

MOTHER KLARA SZCZESNA

An important factor in the spirituality and formation of any religious family is the voice of its Founder. In the case of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, this voice is not only found primarily in the abundant words of the Bishop, Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, but also in the words of Mother Klara Szczesna. Unfortunately, we do not possess much of our Mother's voice, which is why it is so important that we record and transmit her voice to the Congregation's next generations. It is a word that so well expresses Mother Klara and characterizes her spiritual way. At the same time it is very practical regarding the community life of the Sacred Heart Sisters.

The given text is divided into two parts:

To the first belong the three meditations of Mother Klara Szczesna, which, fortunately, have been preserved in the Congregation's archives at our Generalate in Krakow, Poland, meditations pertaining to (1) obedience, (2) love of neighbor and (3) meekness.

In the second part are arranged the thoughts of Mother Klara as compiled by her Sisters. They are a reflection of the spirit of the Congregation during the first years of its existence when Mother Klara was governing the new Congregation as its superior, serving as mistress, and giving personal example.

A. Meditations of Mother Klara Szczesna

1. Obedience

You have the grace for obedience. St. Francis de Sales teaches that in addition to a profound reverence toward those in authority, we must also possess a most heartfelt obedience; indeed, we must love God in those who are over us and love them in God. The *love for obedience* with which we fulfill the deed is of more value than the deed itself. Let us endeavor to relieve the burdens of our superiors. Their responsibility is weighty. May they never need to give us orders in anguish and worry, but rather be sure to find in us a holy and ardent love for God. What, then, is love? Obedience.

Our obedience should be prompt and simple. We do not read anywhere that Jesus delayed his surrender or questioned it. At once, he goes to fulfill the will of God, he rushes like a giant on his way, and, as he approaches Jerusalem to fulfill the bloody Sacrifice, he even hastens his steps and goes on ahead of his astonished and frightened disciples. When your faith will see God in your superiors, it will not cost you to surrender. Then you will obey promptly and joyfully, not retracting from your offering that which gives it the greatest merit in the eyes of God. A forced obedience that attempts to first understand all the reasons is like a faded flower without color or smell, displeasing to God. In the vision of Ezekiel, the Cherubim are seen possessing six wings signifying the swiftness with which they fulfill the will of God, four faces through which they observe the four sides of the world, and flying wherever the Spirit of God takes them. Their wings are ever open, since they are always prepared to fly at the command of God. Indeed, should God order it, they would be even prepared to leave heaven. Such is the image of religious obedience. As brides of the Lord, we cannot look merely to earthly images, but rather must take our example from the one just described, an example from on high. Religious soul, do you know the voice of your Bridegroom?

Our obedience must be in all places and in all things. The vow of holy obedience subjects you, always and in everything, to those who take the place of God ósubjecting your deeds, your will, your opinion, your entire life, without exception save sin. In the eyes of the Church, this vow allows for no exception. The good religious fulfills everything ordered her. Without imperfection, she fulfills everything, changing nothing even in regard to time or way. She takes care not to offer to God broken hosts but keeps each part whole. She will leave everything or begin everything at the first summons, going wherever she is called, not completing even the jot of a letter.

Yet this may merely indicate observing the õletter of obedience.ö The obedience of the soul is a surrender of the will and reason. As St. Ignatius maintains, perfect obedience is blind, yet in this blindness is rooted its wisdom and perfection. Imperfect obedience, on the other hand, sees through two eyes, yet to its ruin. An exterior obedience, without the interior, cannot be called obedience. Whoever obeys only in action yet without one's will and reason, remains with but one foot in the convent. Renunciation of one's free will is a great cost to our nature, but in what nobler way can we use it, if not to return our will to him from whom we received it?

Obedience should be given to each superior, not only toward those worthy of our love and respect because of their wisdom, goodness, experience of the Spirit of God and great holiness. It should include also those superiors who do not have such qualities. Obedience should be given not only to the highest superior, but also to all lower ones, even the youngest and the most imperfect, because we have to obey not the supernatural gifts of our superiors but the God whom they represent.

We must obey in every age, regardless of our state of health or our weakness, even unto old age and the tomb, even were we fulfilling before the most important work for the Congregation or held the highest offices. The good religious loves to be like a child in the hand of obedience until the last moment of her life. Consider, have you not many times withdrawn from the altar of your will that which was once given to God at your religious profession? Have you not stolen that which was no longer yours? Have you not questioned at times, reasoned and wept over the offering of your obedience? Have you ever placed value to the offering of your obedience as something great that you have done for your God? O that from now on your aversions would be burnt in holocaust, and your heart enkindled with a true love for God!

