



# **Meditations and Thoughts of Blessed Klara Szczesna**

**(1863-1916)**

**Co-Foundress and  
First Superior General  
of the Sister Servants  
of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**

**&**

# **Meditations of Mother Jadwiga Wilkowska**

**Third General Superior  
of the Sister Servants of the  
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**

## **MOTHER KLARA SZCZĘSNA**

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 found not only primarily in the prolific words of the Bishop, Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, but also in the words of Mother Klara Szczęsna. Unfortunately, we do not possess much of our Mother's voice, which is why it is so important for us to record and transmit it to the Congregation's next generations. It is her word to us that so well expresses Mother Klara and characterizes her spiritual way, and at the same time is very practical regarding the community life of the Sacred Heart Sisters.

The given text is divided into two parts: To the first belongs the three meditations of Mother Klara Szczęsna, which, fortunately, have been preserved in the Congregation's archives at our Generalate in Cracow, 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 its first years of existence during which time Mother Klara was governing the new Congregation as superior, serving as mistress, and giving her personal example.

# **PART I**

## **MEDITATIONS OF MOTHER KLARA SZCZĘSNA**

### **1. OBEDIENCE**

You have the grace for obedience. What is more, besides a deep reverence toward those in authority, St. Francis de Sales teaches that 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 lighten the burdens of our superiors. Their responsibility is weighty. May they never have 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. You will then 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 first to 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 are flying wherever the Spirit of God takes them. Their wings are ever open for they are always ready to fly at God's command. Indeed, should God order it, they would be prepared even to leave heaven. Such is the image of religious obedience. As brides of the Lord, we cannot look merely to earthly images, but instead must take our example from that just described, the example from on high. Religious soul, do you recognize the voice of your Bridegroom?

Our obedience must be in every place and in everything. At all times and in all things, this vow of holy obedience subjects you to those who take the place of God –submitting 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 that is ordered her. She fulfills everything without defect, without deviating even as to time or way. She takes care not to offer God broken hosts but keeps each part whole. She will leave everything or begin everything at the first summons, going wherever she is called, without completing even the jot of a letter.

Still, this could indicate simply observing the “letter of obedience.” Obedience of the soul, however, means a surrender of the will and reason. Perfect obedience is blind, St. Ignatius says, yet in its blindness is rooted its wisdom and perfection. Imperfect obedience, on the other hand, sees through two eyes, as it were, yet to its ruin. An exterior obedience without the interior, cannot be called obedience. Whoever obeys merely in action yet without the will and reason, remains with but one foot in the convent. Renunciation of one’s free will requires great cost to our nature, yet in what nobler way can we exercise it, if not to return our will to him from whom we received it?

Obedience should be accorded to each superior, not simply towards those who are worthy of our love and respect because of their wisdom, goodness, experience of God’s Spirit or great holiness. It should also include those superiors who do not possess such qualities. Not only should obedience be given to the highest superior, but to all lesser ones as well, even the youngest and most imperfect, since we are obliged to obey not the supernatural gifts of our superiors but the God whom our superiors represent.

We must obey in every age, regardless of our state of health or weakness, even unto old age and the tomb, obeying, even if formerly we were carrying out the most important tasks for the Congregation or had held the highest offices. To the last moment of her life, the good religious loves to be as a child in the hands of obedience. 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 not regarded the offering of your obedience as some great thing you have done for your God? O that from now on your aversions would be burnt in holocaust, and your heart would be enkindled with a true love for God!

