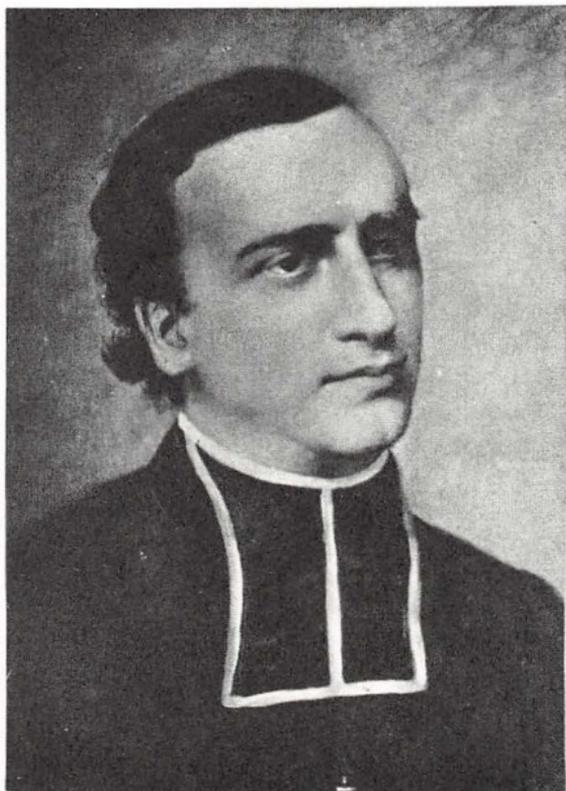


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REV. FATHER PETER VICTOR BRAUN.
Founder of the Sisters of the Sacred
Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

THE SPIRIT OF FATHER VICTOR BRAUN

A

Centenary Tribute

October 1866—1966



" May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved "

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The Spirit of Father Victor Braun.

*“Extract from the Decree on Adaptation and Renewal of
Religious Life.*

Vatican Council II, October 5th, 1965.

It resounds to the good of The Church that Institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore let their Founders' Spirit and special Aims they set before them, as well as their sound traditions—all of which make up the patrimony of each Institute—be faithfully

HELD IN HONOUR !

(Section 2)

The Spirit of Father Victor Braun.

Introduction.

The whole background of this little work is Vatican Council II, which, in 1965, by its Decree on Renewal of the Religious Life, urged all Religious to adapt their original activities to the changed conditions of our times, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the guidance of the Church. Let their Founders' spirit and special aims, however, as well as their sound traditions, be faithfully held in honour.

On that background we here have tried to create a picture of the original Founder, and his deeply rooted devotion to the service of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. We use only his own words to reveal his spirit and his aims. The long letters he wrote to his Dear Daughters must have cost him hours of a long night, for his days were spent among them and their orphans and a multitude of activities :

Chapter

Letter from the Reverend Father Victor Braun.

June 2nd, 1876.

*To all the Superiors and Sisters,
Present and to Come.*

You fully understand, my Daughters, the End and Aim of your Institute, the cause of its being, the dominant thought of your Superior and Founder. At the head of your Constitutions we read that this little Society is entirely consecrated to The Glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to The Propagation of its Worship!

Such is the End which all its members should propose to themselves—to render Him *Love* for Love, to *thank* Him for all His benefits, and to *Repair* the outrages He constantly endures.

Love! Glory! Thanksgiving! Reparation!

If ever you come to forget this fourfold end of your Congregation you would no longer have any reason to exist! Your device, then, should be this:

“All for the Greater Glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus”.

To Love the Sacred Heart, to be Victims of *Reparation*.

To thank Him for His Graces to all mankind.