Holy obedience is faithful to the Rule, and without it there is no holiness or salvation for religious souls. Each religious is obliged to strive not only for the perfection to which all are called, but also for that which is proper to her state of life. Each Order has its own way to perfection. The holiness of the apostolic life is different from that of a hermit's; and a contemplative's holiness is different that asked of the religious in the active life. The specific character of the holiness proper to our vocation is drawn from our Constitutions and Statutes. There we find the spirit of the religious Congregation to which we belong. There also is its aim and its means; there, the end to which we must strive, and the way on which we should walk. We cannot transgress our Rule without transgressing our sanctity and the will of God. St. Thomas writes that any transgression against the Rule naturally lead to transgression of the vows; between the first and second there is only one step. We vow to God and the Congregation not only to keep our vows but also to keep the Constitutions and Statutes that were carefully presented to us in our novitiate. Without this resolution, we would never have been allowed to make our profession. If we often transgress the Constitutions and Statutes habitually, what has become of our promise? It is turned into an accusation before the judgment of God. As servants of the Gospel, the Lord will ask us what we did with our decision and holy, free covenant. The

Order that willed to accept us, can today reproach us: *I have received you as children under the condition that you will surrender to my laws. You have vowed faithfulness before the altar, why then do you betray your oath?*

In vain do some excuse themselves that the Rule does not bind them under pain of sin. They say that it does not oblige them in what does not refer directly to the vows, or wherever a transgression is unaccompanied or followed by some sinful circumstance that burdens them with guilt. Guilt, we might add, that they feel but rarely. Even were our Rule only advisory, should it not still then be a sign of God's will to us, a sign of the intention of his wisdom whereby God desires to pour his graces out upon us? This Rule is the fruit of his Love, Love that desires to unite us with himself. Can we, without sin against God's clearly revealed will, act in such wise as to reject this counsel and to repel God's merciful grace?

As a religious, you are obliged to fulfill perfectly the great commandment of fraternal love, to burn with eagerness for the salvation of your neighbor, and to serve as a good example as well. How do you fulfill it, if instead of being a good example you are a bad example? Truly, there is no worse scandal than the religious who does not keep the Rule, who is unfaithful, and who easily transgresses the Holy Gospel. The epidemic of bad example is always terrible. Infidelity to the Rule immediately brings infidelity to holy obligations; impedes manifold graces for the religious life; and brings within the walls of our convents a worldly spirit, gossip, disorder and ruin.

The holy state of religious life removes you from deceptive goods and brings you closer to God through devotional exercises. These two great means of sanctification necessarily demand faithfulness in all prescriptions of the Rule. They demand obedience to the holy precepts that are protecting you from everything you have renounced through the vows. For example, if you do not want to keep the rules about the mortification of the senses, surely you put yourself in danger of transgression of the most delicate virtue as well as others. Similarly devotional exercises in the Congregation such as meditation, examination of conscience and spiritual reading require recollection and a free and pure thought. Can we truly speak with God after a worldly conversation, or after the Rule's transgression that ushers into our soul chaos and unrest, and kindles an inflamed passion, worldly pleasure or the like?

O God, how many things impede your grace! On the other hand, a faithful observance leads to holiness. God is supreme holiness, and man's holiness depends upon his unity with God, upon his conformity with God's will, for on these rests true love and, thus, true holiness. To know God's will and to continually surrender to it in a spirit of faith, was what brought forth the saints, and such has been given to us in our Rule. The Rule sanctifies not only a part of our life but the whole of it. You may not hear at each moment the voice of the superiors giving you divine commands, yet the Rule always speaks and tells what God demands from you. One of the great popes said that he would immediately canonize the religious who had perfectly kept the Rule. Therefore Heaven is yours, since living the Rule confers it on you. What an easy path! What cause then for coldness and negligence! The obligations of the Rule do not daunt our weakness, are not above our strength; they are not far away or too high but rather are before our eyes and at hand. Is the perfect keeping of the Rule difficult? What is easier than to get up, to lie down, to pray and to be silent at the appointed time? The daily practice of the Rule is the practice of love for God, and what could be sweeter? What can increase our abundant treasure of merits and assure us a more glorious crown? What could be more desirable? O love, then, your holy Rule; keep it and you shall receive Life.

