

**FEMALE PRESENCE  
IN THE LIFE OF  
SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE  
II  
Relationships with female religious  
from various Congregations (2/2)**

**Brother Carlos José Láinez Paz**

Letter 107.

*To a Member of a Religious Community of Women*

It is only through obedience and total submission for the love of God that you will draw down on yourself the graces of Our Lord....

In order to seek God's will, practice obedience with interior submission to the Spirit of Our Lord, who dwells in those who take his place. Often adore the Spirit, by whose inspiration you must allow yourself to be led in all you do.

Be faithful to ask permission for the slightest exemptions without listening to the arguments of self-will. Human nature craves nothing more insistently than to shake off the yoke of obedience. Be faithful to this practice, I beg you.

It is natural to find no difficulty in doing what we like to do; but doing only what agrees with our inclinations is not obedience. To carry out commands indiscriminately, no matter how opposed they are to our feelings and inclinations, that is the sort of obedience God wants of us.

For our obedience to be pure, we must act through the spirit of faith. We must not examine the reasons or the purposes behind the commands we are given, but surmount all questioning and all objections. Simply follow out the commands you are given; that is how you must act from now on.

You are to carry out all the instructions you are given and always with unquestioning obedience. Whatever difficulty you find in doing what you are told, let nothing appear in your attitude that could call for an order contrary to the first one, unless you are convinced that it is a question of the glory of God. In this case you may express your opinion without, however, requiring that it be followed.

Never come to decisions on your own, for such a course of action is contrary to the obedience and dependence that members of a religious community should have. In all you have to do you must follow the orders of your superiors. When they give you any instructions, directions or orders, accept them and carry them out without reply. Do this no matter how foolish what you are told to do or what is said to you may seem. Be assured that once you take reason as the basis for your compliance, you are no longer acting through obedience. A fine sort of religious perfection that would be, to be ready to do only what pleases you! Do not act like that, I beg you. Let there be no argument about what you are told to do nor about who gives you the orders. In the sight of

God, everything is good when seasoned by obedience.

I pray that God will bring you to this frame of mind....

Letter 110.

*To a Member of a Religious Community of Women*

...Always remember that all you have to do is try to save your soul, since you are in this world only for that purpose. Remember, too, that the Savior, who knew all your weaknesses beforehand, died only to win for you the graces and the means to help you work effectively at your salvation.

You must then overcome this wretched human respect, for a sinner like you should no longer be concerned about her good name and reputation. They have been lost in the sight of God and of the saints, so she ought to have no other desire than to be known for what she is—that is, an object of disgust to heaven and earth.

It is most important that you learn to know yourself better than you do, because, I tell you honestly, you have not the slightest understanding of the sinfulness of your life. As long as you persist in this blindness, you will be living a lie and therefore alienated from God who is truth....

I pray that God will make you humble, chaste, and penitent. You have equal need of all three. With tears and moans ask him for these virtues every day. Above all else distrust yourself and put all your hope in him who can lift the poor man from squalor and, as the Prophet says, seat him with the princes of his kingdom.

Although you have little natural liking for virtue, yet God wishes to imbue you with it through the power of his love.

You will not find it very difficult to give yourself to God if you have a little generosity. I hope he will give it to you. Take courage, my dear Sister; just begin to want suffering and all will be smooth and easy for you.

Realize that your vocation comes from God, and it would therefore be acting against his will to grow weary of it. Bless him daily for having called you to share in the various aspects of his passion, and be really ashamed that through your infidelity you have not done so.

Is it not an honor, a very great honor, for you to give yourself entirely to God? This, I think, is the one thought that should occupy your mind.

If you seek God and not consolation, you will find peace of mind.

Sometimes it seems that Our Lord is asleep, but then he awakens and sets us on our way. We must not go faster or at a different pace from what he wants of us, and we must rest when he wishes it.

My dear Sister, do you have to experience consolations to remain in God's service? Are you not prepared to be his simply out of love for him? Throw yourself into his arms; he is your Father and he will carry you when the road is rough, that is, in time of temptation.

It is not from men that you must expect your salvation when you ask for their help; it comes from God alone. Perhaps it is because of the lack of this spirit of faith that God does not give you the help you need.

In short, I pray that God will open your eyes more and more so that you will realize on the one hand the depth of the abyss from which you have been saved and, on the other, the infinite love that has lifted you from it. May this twofold realization lead you to repay him with a love and fidelity that are in proportion to your sinfulness and his mercy. Amen.

Letter 111.

***To a Member of a Religious Community of Women***

...Frequently spend time in prayer, and during periods of aridity to find your consolation in it, for it is there that you will find God most surely. In periods of dryness and darkness when you feel no attraction, remain constantly faithful to prayer. This is a good frame of mind to be in and a very sanctifying one.