To increase His Glory on earth by *your Apostolate!*

This is what you have done since the first day of the Foundation of your little Institute in 1866! You have been blessed in so admirable a manner! Now, in 1876, you are already in fourteen Dioceses and four Countries! Is it not to each

one of you, as well as to Blessed Margaret Mary, your Patroness and your Model, that Our Lord has confided this beautiful Mission, when He said—My Divine Heart, full of love for mankind, wills to spread the flames of Its ardent charity *by means of thee*—to enrich souls with Its precious treasures of the graces they have such need of! And you have chosen, an abyss of unworthiness and ignorance, for the accomplishment of so great a design, so that all may be done **BY ME!** Where could we find a more beautiful vocation than this, my Daughter? Do not your hearts rejoice with gratitude—yet abasing yourselves deeply at the sight of your miseries and sins? You cannot exercise your sublime mission with fruit unless you sacrifice yourselves as victims of Reparation; Is not that meant by St. Paul when he says, ‘If you will be grafted on the resemblance of the glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ, you must be also grafted on the resemblance of His immolation and death. Therefore, I conjure you to offer your body to the Lord, as a living and holy victim, rendering to God the adoration and love which are His due; victims to expiate our daily faults, and to practice virtue, and to reproduce in ourselves the image of Jesus Christ immolated—without which image God the Father has declared that He will not recognise us as His children!’

You know, my Daughters, that beside this general vocation to the life of immolation inseparable from a Christlike life, you have also a particular vocation as Sisters of the Sacred Heart to be Victims of Reparation, by uniting yourselves in a special manner to the Sufferings of Jesus

Christ, thus aiding Him in the working out of His designs.

At the epoch especially foretold by St. Gertrude when faith should be almost extinct and charity grown cold—in what age have the flames of charity been colder than in ours! The times are bad—the demon, the Prince of this World, reigns everywhere as sovereign lord; the minds of men are led away, their wills turned towards impiety—conscience is now only an idle word, smiled at! The elementary notions of good and evil have disappeared; humanity, blinded by thousands of journals and pamphlets is dying—honesty, virtue, justice, moral truth, all is disappearing, nothing remains! But No! There still remains to us the Heart of Jesus—we, servants of the Sacred Heart, interpose ourselves between Divine Justice and the sins of men! In entering this Community you have taken the sentiments of Jesus Christ when coming into the world saying to His Father, “BEHOLD I COME TO DO THY WILL”—to be immolated as He was—where, when and how it should please Him; to remain abandoned on the Altar of Sacrifice, body, soul, heart, a continual Holocaust, to implore mercy for poor sinners! You have asked Him the cause of His sorrow, and He has said to you as to your Blessed Patroness, Margaret Mary, “It is the extreme Ingratitude of man, and particularly of souls consecrated to Me, who yet share their hearts with creatures”. You have offered yourselves entirely to Him, to compensate and console Him for the forgetfulness of men, for the crimes of sinners, for the sacrileges, the abandonment He suffers in the Holy Tabernacle—the Most Blessed Sacrament—

for your own infidelities and for mine! Penetrated with the sense of your unworthiness, you have implored Our Lord to have pity on your weakness. "Fear nothing!" He has replied. "I will be your strength! Only listen to what I desire of thee, and dispose thyself for the accomplishment of my designs." Never omit your Act of Reparation each day, nor your First Friday, a day of special Reparation, nor your first daily act on awakening in the morning, every thought and word and deed, an Act of Reparation to The Sacred Heart! How could you speak to the poor and sick, and to poor sinners of that Loving Heart, if your own heart were not aflame with love of your Celestial Spouse?

The honour of His choice of you has been accepted by you with deep humility, with generosity, while knowing and seeing in it difficulties, sufferings, pains, humiliations, but be not disturbed by these nor astonished at the repugnances poor nature experiences! Your Patroness, Blessed Margaret Mary, suffered all these very bitterly, but they did not prevent her from being to the last a holy and efficacious victim of reparation and love. Had He not warned her, "I will be thy torment, but I will also be thy Joy and Consolation.