2. Love of neighbor

The public life of Christ the Lord should teach us especially a love of neighbor and zeal for souls. Jesus is himself the strongest motive for us to love our neighbor, for he himself loves him. Jesus demands that we love our neighbor; he resides within our neighbor, so that we could love him there. If the Manger, Calvary and the Altar speak so clearly to you of Jesus' love for you, do they not also speak about his love for others? O how you would love your neighbor if you could seek his value in the Heart of the suffering God! With what different eyes you would see this person - for you so unpleasant and unfriendly, if only you could see the immeasurable love for this person from him who is holiness and justice itself; if you could see the sweet mercy Jesus has for this person whom you regard as unworthy, would you then have but a little mercy for such a one? If only you could know that in somehow hurting this person you are wounding the apple of the Savior's eye! The love of God and the love of neighbor are one. They cannot be separated for indeed the object of this love is one and the same. To love God in and of himself, or to love our neighbor for God's sake, is equally to love God. The disciples of Christ will identify themselves through their abundance of love.

The Heavenly Master commanded the Apostles to love each other as he loves them and his Heart greatly desires our fraternal love. *I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was sick and you cared for me; I was in prison and you came to visit me.* These are the crowns of love of neighbor. Jesus is in our neighbor. *Whatever you do for the least of my brothers you do unto me.* At the moment of judgment you will judge not your neighbor but yourself. When you sadden and offend someone, you sadden and offend Jesus. St. Paul, in persecuting Christians, persecuted Jesus. St. Martin in covering a naked man, covered Jesus. How dare you refuse a moment of patience, a word of consolation, a service and a piece of bread to him, who did not refuse you a drop of His blood?

In giving us his commandment of fraternal love, the Lord Jesus desires that our love would take the form and likeness of his own, that is, that would it be supernatural ó a love for God and in God, not arising from nature and the senses. Worship the image of God and the great ransom of God's Blood within the soul of your neighbor. Love him, and if for the good of his soul you must make some unpleasant reproof, do not hesitate. Even should he forget his salvation, you must love his salvation. Love should be universal since Jesus died for all. Even his worst enemies had a share in his charity. He prayed for his persecutors. If we love God in our neighbors, we acknowledge that there is not one who is so miserable that he could not have access to your love. However not everybody has the same access. Have a threefold love: maternal toward those whom providence places under your care, childlike toward your superiors and sisterly for your Sisters in God.

Have a grateful love. Truly, what people can do to refuse the love of Jesus for them! They do not accept him when he comes. They persecute and crucify him and still he loves them. The Holy Spirit says that love is stronger than death. What kind of love is it that does not sacrifice, and is discouraged and despondent with the smallest things? O how rarely there is found a holy and perfect fraternal love! It is easy to have exclusive friends but rare to embrace everyone without exception. It is impossible without sacrifice and dedication. Our love is natural, sensible, egoistic and self-interested. We do not love as Jesus has loved, loving us even unto the shedding of his blood and desiring no retaliation.

3. Meekness

“Blessed are the meek,“ Jesus said, that is, “Blessed are the gentle.“ Gentleness and sweetness are the characteristics of Jesus. They are the rays of his Divine state. Jesus was meek, sweet and good. He promises that the meek will inherit the earth and the peacemakers he calls his sons. He reforms the Old Covenant by introducing to it gentleness and kindness. *Truly I say to you: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, forgive not seven but seventy-seven times. If someone strikes you on one cheek turn the other one as well.* Not wanting to blind a soul by his greatness, therefore he sweetly cries: *Come to me all who are suffering and burdened, come all to me and you will find rest.* I have mercy on you. I have come to you, assumed your body and carried your crimes so as to reconcile you with the Father and to teach you the secret of happiness, which is: *Learn from me for I am meek and humble of Heart.* Behold the spirit of Jesus. When the zealous sons of Zebedee would call down from heaven fire upon the houses of sinners, the most merciful Lord said to them: *You do not know what spirit you are; the Son of God did not come to lose souls but to save.*

I send you among people to be as gentle as lambs and as simple as doves. The Bride of the Lamb should be sweetness itself. The prophets who foretold the coming of Jesus said: *Daughter of Zion, your meek King comes...The Lamb will be given and will not cry out, will not break a bruised reed nor snuff out a smoldering wick.* How much more in actuality did Jesus surpass these prophecies! His presence alone - full of sweetness - calmed sadness. It was often said of him: Let us go to the Sweetness. In his public life, how patiently he endured the constant imperfection of His disciples, and the weakness, uncertainty and intrusion of the multitude pushing about him. His sweetness never waned. He treated the Pharisees quite gently until they attacked his Person. When they pressed him He removed the mask of their hypocrisy, yet always respecting their dignity and teaching. He always received wayward souls with the sweetest compassion, so that human malice would call him the friend of sinners. He firmly declared that he came into the world for the sake of sinners. His sweetness converted the Samaritan woman, Magdalene, Zacchaeus and the fallen Apostle. What sweetness upon the Mount of Olives! Simon experienced it, and, for the betrayer, who handed him over, what a sweetness of words: *Friend, you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?* During his agony on the cross he cried out: *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* Each of these words of love is a great meditation.