Holy obedience is faithful to the Rule, since apart from it there is no holiness or salvation for religious souls. Each religious is obliged not only to strive 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 the hermit’s, and the holiness of a contemplative differs from that required 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 will find the spirit of the religious Congregation to which we belong and its aim and means, there we find the end to which we must strive and the path upon which we should walk. We cannot transgress our Rule without

transgressing our sanctity and the will of God. St. Thomas writes that any transgression of the Rule naturally leads to transgression of the vows; there is but one step between the first transgression and the second. 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 becomes an accusation before the judgment of God. As servants of the Gospel, the Lord will ask us what we did with our decision and our holy, free covenant. The Order that willed to accept us, can now reproach us: I received you as children under the condition that you would 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. Moreover, they say that it does not oblige them in what does not refer directly to the vows, or where the transgression fails to be accompanied or followed by some sinful situation burdening them with guilt –guilt, we might add, 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 God’s wisdom whereby he desires to pour out his graces 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 perfectly fulfill the great commandment of fraternal love, to burn with eagerness for the salvation of your neighbor, and to serve also as a good example. How do you fulfill this, if, instead of being a good example you are a bad one? Truly, there is no worse scandal than the religious who does not keep the Rule, the one who is unfaithful and who easily transgresses the Holy Gospel. The epidemic of bad example is always terrible. Infidelity to the Rule immediately brings about infidelity to holy obligations, impedes manifold graces for the religious life, and ushers within the walls of our convents a worldly spirit, gossip, disorder and ruin.

The holy state of religious life withdraws you from false goods, while leading you closer to God through devotional exercises. These two great means of sanctification necessarily demand faithfulness in all the prescriptions of the Rule. They require obedience to the holy precepts that safeguard you from all you renounced through your vows. For example, if you do not desire to keep the rules about mortification of the senses, you certainly put yourself in danger of transgressing the most delicate virtue and others as well. Similarly, devotional exercises in the Congregation such as meditation, examination of conscience and spiritual reading require recollection and a free and pure thinking. Can we truly speak with God following worldly conversation or after committing a transgression of the rule that invites chaos and unrest into our soul or ignites enkindled passion, worldly pleasure and the like?

O God, how many things impede your grace! Yet a faithful observance leads us to holiness. Because God is the highest holiness, a person’s holiness depends upon his union with God and his conformity to God’s will. Indeed, true love –and therefore true

holiness—rests upon this. What brought forth the saints if not the knowledge of God’s will and their continual surrender to it in a spirit of faith –and yet this we are granted in our Rule. The Rule sanctifies not only a part of our life, but all of it. You may not hear at each moment the voice of the superiors giving you divine commands, however the Rule is always speaking and revealing what God asks of you. One of the great popes has said that he would at once canonize the religious who had perfectly kept the Rule. Heaven, then, is yours, since the living of the Rule confers it upon you! What an easy path! What cause then for coldness and negligence! The obligations of the Rule do not daunt our weakness, nor are they beyond our strength; they are neither too far from us nor too high, rather, they are before our eyes and close at hand. Is the perfect keeping of the Rule difficult? What could be easier than to rise or retire, pray or be silent at the appointed time? The daily practice of the Rule is the practice of our love for God, and what could be sweeter? What else 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 above all a love for neighbor and a zeal for souls. Jesus himself is the strongest reason for us to love our neighbor, since he himself loves him. Indeed, Jesus demands that we love our neighbor, he resides within him that we might love the Lord therein. If the Manger, Calvary and the Altar speak so clearly to you of Jesus’ love for you, do they not also tell of his love for others? O how you would love your neighbor if you would seek his value within the Heart of the suffering God!

If you could but see the immeasurable love that he who is holiness and justice itself holds toward this person –who for you seems so unpleasant and unfriendly –with what different eyes you would view him! If you could but see with what sweet mercy Jesus regards him whom you deem so unworthy, would you not then have just a little mercy for him? If you could only know how in hurting this person you are somehow wounding the apple of the Savior’s eye! Love of God and love of neighbor are one. They cannot be separated, since the object of their love is one and the same: to love God for his own sake or to love our neighbor for his sake, is equally to love God. Christ’s disciples will distinguish themselves by their abundance of love.

