accepted the adoration of both shepherds and wise-men, and even led them by a star into the presence of this little baby without grandeur or majesty.

It is true that you will not be able to understand him unless you have the eyes and the heart of a child. But it is too easy to forget that this state of spiritual childhood is not reserved for only a few people. Spiritual childhood has become an obligation ever since our Lord took a little child by the hand, put him in the midst of the grown men who were arguing over who would have the first place and who were dreaming of an earthly kingdom, telling them,

“If you do not become like little children, you will never enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt 18:3).

23. Have trust



He did not say you will not have a choice place but, rather, “you will not enter” into my kingdom.

These words you had not understood. Maybe the explanations given you were mistaken or far from reality, not taking into account the real helplessness and weakness of a little child. So then, to make you understand better, the Lord had reduced you to helplessness - perhaps the helplessness of being sick and unable to make the least effort of your own, or the still more painful helplessness of somebody struggling without strength in the midst of temptations, when work and suffering seem unbearable,

And little by little, weary of trying so hard but so uselessly, you found yourself thinking of the Crib and the Christmases of the past, and for a time your weariness and your suffering were soothed, as they are always soothed, even in the most hardened of hearts, before the joyful simplicity of a little child.

By becoming so small, so gentle a child, I was crying out to you, have trust, come close to me! Do not be afraid of me, come to me... Do not be so frightened in the presence of such a gentle baby, smiling at you and holding out his arms to you. He is your God, but he is all smiles and gentleness. Be all fondness, love and trust. (Br. Charles of Jesus, Spiritual Writings).

So now I want you to take a good look at this Crib, in the light of the star that shone before the wise-men to guide them. I want you to understand its lessons. If people who do not understand it yet want to smile, let them. But do not present to them an aspect of the Crib that will put them off.

This Crib is something so beautiful and so great. This Crib of Bethlehem contains the whole Christ, God and man together, and in the extension of this cradle there is the Workshop of Nazareth, the Passion and the Cross, and all the Glory of the Resurrection and Heaven itself.

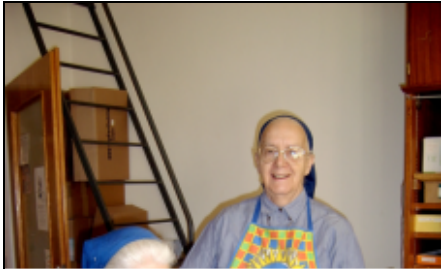
In his great love, Christ, the Son of God, chose to pass through a little infant's helplessness, the only state in which someone is totally given over into the hands of another.

Because he is so helpless, a little child always turns toward his father. He is too weak and too little to have a will of his own or to want anything that his father does not want. How touching is this trust in his father. Have you ever seen that often repeated gesture of a young father pretending to toss his little child out over a cliff? And the child laughs and laughs because he knows well that no harm can ever come to him from his father.

Like all babies of the world Christ the workman, Christ of the Passion, Christ glorious in his Resurrection, needed the tender watchfulness of the Virgin Mary by his cradle. He needed the fatherly care of St. Joseph who guided his first steps, and most of all he needed the love of his Father in heaven to whom he was obedient from his birth in the crib to his death on the cross.

Look at the Crib and do not be put off by the childish ways it is sometimes pictured. That is just the price we have to pay when trying to represent divine realities. Instead may you see in this Crib only your God who is calling to you to follow him, and to become as a little child in total self-surrender. Like him may you have toward God a child's trustfulness. Like him may you have toward the Virgin Mary his Mother the same pressing need and loving self-surrender of a child who cannot do without a mother at his cradle. How sad to see a cradle without a mother to bend over it.

24. Like all the babies of the world



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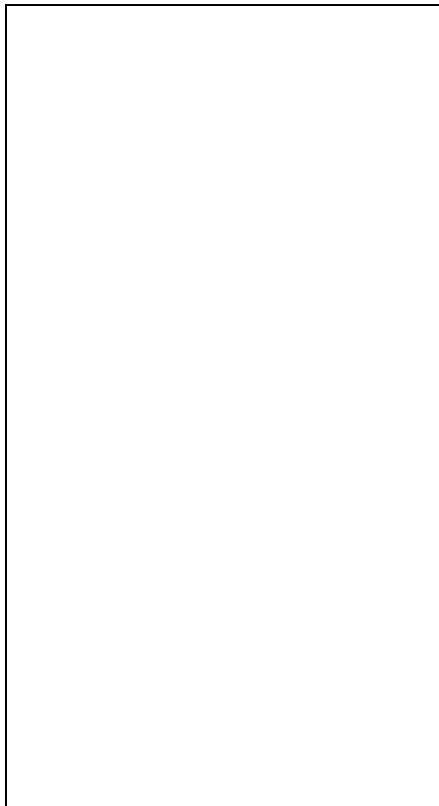
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25. With Mary your mother

Always be a little child with your heavenly Mother. Often when a child grows up, the mother retires into the background and suffers silently from her solitude because the child is ashamed to need her any more, and it is only in moments of great suffering and at the hour of death that he calls for her help. We are always very little in the face of suffering and death.

Never be grown up with our Lady. Let her show you her motherly tenderness. Ask her to teach you the secrets of her love for the Lord, a love that always knew the right time and the right way. Ask her to teach you to remain humbly the “servant of the Lord.” As a woman you must know how to give yourself fully in self-effacement and self-forgetfulness.

It is to her that I have entrusted all the Little Sisters of Jesus, for it is only normal to confide what you hold dearest to the person you love and trust the most.



Our Lady of the whole world

It is to her, Mediatrix of all graces, that I entrust you as well, asking her to give you her little infant Jesus so that he may always stay with you. Then you may carry him throughout the world with his message of humble and trusting self-surrender, of simplicity and poverty, of gentleness and peace, of joy and love - a universal love reaching across all divisions of nation and race and breaking down the barriers of class, so that there may reign among men: Unity in the Love of the Lord.

Do you want to receive this message which contains all the essentials of the message of Brother Charles of Jesus and all the essentials of the spirit of the Fraternity of the Little Sisters of Jesus?

If so, this will be the sign by which you will recognize whether the Lord Jesus is calling you to become his Little Sister, following after Brother Charles of Jesus.

Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus

September 1945

*Reading was drawn from here: <http://www.jesusc Caritas.info/jcd/fr/green-booklet>