How different this kind of example and teaching this is from an impatient and rough religious, with demanding face and unkind voice! What is there in common between her spirit and the spirit of Jesus? Truly, Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. When we do not follow this Way we are outside the Truth and the Life. How numerous the transgressions against love and sweetness; receiving the Body of the Lamb of God you should live His life, imbued with His sweetness, throughout! He is so sweet on the altar and in your heart. After receiving and adoring Him, remember to stay as long as possible in silence under this ineffable sweetness with which He is present within you. Ask him to calm all unrest in your soul, and give you the peace beyond all understanding. Having this peace you can be good, gentle and patient. Think about Jesus' sweetness; look at His sweetness in the Sacred Host. This sweetness will make you the master of your own heart, will give control over yourself and true victory. It will make master of the hearts of others because this sweetness unites hearts, relieves and disarms them, converts souls and wins them for God. Finally, you will possess God's own Heart for nothing makes you resemble him more than this sweetness, and God, seeing this likeness in you, will not refuse His love. The peace of a soul possessing itself is a participation in the glorious, unchangeable and serene

calmness of God. God is the God of peace. His Spirit is sweet. In a particular way, he rewards sweetness, the virtue of Jesus, and listens to its prayers.

B. Thoughts of Mother Klara Szczesna as compiled by her Sisters.

1. A good novice

Mother Klara believed that the novice who would become a good religious should be characterized by the following qualities:

She never willfully commits any venial sin.

She hides nothing from her superiors nor desires that anything will be hidden.

She is not angry when others disclose her transgressions.

She eagerly receives a penance for the transgressions that she committed or which others attribute to her.

She looks in all things for mortification and a means to conquer herself, especially in that which is humiliating to her and which can take away the good opinion others have of her.

She speaks only of those things that are proper for a religious.

She is proper in her outward behavior and there is nothing for which she should be corrected.

She prefers to read those books that encourage her to devotion, rather than those that only satisfy her curiosity of mind.

She does not indulge with anyone in a particular friendship based merely upon worldly relationship.

She rejects her self-love and combats it within the permission of her mistress.

She dismisses any voluntary aversion to prayer, reading and other spiritual exercises.

She recognizes the good fruit of her meditation not according to consolations but according to the measure of love of virtue, and aversion to transgressions.

She avoids even the smallest transgressions of the Rule and she does not neglect anything that leads to perfection.

She burns with the desire for holiness and perfection, not out of her own interest but to be pleasing in God's eyes.

She desires to speak often with her mistress and to receive from her advice and direction on how she should avoid sin and transgressions, acquire virtues and perfect from day to day her interior and exterior behavior.

Given the choice between two good things, she chooses the more perfect one.

She does not choose for herself special places, employment or obligations, but is always ready for everything.

She is always joyful, never sad or gloomy.

She is not easily scandalized, and if possible, she attributes good to everything. She refers to her mistress whatever could cause harm to the Congregation, the person committing the transgression or others.

She comes out of the novitiate most steadfast. She has such great hatred for sin and imperfection but on the other hand, great love for virtue and perfection, thus without anyone watching her, she lives as perfectly as under the eye of the superior - as each religious should.

2. A religious according to the Heart of Jesus

She concerns herself with only one thing: to in no way sadden the Heart of her Divine Spouse; therefore she keeps watch over herself, prays, and avoids falls.

She cares for only one thing: to know Jesus Christ; the tabernacle is her school and the Cross ó her book.

She longs for only one thing: her Divine Spouse; thus she desires his love, wants to experience poverty, contempt and suffering, longs for Holy Communion, and desires to reside with the Lord Jesus hidden in the Most Holy Sacrament.

She is always busy about one thing: to be pleasing to the Heart of her Divine Spouse.

Only one spirit enlivens her: the spirit of the Lord Jesus; so she has an aversion towards the world and all its vanity, and desires to live the hidden life.

She strives toward one aim: to be a victim together with her Divine Spouse.

She has only one dwelling: the Heart of the Lord Jesus.

The Bride of Christ so closely unites herself with her Spouse, that she shares one concern and one thought with him; she has acquired one knowledge, has only one desire, one love, one occupation, one spirit, one aim and only one abode, namely with Jesus and the Virgin Mary ó she who is most closely united with him.