Who among you would refuse to hold back that Arm of Divine Justice ready to strike the guilty and will your selfishness, your sensuality shrink before the sacrifices the Heart of Jesus demands of you? No! I cannot believe that a single one among you would be capable of such cowardice or such culpable indifference! You will make no resistance to His Will, nor to the manner in which He will dispose of you by obedience. Listen again to the

voice of the Sacred Heart, to Blessed Margaret Mary; "You are my chosen victim. By my Almighty Power you will forget your own nothingness. My love will never be idle in you, ever acting and suffering, never taking any credit for yourself, any more than as the tool in the hand of its master." You also, my Daughters, have heard this Divine Call! Sacrifice yourselves with Christ, and to Christ, your Divine Spouse, judged, contradicted, crucified as He was! and according to His good pleasure. Strive to conform yourselves to Him, Who was "Meek and Humble of Heart." To do this, you will not do anything beyond your exact obedience to the obligations imposed by your Rule! Offer your words and acts, pain and contradictions of all kinds attached to the perfect fulfilment of your duties to those entrusted to your care, the poor, the sick, the aged, the children, the young women under your protection. This generous offering will obtain for you more surely from Our Lord all the other graces you ask of Him in each Mass and Holy Communion for yourselves and relations and friends. We may not murmur under trials but must even be glad to have them to suffer with our suffering Spouse. We should endeavour to spread Devotion to the Sacred Heart by a thousand little means which your zeal will suggest to you, and by which you have hitherto edified all. You will distribute pictures of the Sacred Heart, prayers, medals, etc. You will also encourage others to be enrolled in the Apostleship of Prayer, and in the Guard of Honour.

I will now point out the interior means to attain our holy purposes, our ends.

1st. A great purity of heart. St. Paul says, "Jesus Christ offered Himself to His Father as a Spotless Victim, and has thus become the Mediator of the New Testament." Thus must we interpose ourselves to mediate between Divine Justice and Sinners. But how could we do this if we ourselves are objects of His anger?

2nd. The Spirit of Self sacrifice! Beware of complaining when you suffer inconveniences in food, domestic discomforts, clothing, housing, or employments, unless indeed, your health be compromised. And then do not complain among yourselves, but put your case humbly before the Superior who will remedy it, if possible, with a maternal solicitude.

3rd. *The Interior Spirit.* The Office of Reparation is united with the office of the adoring angels. Like them, we should never lose sight of God, although they are always ministering to His people. Thus, in your distracting employments, in your necessary relations with the world, even in your recreations, you should think of the Presence of your Divine Spouse. You will edify others and draw them to God, and thus the Interior Spirit will reign in your Community. We should try to be both Martha and Mary, uniting the Active Life with the Contemplative. I propose to speak to you more at length when we shall have the happiness in our Spiritual Conferences to discourse on this beautiful subject. May our Good God grant me a few more years of life, and a little strength and light to penetrate your hearts with love of your Holy Vocation on which I have conversed with you since the first days of your Foundation.

This letter will be read in all the Houses as soon as it arrives, and kept in the archives, as will be the original in those of the Mother House of Argenteuil.

Written and signed, June 2nd, 1876, first Friday of the month of the Sacred Heart :

Your Father in God, Victor Braun,
Superior General.

Chapter II

September 5th, 1873.

Part of a long letter from Paray-le Monial.

May this date always remain graven on your memories, as on that of your Father!

The Consecration of all our Congregation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was made by me, your Father and Founder, to whom, on the eve of my departure to Paray-le-Monial, you had confided this charge. I did this when beginning the Holy Sacrifice for all the members of the Institute on the 5th of September, 1873, at half-past two in the morning. Our Sisters received Holy Communion within two steps of the place where their patroness, Blessed Margaret Mary, knelt when Our Lord appeared to her. When I held the Sacred Host in my hands, all unworthy, I understood that His Heart bled at the sight of my sins and yours, and that He asked of me Reparation in my own name and in yours, not only for the time when we knew not the love of this dear Heart, but also since the moment when we consecrated ourselves solemnly to Him. I then made this Reparation of Honour as best I could, promising Him that henceforth, not only would we not grieve Him ourselves, but that we would all, to the best of our power, repair the outrages with which each day sinners overwhelm Him. This is our special mission. Do not yield it to others! You are the comforters of that suffering Heart! Like Veronica, wipe the Adorable Face of your Saviour. He casts His Eyes on you and His Heart is touched, and sinners are spared! I still held in my hands the Sacred Host! I prayed Our Lord to be Himself the Great Reparation for all