The Heavenly Master commanded the Apostles to love one another as he loves them, and his Heart greatly desires this 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. Such are the glories of love for neighbor. Jesus is within our neighbor. Whatever you do to the least of my brothers you do unto me. At the

moment of judgment you will not judge your neighbor but yourself. When you sadden and offend someone, you sadden and offend Jesus. In persecuting Christians, St. Paul persecuted Jesus. In covering a naked man, St. Martin covered Jesus. How dare you refuse a moment of patience, a word of consolation, a service or a piece of bread to him who did not refuse you one drop of His blood?

In giving us his commandment of fraternal love, the Lord Jesus desires that our love take the form and likeness of his own, that is, that it be supernatural –a love for God and in God that does not arise from nature and the senses. Adore within the soul of your neighbor the image of God and the great ransom of God’s Blood. Love your neighbor, and if, for the good of his soul you must make some unpleasant reproof, do not hesitate to do so. Even should your neighbor forget his salvation, you must love it. Our love should be universal since Jesus died for all. Even the Lord’s worst enemies had a share in his charity. He prayed for his persecutors. If we love God in our neighbors, we recognize that there is no one so miserable that he cannot have access to our love. However not everyone has the same access. Have a threefold love: maternal love toward those whom providence places under your care, childlike love towards your superiors and sisterly love for your Sisters in God.

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

### **3. MEEKNESS**

Jesus has said, “Blessed are the meek,” which is to say, ‘Blessed are the gentle.’ The characteristics of Jesus are gentleness and sweetness. They are the rays of his divine happiness. Jesus was meek, sweet and good; he promises that the meek will inherit the earth and calls the peacemakers 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. In order not to blind the soul by his greatness, sweetly he then cries out: 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, I have assumed your body and carried your crimes so as to reconcile you with the Father and to teach you the secret of happiness, namely this, 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 fire from heaven 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. In actuality, to what greater extent did Jesus surpass these prophecies! His mere presence –so full of sweetness, calmed sadness. Of him it was often said: Let us go to Sweetness itself. In his public life, how patiently he endured the constant imperfection of His disciples, as well as 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 respecting all the while their dignity and teaching. Always he received wayward souls with the sweetest compassion, such that human malice would call him ‘friend of sinners.’ He deKlarad firmly that he came unto this world for the sake of sinners. His sweetness converted the Samaritan woman, the 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 from that of the impatient and rough religious, she 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 follow not this Way, we find ourselves 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 throughout with his sweetness! He is so sweet upon the altar and in your heart. After receiving and adoring Him, remember to remain as long as possible in silence under that ineffable sweetness with which he is present within you. Ask him to calm all the unrest in your soul and to give you the peace beyond all understanding. Possessing this peace you are capable of being good, gentle and patient. Consider Jesus’ sweetness. Behold his sweetness, in the Sacred Host. Such sweetness will make you master over your own heart, giving you self-control and granting true victory. It will make you master over the hearts of others since this sweetness unites hearts, relieving and disarming them, converting souls and winning them for God. Finally, you will possess God’s own Heart, since nothing makes you so resemble him as does this sweetness. God, moreover, seeing in you his likeness, will not refuse you his love. The peace of a soul in possession of 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 singular way, he rewards sweetness –that virtue of Jesus—and hearkens to its prayers.



## **PART II**

# **THOUGHTS OF MOTHER KLARA SZCZĘSNA 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 does she desire that anything will be hidden.

She is not angry when others disclose her transgressions.

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

She looks in all things for a means to mortify and overcome herself, particularly what is humiliating to her and which can remove 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 merely satisfy her mind's curiosity.

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

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

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

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

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

She burns with a desire for holiness and perfection, yet 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 advice from her and direction on how she should avoid sin and transgressions, acquire virtues and perfect her interior and exterior behavior from day to day.

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, but whenever possible attributes good to everything.

She refers to her mistress whatever could cause harm either to the Congregation, the transgressor or others.

She comes out of the novitiate most steadfast. On one hand she has so great a hatred for sin and imperfection, while on the other, such great love for virtue and perfection that, without anyone's notice, she lives as perfectly as if under the eye of the superior –as should every religious.