3. A religious toward her superiors.

Mother Klara taught that the Sisters should not see a Sister chosen as superior as one having various imperfections, but as the person who takes place of God. God can supply everything that is lacking within the person whom he puts in his place, and he will generously reward the Sisters who honor him in their superior.

Mother Klara has said that the Sisters should always quickly and eagerly obey their superior regardless of the wisdom and prudence of the command, so that this obedience would not be a worldly reasoning, unworthy of a religious. She exhorted the Sisters to listen to their superior solely because the superior takes the place of him to whom the religious offered her will. Such is religious obedience, full of merits.

She recommended that the Sisters have a great trust in the superior - not hiding anything from her; and as regards conscience, although it is not obligatory, a Sister can, if she chooses, look to her superior for advice in the spiritual life.

A religious should turn to the superior in her needs as a daughter to her good mother, and should regard as good whatever the superior orders, even should it be against her inclinations.

A religious should willingly receive admonitions and even ask for them for such a Sister would become perfect quickly. On the other hand, the Sister who cannot tolerate correction will never be perfect.

The religious should be on guard against murmuring about her superiors and should not listen to it; she should avoid criticism.

A religious should have a greater loyalty toward her superiors than to others; she should please them while avoiding flattery, servility, reporting, and all that does not arise from love of neighbor.

She should remain grateful to her former superiors, however in such a way that these feelings of honor do not diminish her trust in her present superiors. If a religious desires to live solely according to the counsels of her former superiors, she could be following a way that brings lack of peace, causes misunderstanding in the convent, and perhaps even brings about the ruin of the Congregation.

If it should happen that a superior often humiliates a religious out of prejudice or wrong judgment, that Sister should not stop showing her superior the respect due her because of her office. She should not doubt that God will help her in this matter, for whenever a mother becomes like a bad stepmother towards her children, the father shall then take greater care of them.

The religious should have compassion upon her superiors, since, while on one hand they are obliged to keep in mind the strength of their subjects, yet on the other, they will someday be asked to give an account to God about each individual soul's progress on her way to perfection. One would have to be heartless not to try to relieve a mother weighed down beneath such a burden.

4. The superiors toward their subjects.

The superior has the obligation to be vigilant óperhaps even more vigilant óover herself, as well as over her subjects. She should care for all their needs óthe health of their bodies and the sanctification of their souls óand should love them as her daughters.

The superior should be characterized by a great sweetness. If she must command something of her subjects, may it be done in so humble a way that it is more a request than an order. If she can do something good on their behalf, may she do so willingly. If she must refuse, may she do it in such a way that her subject knows that it pains her to do so.

The superior should avoid any lenience, so that religious observance will not depend upon the will of an individual. Such indulgence towards an individual can lead to weakening of the observance of the Rule. The superior should not allow transgression of the Rule or neglect of religious tradition.

One of the most essential virtues for the superior is prudence, by which she will know how to discern means that can best help in the improvement of her subjects. She tries to learn about their dispositions and acknowledge their needs. In the assignment of obligations she should not regard what each religious desires, but what will best serve the needs of the Congregation. From time to time she should evaluate how the obligations are being fulfilled.

The superior should never be suspicious but always watchful.

The superior may permit Sisters to meet with friends in the parlor, provided she knows that the visitors are trustworthy, that the visits are not too frequent, the conversations not prolonged, and that after contact with the world the religious are more obedient, have a greater love towards others and desire God more.

The superior should not decide anything without thorough consideration of it.

She should never admonish when irritated but wait for this to pass. She should pray for the intention of the person whom she must correct, and to sweeten the bitterness by assuring this Sister that it is only out of love that she must correct her.

Mother Klara often said that undoubtedly the superior could rule the entire house contentedly, if she gains the respect, love and trust of her subjects. The superior gains this respect if she does not avoid difficult situations. She gains this love when she treats all Sisters

equally and takes into account especially the Sisters who are sick, older and those who in serving others will neglect their own needs. She gains this trust by showing a sincere solicitude and the proper respect of what is revealed to her in confidence and which she does not reveal to anybody.

May the superior rejoice and thank God if she sees that all Sisters are striving together toward perfection. If there are Sisters who murmur, may she remember that the Lord Jesus, example and ideal of the perfect superior, endured Judas the traitor who harmed Him more than we can ever image.