our sins, yours and mine, and those of the whole world. You were all present in my heart, and I placed you all in the Sacred Side of that Adorable Heart. I told Him that you all wished to live and die in this pure and holy love as you have so often promised Him! May we not now hope for great things for our dear family, a new era of spiritual and even temporal prosperity?

The Blessed Margaret Mary was speaking to all Religious Communities when she said: Religious who embrace this Devotion to the Sacred Heart will draw from thence such help, that no other means will be needed to restore fervour and the most exact regularity in the most lax Communities, and to bring to the height of perfection those who already live in exact regularity. Your Superiors, who are often much discouraged, have much to hope for from this. No artifices of Satan could ruin their work if it is based on a spirit of simplicity and humility, if the Sacred Heart is their Protector!

In the room in which Blessed Margaret Mary died, the Superior of the Visitation Sisters has deposited our Rules and Constitutions, gilded and bound in red morocco. The Saint will, I hope, obtain for you the grace to understand them, and to put them into practice until death, as she herself did.

Let the Divine Heart of Jesus, my dear Sisters, ever reign over you as your Sovereign Master and Spouse! Do you thank Him enough for confiding to you the beautiful mission of propagating this Devotion to His Sacred Heart? I urge you to be very faithful to all the pious practices of this

Devotion which have been customary in our Congregation from the first days of its foundation. Keep alive in your hearts this devotion, excite and preserve it in the hearts of those over whom you may have influence.

Thus will you draw down the blessings of Heaven on yourselves and on your good works, and will merit more from day to day the holy title you bear. Amongst these pious practices the chief ones are:—

- I. The Holy Hour every Thursday.
- II. The Act of Reparation daily after Vespers.
- III. The First Friday Holy Communion of Reparation.
- IV. The “Nine Fridays” promulgated among the Faithful with whom you work.
- V. The Celebration of the Feast of the Sacred Heart.
- VI. The observing of The Guard of Honour.
- VII. The invocation, May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart pray for us.
- VIII. The Blessing of the Hour.
- IX. Prayer for the Dying, Agonising Heart of Jesus, have pity on the dying.
- X. A Statue or Picture of the Sacred Heart in every room occupied by the Sisters and their charges, men, women and children.
- XI. The veneration of a Relic of Blessed Margaret Mary to be retained in every House.
- XII. The singing of, “Heart of Jesus, burning with love for me, inflame my Heart with love of Thee.

XIII. The ringing of the Agony Bell, and the three Paters and Aves with extended arms at 3 o'clock each Friday.

Père Braun, Superior General.

Argenteuil, the 19th of September, 1873.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be known, loved and glorified by the whole world!

Chapter III

Consecration to Our Lady of The Sacred Heart.

I WILL BECOME A SAINT !

Homerton (London), 12th October, 1872.

Vigil of the Maternity of Mary.

"May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be Everywhere loved!"

My Daughters,

How I regret that our poverty does not permit of our joining the great Pilgrimage at Issomdin, where Our Bishops will consecrate anew our poor France to Mary, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, on the 19th of this month. I console myself that our little orphans of Argenteuil can go on that day to the Pilgrimage of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at Ermoret; their prayers will obtain for us all, I hope, numerous graces and privileges. In all our Houses on that day you will renew the Consecration (so often already made) of your dear Congregation. The day is well chosen, it is the Feast of our holy Patroness, Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque.