## **2. A RELIGIOUS ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF JESUS**

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

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

She longs for but one thing: her Divine Spouse, thus she desires his love, aspires 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, hence she has an aversion for the world and all its vanity and desires to live a hidden life.

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

She has but one abode: the Heart of the Lord Jesus.

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

## 4. 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 asserted 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 she 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, while it is not obligatory a Sister, if she chooses, may 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 become 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. Should a religious desire to live solely according to the counsels of 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 then takes greater care of them.

The religious should have compassion for her superiors, for while on one hand they are obliged to be mindful of the strength of their subjects, 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.

## 5. THE SUPERIORS TOWARD THEIR SUBJECTS

The superior has the obligation to be vigilant –perhaps even more vigilant –over herself, as well as over her subjects. She should care for all their needs –the health of their bodies and the sanctification of their souls –and 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 allow neither transgressions of the Rule nor neglect of religious tradition.

One of the most essential virtues for the superior is prudence, by which she will know how to discern the 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, the visits not too frequent, the conversations not prolonged, and that after such 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 a 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 sweeten the bitterness by assuring this Sister that it is only out of love that she must correct her.

Mother Klara often deKlarad that the superior could undoubtedly rule the entire house contentedly provided she gains her subjects' respect, love and trust. The superior will gain their respect if she does not avoid difficult situations. She will gain their love if she treats all Sisters equally and takes into particular consideration the Sisters who are sick, older, or who in serving others will neglect their own needs. She gains their trust by showing a sincere solicitude and the respect due to what is revealed to her in confidence and which she does not divulge to anyone. May the superior rejoice and thank God when she sees that all Sisters are striving together toward perfection. If there are Sisters who murmur, let her recall that the Lord Jesus –exemplar and ideal for the perfect superior – endured the traitor Judas who harmed him more than we can ever imagine.

May the superior pray ardently each day for 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, let her try at least to console the Sister with good words, that the Sister might leave her presence encouraged. Let the superior bear in mind that for the religious there is no greater consolation or better sweetness amid the difficulties she endures than a sincere conversation with her superior and the kind interest she receives from her superior from time to time.

## **6. THE ELECTION OF SUPERIORS**

Happiness or misfortune, devotion or lack of zeal in the Congregation rests in great part with the superiors, whenever there is lack of religious observance within the convent, they are responsible. When, in seeking their own comfort in everything, the superiors fail to give good example, the religious Rule becomes a dead letter. No Sister enters with the intention to harm the Congregation; rather each Sister brings a reserve of good will. If she will find superiors who know how to direct this good will, she will become a saint. However, should she encounter superiors who do not burn with zeal for the salvation of souls, 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 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, those 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; who are most zealous for the good of the Congregation and most faithful in keeping the religious Rule; those most prudent in caring for the Congregation's interests and who have the least affinity toward 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.

## **PART III**

# **MEDITATIONS OF MOTHER JADWIGA WILKOWSKA**

The meditations of Mother Klara Szczęsna, recorded in the first section, were not completed by Mother Klara but by Mother Jadwiga Wilkowska. Mother Jadwiga included Mother Klara's meditations in the same notebook with those of her own that follow. Since Mother Jadwiga's meditations bear such close likeness to those of Mother Klara, they are fittingly published here. Moreover, there is also another important reason for their inclusion, namely, the very person of Mother Jadwiga herself. In recounting about 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 resembled M. Klara's most closely. Mother Jadwiga's life testifies to this, as does the reputation she left after death.

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 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.