May the superior daily pray ardently each Sister and consider her progress. At least once a month, she should spend a quarter of an hour speaking with each Sister, finding out her needs and efforts on the path toward perfection. If she cannot help the Sister by her deeds, may she try at least to console the Sister with good words, that she could leave her presence encouraged. Let the superior keep in mind that there is no greater consolation for a religious or better sweetness in the difficulties that she endures, than a sincere conversation with her superior and the kind interest that she receives from her superior from time to time.

5. The election of superiors.

Happiness or misfortune, devotion or lack of zeal in the Congregation depend, in great part, upon the superiors, for they are responsible whenever there a lack of religious observance within the convent. When the superiors, seeking their own comfort in everything, fail to give good example, the religious Rule become a dead letter. No Sister enters with the intention to harm the Congregation; rather, each Sister brings a reserve of good will. If she finds superiors who know how to direct this good will, she becomes a saint. However, if she encounters superiors who do not burn with zeal for the salvation of souls, who do not guide prudently, or who do not practice virtue, such a Sister will waste her life in the Congregation and not attain holiness.

The greatest grace that God can give the Congregation is that of good superiors. Prior to their election, therefore, the Sisters should pray ardently to the Holy Spirit and the Patron Saints of the Congregation, as well as the intercession of the deceased Sisters, for the discernment of those who, by their wise direction, would be the most effective for the task of the sanctification of souls.

As to the election of superiors, only those should be chosen who are the most humble and who do not desire this honor, who are most united with the Lord Jesus, who have the greatest love for all Sisters in the Congregation and are not particular toward any Sister; those who are most zealous for the good of the Congregation and most faithful in keeping of the religious Rule; those most prudent in caring for the Congregation's interests and who have the least affinity toward an association with the world.

When there is a difficulty in finding a Sister who possesses all these virtues, then one must be elected who has at least most of these virtues.

C. The Meditations of Mother Jadwiga Wilkowska.

The meditations of Mother Klara Szczesna, recorded in the first section, were not completed by Mother Klara but by Mother Jadwiga Wilkowska. Mother Jadwiga included them in the same notebook together with the following meditations. Since her meditations bear such close likeness to those of Mother Klara, they are fittingly published here. They are also included for another important reason, namely, due to the very person of Mother Jadwiga herself. In speaking of Mother Klara, we see that of all Sisters, M. Jadwiga Wilkowska, was Mother Klara's most faithful associate and most reliable confidante. Mother Jadwiga's personal spirituality was very akin to that of M. Klara, and her responsibilities in the Congregation most closely resembled those of M. Klara. Mother Jadwiga's life and the reputation she left after death testify to this.

She was born on March 26th, 1875, in Zalesie (in Slask Gorny), Poland. She entered the Congregation on June 30th, 1896. While yet a Sister in temporal vows, in 1902 she became mistress of the novitiate. She remained mistress until the 1917 Chapter, during which she was elected as first Assistant of the General Council of Mother Ignacja Wiess. She later fulfilled the duties of superior in Zakopane and Krosno, and, finally in 1936, was elected as third successive General Superior of the Congregation, in which office she died in the odor of sanctity.

Our Sisters considered her to be the ideal of the Sacred Heart Sister. Her special characteristic was *to become for others someone close and dear*. Because of this, we can say that she was a nearly perfect superior: *At no time did anyone notice that she was above them; nor was anyone fearful before her dignity as General Superior; moreover, no one felt strained in her presence*.

Out of her possession of these human qualities, M. Jadwiga was a true mother ó a long-time mistress of novices and superior. The notebook she handed down gives witness to her deep spiritual life. In this notebook can be found a 16-point program of her spiritual life. For example: *Do not offend your neighbor in thought, word and deed. Do not despise your neighbor in any circumstance. Do not be jealous of anything - interior or exterior gifts, success or human friendship, virtues or graces from God. Be understanding of the faults of others. Associate with those who have given offense, and do so with a cheerful face, without anger and aversion, never reverting back to these offenses. Look for an opportunity to do something good for those who have given offense*.

While the first meditation of M. Jadwiga Wilkowska is somehow a conclusion of the meditation of M. Klara Szczesna on meekness, in its essence, however, it establishes a separate subject, since it is a meditation upon the apostolate of the religious soul acting as an instrument within the hands of Jesus.

The second meditation concerns a most important matter in the vocation and life of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, namely, the Most Blessed Sacrament, particularly described under its four aspects *for the religious soul, that is, the Eucharistic Lord Jesus as (a) the love of her heart; (b) the power of her life; (c) example of virtues and (d) giver of hope, of final perseverance, and assurance of future glory*.