What will you say to your Mother, Sovereign Queen of that Heart to Which you have consecrated your life, your soul and all your faculties? Each one of you will say from the bottom of your heart, "I will become a Saint! Mary, you who have adopted me for your child, help me! I will become a Saint! But I must allow myself patiently to be humiliated, to be forgotten, to be put on one side! Never mind! I am resolved I will become a Saint! I must never excuse myself, never be impatient, bad-tempered! I must do violence to my-

self, must submit my will to that of my Superior, never sulk, dispute, doing my work well to the end, however distasteful it may be! Never mind! I must love all my Sisters, doing humble little services readily and happily, even when I am displeased, never mind! I am resolved to be a Saint! I must constantly resist the sway of my proud nature, so cowardly, so vain, my antipathies which lead me to abstain from speaking to those I do not like! Never mind!, I will become a Saint, because I know Thou wilt be near me, O Heart of Jesus! O Mary, my Mother, Queen, Mistress of the Heart of Jesus, Hope of the Hopeless, you will help me! I will be thy true servant, according to the Divine Heart! Then all will be easy! My Daughters, in doing your best to fulfill your duties every day, you will be doing what the Saints have done, not more than you do, but they did it as Saints do! I must now stop, for the post is waiting for my letter. I confide you all, each and everyone to our common Mother, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart!

All to you all, in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,
your Father Braun,

12th October, Vigil of the Feast of the
Maternity of Mary,
London, 1872.

** The new feast of the Divine Motherhood is
October 11th.*

Chapter IV

Conference, 23rd January, 1880.

At the Mother House, Argenteuil.

Reverend Father Braun had been away, visiting the Houses in Austria and in England. He had just received a welcoming address from the Community of the Mother House. He thanks them thus:—

Let me thank you for those wishes which express so kindly your joy and happiness on my return to you!

Well, yes! Here I am back once more in your midst many weeks, even months have passed since my departure. When I left you the trees were still covered with green leaves. Now they are all fallen, and nothing is to be seen but bare branches covered with snow. I know that this winter has been a very hard one for you, and that you have suffered a great deal from the cold. We have not had in London, it is true, much frost and snow, but we had what is worse, continual fogs, so much so that we were forced to have the gas lighting all day, and this, I must own, caused me great suffering, and greatly impaired my health. I passed many nights without sleep or rest! But these restless hours were not lost! They were usefully employed for you. I endeavoured to finish the great work and mission which Almighty God has confided to me, for I said to myself, "The years are rapidly flying by. I see my hair turning grey! I must work hard, for it is no small undertaking to lay the Foundation of a Religious Congregation!" This work cost me great fatigue and labour. I was obliged to study, to think, and to pray; to look over a number of books, and different notes that I had taken years before. Like a child ever docile to our Holy Mother

the Church, I said to myself, "I will do nothing by myself; I will not write a single word which has not been dictated by this good Mother!"

In giving you these Rules I simply follow her teaching. And all these letters, each word of your Directory has been dictated by the Holy Spirit, and therefore I am certain that I am not mistaken. These Rules, it is true, you have already received. But I wish to give you a more exact and clearer explanation, in order that you may better understand your obligations. For this end I am endeavouring to finish your Directory.

Now I must tell you of an inspiration, for it was after Mass that it came to me. In England, there are a great many young persons who have presented themselves to be received into our Community, fifteen of whom have been accepted, but were not able to enter yet because there was no room for them at this time. We told them to wait, but some among them had already waited six months, and even a year. In the end they lost patience, and entered other Communities.

Taking this into consideration, I said to myself, "Why not establish an English Novitiate in France? At St. Cloud where there is a large House?" It is now well determined, though it has not yet been spoken of to you, that is to say, you have not been told it officially. We have now so far decided that there are already ten Aspirants waiting for the Novitiate to be established in order to join us. Now that I am back I will see to it at once. In a fortnight's time I hope all will be ready. It will be a real English Novitiate where the same Rule will be followed, and the same Exercises, only in English.