Because of these her human qualities, M. Jadwiga was a true mother, a long-time mistress of novices and superior. The notebook she handed down gives witness to her deep spiritual life. In this notebook is found a sixteen-point program of her spiritual life. For example: Do not offend your neighbor in thought, word or deed. Do not despise your neighbor in any circumstance. Do not be jealous of anything, neither interior nor 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, and 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 in some way a conclusion of the meditation of M. Klara Szczęsna on meekness, it essentially establishes, however, a separate subject, namely, the apostolate of the religious soul acting as an instrument in 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, that is, the Most Blessed Sacrament, describing under four aspects particular to the religious soul, the Eucharistic Lord Jesus as, (a) the love of her heart; (b) the power of her life; (c) her example of virtues and (d) her 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 participates in the life of Jesus in greater measure than do others. As she has taken Jesus to be her master, leader, and bridegroom, she stands beneath his holy banner of salvation and must fight together with him and all his hosts of saints against the camp of Lucifer. 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 teach the little ones, to seek out the lost, to be consumed as a victim for the whole world and to die 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 for Jesus does; she would give her life for each soul since Jesus has given his life. She saves souls for Jesus cries out urgently: “Save souls, do not spare yourself, save souls,” and she will save many if, instead of being wanting in fervor, she is enkindled with zeal. Out of gratitude for Jesus who saved her, she would save souls and cast them into His arms, a thing he so desires and asks for. She will stand beside the child’s crib or at 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, through prayer, counsel and example, to bring about with him the sanctification of our neighbor for the sake of our neighbor’s eternal happiness. To convert a sinner is a greater thing than raising 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 our selves. As the heavens are higher than the earth and eternity longer than time, so concern for souls is more perfect, cries out more loudly to God, and removes 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 of which he wants to make 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 by faith penetrate the Eucharistic veil. Let us contemplate the Lord Jesus on his throne of love surrounded by the light emanating from his open Heart and his most sacred wounds. This light represents the many graces he grants the world and souls, some of which are those also intended for us. Let us ask the Lord Jesus for the grace that we may love him more and more in this Most Holy Sacrament.

### **Point 1.**

#### **The soul of the religious needs love**

Let us give honor to the Lord Jesus and thank him 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 ever 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 in need of love. What heart can now respond to the needs of our heart? Indeed, living in the Congregation, we have friendships, but have they ever fulfilled the desires of our heart? There, in the Most Blessed Sacrament is found the Heart who will respond to the needs of the soul of the religious. 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, 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 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 to her, for in the Most Blessed Sacrament she has Jesus whom she values above all.



Jesus gives himself to us completely; let us likewise give ourselves to him completely and wholly. Each day he renews his death for us; let us daily give ourselves as an offering. He remains on the Altar for us, and, though he seems 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 thank him 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 for the children of God! We are subordinate in everything, requiring continual sacrifice from us. Our soul would be crushed beneath this, were the Most Blessed Sacrament not sustaining us, giving us strength. The religious would never be capable of such self-denial were the Most Blessed Sacrament to be 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 to 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 can draw in abundance the strength she needs for herself. 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 sorely tried and sometimes experience interior agony. No one can understand and heal such hidden wounds of suffering. How many hot tears she will then shed before the Most Blessed Sacrament. How many painful sighs 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 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 so as to acquire the virtues that the world cannot give. We left a world in which lovers crown themselves with flowers, so as to stand close to the altar, beside Jesus, and 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 though we are bound to poverty through our vow, we shall never be as poor as he was.

We sacrificed our chastity to the Lord Jesus; He gives us his chastity in the Most Blessed Sacrament. As he is pure on the Altar so everything is pure surrounding him. Nothing can be mingled with the essence of this Sacrament, nothing filthy that touches him. All that surrounds him is white, and even should the Church add different colors to this pure white, this is 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. For love of 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, their 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 a 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 everything so as to attain it; and the greater our hope, the harder we shall work, the more we shall take upon ourselves.

Our hope is holy and eternal; indeed, there is nothing more beautiful and surer than our hope. The Most Blessed Sacrament preserves our hope, encompasses all hope, and offers 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 become food for pilgrims. In this way the prayer of the Church unveils to us both eternity and the heavenly vision; Holy Communion both promises and gives us God.

Possessing the Most Blessed Sacrament, the soul of the religious knows what she looks to, and she rejoices in the 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 pledge of future glory.

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