1. Apostolic zeal

Zeal for the salvation of souls should consume the hearts of religious as it consumed the Heart of Jesus. In order to save souls, the Son of God descended to earth and became Jesus for us. Each religious soul is an apostle since she takes part in the life of Jesus in greater measure than do others. As she has taken him to be her master, leader, and bridegroom, she stands beneath his holy banner of salvation and must fight against the camp of Lucifer with Him and all the hosts of Saints. She is an apostle by her prayer, sacrifice, acts of mercy and example. She is an apostle of humility and meekness, but also of love, ready to go and to teach the little ones, to seek out the lost, to be consumed as a victim for the whole world and to die in a martyrdom of love. The religious is an apostle and knight, since Jesus and the Church are always in battle; she burns with love for souls because Jesus does so; she would give her life for each soul since Jesus has given His life. She saves souls because Jesus cries out urgently: "Save souls, do not spare yourself, save souls," and she will save many if, instead of wanting in fervor, she would rather be enkindled with zeal. Out of gratitude for Jesus who saved her, she would save souls and cast them into His arms, something he so desires and asks. She will stand beside the child's crib or the bed of the dying, and will thereby gain souls for Jesus.

The apostolic aspect of the religious life is a great responsibility in the service of God. O what a holy and wonderful thing, to serve as an instrument of the Holy Spirit, and to bring about with him through prayer, counsel and example, the sanctification of our neighbor for the sake of our neighbor's eternal happiness. To convert a sinner is a greater thing than to raise the dead, since the soul is of greater value than the body. We are not good workers if we simply concern ourselves about our own salvation, but rather when we lovingly care for the salvation of another.

To do merciful deeds, especially spiritual works of mercy is to secure mercy for ourselves. As the heavens are higher than the earth and eternity longer than time, so concern for souls is more perfect, cries out the louder to God, and takes away our iniquities. Sacrifice for souls is a sign of God's favor. St. Paul writes that the names of all such apostolic workers are recorded in the book of life, and he himself built his hopes upon those whom he was able to bring to Jesus.

You have given yourself to Jesus, thus you are an instrument in his hand which he wants to use for the salvation of the world. Be enkindled with the fire of his holy love; pray, and you will accomplish all of it.

2. What the Most Blessed Sacrament is for the soul of the religious.

Let us penetrate by faith the Eucharistic veil; let us contemplate the Lord Jesus on his throne of love surrounded by the light that emanates from his open Heart and from his most sacred wounds. This light represents the many graces that he grants to the world and to souls, among which are those also intended for us. Let us ask the Lord Jesus for the grace that we might more and more love him in this Most Holy Sacrament.

Point 1. The soul of the religious needs love.

Let us give honor to the Lord Jesus and let us give him thanks that he has offered his love in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Now that we have left behind our family who surrounded us with love, we can always have access to his Heart. The sacrifice we made in giving ourselves to God did not change our nature. In the religious garb we remain the same as we were in our families, our hearts always needing love. Whose heart can now respond to the needs of our heart? Indeed, living in the Congregation, we have friendships, but did they ever fulfill the desires of our heart? There, in the Most Blessed Sacrament is to be found the Heart who will respond to the needs of the religious soul. Before him she reveals her deepest sentiments.

The Heart of Jesus is the Heart of God and the ocean of goodness. He knows the religious soul, he loves, blesses and calls her. Is it possible to ask anything more? Convinced of the love of this Most Sacred Heart, she gives herself to him completely. By this self-giving, she comes to close union with the Lord Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and this intimate and holy union gives meaning and beauty to the religious life. The Most Blessed Sacrament becomes for the religious soul the sole object of her love and the one who provides for all her needs. Possessing this treasure, she does not regret leaving anything. Others may have father, mother, wife or husband, brothers or sisters, but the religious soul has the Lord Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. All the delights, pleasures and riches of this world and the world's happiness are as nothing for her, since she has Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament whom she values above all.

Jesus gives himself to us completely; let us give ourselves to him also completely and wholly. Every day he renews his death for us; let us give ourselves to him daily as an offering. He remains on the Altar for us, and, though seeming lifeless to us, yet he lives; each day, then, let us die and live for him.

Point 2. The soul of the religious needs strength.

Let us give honor to the Lord Jesus and let us give him thanks that in the Most Blessed Sacrament he has left us his strength. The religious life is difficult and contrary to our nature; our vocation demands continual mortification. We cannot do as we please concerning rest, food, or even writing a letter. O holy state of subjection of the children of God! We are subordinate in everything, demanding from us continual sacrifice. Our soul would be crushed beneath this, if only the Most Blessed Sacrament did not sustain us, giving us strength. The religious soul would never be capable of such self-denial if the Most Blessed Sacrament were taken from her. In fact, it happens that in some groups that are separated from the Church and which do not have the Most Blessed Sacrament a religious austerity does not exist there.