Now that I have spoken to you concerning your Directory, I will join to it the thoughts of Reparation, of which your Mother has just spoken in her Compliment. You know that my first thought in establishing your Community was Reparation, and I would wish it to be yours now at this time especially when the whole of Catholic Europe, not only in France, but in almost every country in the world is pressed and induced, as it were, by Satan, to commit evil! Russia is overthrown! Here in England a terrible sacrilege has just been committed against the Blessed Sacrament, the Priest saying Mass shot by a freemason, the Chalice upset, the Sacred Hosts scattered on the ground! Then came up a good Irishman along with another Priest, seized the would-be assassin and took him to the Court. The Celebrant had not been touched!

The Cardinal, Archbishop of Westminster, Dr. Manning, ordered public prayers to be said, a Novena of Holy Communions and Masses, and an Act of Reparation twice a day during the Novena. It was in the Italian Church all this happened. You see how necessary Reparation is, even were this the only Sacrilegious crime in the world! It would be quite sufficient to make you sacrifice yourselves and become victims of Reparation.

And now I will speak to you on Obedience. St. Vincent de Paul wrote that "Obedience without the obedience of the judgment is the obedience of Satan!" These are very strong words, but very true words! Obedience not accompanied with a spirit of Faith, that is to say, when we do not see God in the person of our Superior who commands us, then may we well say that obedience comes

from the demon! A true spirit of obedience, a spirit of Faith is what is so often wanting in you. One thing then I ask of you, it is to be always very obedient and to have a great spirit of Faith!

But now we must come to the practice of our theories. That is what I hope to do now I am back again with you, if Almighty God gives me health and strength. With the help of all our prayers and good will, we shall be able to put these theories into practice! Amen! Deo Gratias!

1st. The Spirit of the Institute.

The Spirit of Faith, simplicity, the absence of all self-seeking, true obedience, devoted love drawn from the Heart of Jesus, for all, especially for the poor and working classes, such should be our Spirit. Charity is our supreme law, and our perfection will consist in its entire accomplishment. It is founded on prayer and the interior life, since one cannot worthily glorify the Heart of Jesus, without studying its interior dispositions in order to conform ourselves to It, to imitate its love for all mankind. To know God evermore ardently into His desires for the souls He loves, to spread abroad the knowledge of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, such must be our sole end. In it we shall render love for love, thanksgiving for all the priceless gifts of grace that we receive, and will offer Reparation for the outrages He constantly endures. In the difficult works of zeal and mercy for the souls entrusted to them, let the Sisters rely on the promises of the Divine Heart to Blessed Margaret Mary.

Devotion to Saint Joseph.

The Congregation, penetrated with the Spirit

of the Heart of Jesus and Mary, proposes equally to honour with a special love Saint Joseph, the chaste spouse and guardian of the Holy Family, and patron of a happy death. Saint Joseph placed himself in the School of the Sacred Heart on the very day when that Divine Heart submitted Itself to his paternal authority long before the lips of that Divine Master had been opened to say to me,

“Learn of Me for I am
Meek and Humble of Heart.”

St. Joseph had heard uttered by His Heart in the abasement of His Incarnation and Nativity that simple lesson, and he had understood that therein were summed up the Teachings of his Divine foster Son.

Devotion to St. Francis de Sales

The Congregation places itself also under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales, that perfect model of the interior and active life, combined in works of zeal and mercy. How many motives have not the Sisters to choose the amiable Saint Francis for the special patron of their Institute! Where could they find a more perfect image of the Divine Heart of Jesus, a more perfect model of the worship which we should pay to it?

It was the spirit of humility and sweetness which made Saint Francis one of the most amiable among the Saints, and which caused the return to God of so many thousands of souls lost in the ways of error and sin.

This is the very spirit the Sisters will endeavour to acquire.