Prayer, made the way I have taught you to make it, will lead you in a short time and effortlessly to live mindful of the presence of God.

Prayer is to be preferred to everything. After the Divine Office you should consider it an essential point of Rule.

Prayer of suffering is best of all, and when God lets you experience it, you must look upon it as most fortunate for you. Do not use a book during such times; you do not need one.

Do not be surprised if God seems to withdraw from you and if you experience aridity during prayer; you alone are the cause of this. Renounce your self-will, do violence to yourself, be faithful to whatever demands grace makes of you. Then, however unworthy you may otherwise be of the caresses and favors of the Spouse of souls, he will overwhelm you with them.

Be all the more faithful to prayer when you feel, on the one hand, God deep in your heart drawing you to it and on the other, the devil making every effort to dissuade you from it....

Prayer should be your main support; therefore, you must never miss it except when you are ill. It is prayer that will dispel the darkness of ignorance from your soul. Live by the spirit of faith. You are in God's presence; that is more than enough for you. Do not give way to self-pity, but rather fear that and distrust it.

Your prayer is good just as you are making it; continue to make it that way. God is in your prayer, making it for you. All you have to do is from time to time disown with peace and tranquility of heart all the repugnance and the distractions that you experience, and put yourself completely in the hands of Our Lord, so that he may come and live in you and himself master your inclination to evil.

You ought to welcome the state in which you find yourself during prayer as a penance God wants you to do for your sins. It will be quite some time before you recover from it. You must bear it patiently, even joyfully. Is it not enough for a wretched soul to know that she is in God's presence? That is the reflection you should make from time to time during the day and also during your prayer in order to win for yourself some degree of interior and exterior recollection.

Your present state of prayer, as you describe it to me, is not the dangerous form of idleness that you think. Provided you hold on to the thought of God and make progress toward him, why should you be upset? He has no need of all your efforts. Idleness is to be avoided, but at the same time you must not hamper yourself with a great number of acts in prayer. All you need and all God wants of you is that you remain in his presence.

In a word, turn once again to prayer for help and remain in an attitude of abasement before God, divesting yourself of all that is not God. In simplicity of heart ask him to help you out of your present wretchedness. If you cannot pray, tell God that you cannot and then remain at peace. He will not ask you to do the impossible. Or, say to him as the Apostles did, "Lord, teach me to pray." Then remain humbly before him as one who is incapable of doing anything, and that will

be your prayer....

Letter 112.

***To a Member of a Religious Community of Women***

It is this sort of silence that ought to be the portion of every soul that really loves solitude and has withdrawn herself from the love of the world.

She ought to remain composed and silent because in this way she will always be able to rise above herself. There is nothing more dangerous for her than to allow herself to be torn away from conversation with God to stoop toward conversation with men....

Letter 113.

***To a Member of a Religious Community of Women***

...Now is the time for little speech and much action. Let your aim be to become very silent and very humble and to apply yourself very much to prayer, for this is what God wants of you.

To do this you need little thinking, little desiring, and little understanding, yet it is the way to live at peace.

You will find silence a very useful, even a very necessary virtue, if you are to adore God, serve him in spirit and in truth, resist temptations, and save yourself from falling into sin....

You must learn how to be silent, to conceal your feelings, and to speak only when necessary. So that you may not fall into the habit of excessive talking, try to observe strictly the following rules:

Do not speak at all outside recreation time unless the need is urgent, and even during recreation speak but little. The present state of your soul demands that you be faithful to this. And you must not make even a single comment about what goes on, remembering, however, that your silence is not to spring from pride.

Take care never to justify yourself, but, on the contrary, admit that you were wrong, without of course telling an untruth. If you cannot speak without justifying yourself, remain completely silent. I do not see that you ever have any reason to justify yourself.

You are not to talk of what happens in the community or of the disorders that you think exist in it. Under such circumstances be satisfied with offering a prayer to God. When matters of importance, and even unimportant ones, are spoken of, never offer your opinion, being convinced that you have little understanding or sense of judgment.

Always remain silent when others annoy you, and let God alone be the witness of your innocence.

Lastly, if after you have held yourself in check, you do in the end speak of what you have with difficulty concealed, and even of the graces that God has granted you, you will lose what your silence has won for you, and you must set yourself a penance for your failure. . . .

Letter 114.

***To a Member of a Religious Community of Women***

You may be sure that you will not make progress in the way of love except insofar as you are faithful not to harden your heart to the inspirations of grace. You know what the Holy Spirit says by the mouth of the Prophet, "If today you hear his voice, take care not to harden your heart," for this could bring about his withdrawal from you, perhaps forever... •