If everything is possible to one who believes, what is not possible for one who loves? Love gives great strength to the soul; from the Most Blessed Sacrament, the source of love and the source of strength, the religious soul can draw the strength she needs for herself in abundance. Apart from hardships and daily work, there are also difficult, painful and trying moments in the religious life. Desiring to purify the soul, God permits that she will be tried painfully and sometimes experience interior agony. No one can understand and heal such hidden wounds of suffering. How many hot tears she then sheds before the Most Blessed Sacrament. How many painful sighs she makes to God hidden in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

O my Jesus! Your most merciful Heart hears these humble laments, and only the Most Blessed Sacrament is able to soothe this silent pain. With you, O Lord, the religious soul receives the cup of bitterness, and rises strengthened. She reminds herself that she entered the Congregation in order to find the Cross, and that when God leads her along this path, the Most Blessed Sacrament will give her the strength needed to carry the cross.

Point 3. The soul of the religious needs virtues.

Let us give honor to the Lord Jesus and let us thank him that in the Most Blessed Sacrament he left us his virtues. We entered the Congregation in order to acquire the virtues the world cannot give. We left a world in which lovers crown themselves with flowers, so as to stand near the altar, beside Jesus, to tend the flowers that began to bloom on Calvary.

We vowed poverty; is anyone poorer than Jesus? On the altar he is poorer than in the manger, more destitute than on the cross. Everything that surrounds him and decorates the altar or church is a gift of love and generosity from his children. Jesus has nothing. The King of the poor desires that his love in the Most Blessed Sacrament be characterized by poverty. Behold our exemplar; even if by our vow we are bound to poverty, we will never be as poor as he was.

We sacrificed to the Lord Jesus our chastity; He gives us his chastity in the Most Blessed Sacrament. As he is pure on the Altar so everything is pure around him. Nothing can be mingled with the essence of this Sacrament; nothing is filthy that touches him; everything that surrounds him is white, and even if the Church adds different colors to this pure white, it for us, not for him. This King of virgins hides himself in the whiteness of bread. When we receive him, when we visit him, we say to him: "O purest Lord, sanctify my body, sanctify my soul, that in uniting with You, I might receive whiteness and chastity, of which you are the source."

We desire to live in obedience. Jesus, obedient unto death on the cross, does not cease being obedient on the altar. Here he is deprived of his majesty, power and freedom. Out of love for us, he impoverished himself in such a way that nothing remained for him; he cannot move or make a sign. He does not belong to himself but to others; he is at the mercy of their will, devotion and sometimes, unfortunately(!), their malice. He exposes himself even to sacrilege and to those who insult him.

O Divine obedience of Jesus! How it shames our pride and our demands! How good is this sweetest Lord that in the Most Blessed Sacrament he gives us the example of all needed virtues, so dear to those who love him.

Point 4. The soul of the religious needs hope.

Let us give honor to the Lord Jesus and let us thank Him that in the Most Blessed Sacrament he has left of the promise of his hope. "*The Imitation of Christ*" says that the life of the good religious is a cross and martyrdom. No one takes up the cross or embraces martyrdom because he finds pleasure in suffering. No one could persevere in the Congregation, who does not have the hope of a future reward and the assurance of a better life. In whatever we choose in this life, we

do all so as to attain it; and the greater is our hope, the harder we will work and the more we will take upon ourselves.

Our hope is holy and eternal; there is nothing more beautiful and surer than our hope. The Most Blessed Sacrament preserves our hope, contains all hope, and gives us hope's sweet assurance; indeed it is hope's dearest and surest pledge. The Most Blessed Sacrament belongs to the earth in the form of bread, but in its essence it is our heavenly gift. Before giving us Holy Communion, the priest says to us: *Lift up your hearts*; and during the elevation, the Church sings: *Behold the bread of Angels became the food for pilgrims*. In this way the prayer of the Church unveils before us both eternity and the vision of heaven; Holy Communion both promises and gives us God.

Possessing the Most Blessed Sacrament, the soul of the religious knows what she looks toward, and she rejoices in God who is her Savior. Waiting for this happiness is her sweetness and consolation in this life. She trusts, and her hope will not be disappointed for she consumes the bread that is the promise of future glory.

O Wondrous Mystery! What could be lacking to the soul of the religious who believes in you and loves you?