With this in view, the Institute has chosen as its principal Feasts:—

The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
The Feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.
The Feast of St. Joseph, March 19th.
The Feast of St. Francis de Sales, January 29th.
Feast of Blessed Margaret Mary, October 17th,
patroness of the Novitiate.

In all these familiar discourses, I speak, full of paternal love for you all, as simple interviews between a Father and his Daughters.

You have your Rule, your Constitutions, your Directory. Each has her own place in these Rules, in this Organisation. You know your duties, you know whom you are to obey! The cook, the nurse, the teacher, none will interfere with each other's charges! Woe to the Community whose subjects follow their own caprices, each a mistress, doing as she pleases! No! There is the one Superior, the one Organisation to be respected by all! Each charge entails its own responsibilities, which must be respected and accepted humbly and seriously before God and her Community. All this is very clear, and you know your Rules. Understand them in their true sense and spirit. I say this because there are some little Sisters who have a tendency to bear in mind one thing only, and to leave the rest! They will remember the duties of others very well, but ?

You, the older Sisters, will find that I often repeat myself, you will say you have heard that before, often! But there are always younger Sisters arriving needing these directions! My greatest care has been to complete what was yet wanting to the entire Organisation of your Congregation. At the age to which I have come, death may surprise me.

I have therefore hastened to put in order the notes I have already gathered during some years past. Later on, the Chapter General will correct, complete and perfect the whole.

Your Father in the Heart of Jesus,
Victor Braun, Superior General,
Rudolph Hospital, Vienna, December 1st, 1878.

Conference.

Poverty. Every Sister should consider the Virtue of Poverty as her strong rampart, and love it as her mother. It prevents softness, simplifies all our wants, and disengages us from all ties, renders us free for the service of God. Let all understand plainly the vow which they have made, in order to keep it quite inviolate for love of Him Who made Himself poor for love of us; may we experience sometimes its effects according to the measure of a holy discretion.

All shall religiously take care of the objects of the House, regarding them as consecrated to God. As to what the Congregation puts at their disposal, they shall remove from their hearts all feelings of private property, keeping themselves always ready to abandon anything at the least sign of Obedience.

The duty of Superiors is to provide each Sister with all that is necessary; the custom called 'peculium' is forbidden, as injurious to the spirit of poverty.

Therefore, no Sister shall be allowed to possess money proceeding from some small income, from friends, or elsewhere, which the Superior might consent to leave her the free use of either for herself or for others. Everything in use, and in furniture should express simplicity and holy poverty. All shall take great care of their own tidiness and cleanliness in their employments and in other matters, as well for edification, as in the interests of holy poverty and even of health.

Conference.

For the Preservation of the Religious Spirit.

The Sisters will remind themselves unceasingly that they have need of being humble to save their souls. They have need of humiliations, and for this reason should seek occasions of doing the acts of penance practised publicly by the Community.

The fervour of the Sisters should be ardent enough towards the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar to manifest it by their humble and recollected posture, by the earnestness of their vocal prayers, in the singing of hymns, and, above all, by their fidelity to the very important act of Thanksgiving after Mass.

The substance of your Rules and Constitutions is a Treatise on Perfection which will not alarm you!

How easy and sweet all this will be, if the love of the Heart of Jesus is in your hearts!

Chapter V

Religious Silence.

Reverend Father Braun answers some questions asked by Sisters on the subject of Silence.

Let no Sister hope to preserve in her heart a true piety if she be not faithful to the rule of silence, if she takes pleasure in telling or hearing news, complaining in secret to other than her Superiors, speaking thoughtlessly or in too high a tone in the Convent.

Holy Silence is the Secret of the Interior Life! A Religious Silence is a Hymn of Praise to God! She who knows how to keep silence knows how to keep Holy Recollection, and therein even the most timid soul finds refuge. Silence in the presence of God is prayer and recollection and meditation, and leads to holy contemplation. To the good Religious it is the exercise the most dear. It is the guardian of her vocation, it is the hammer of vice. In keeping silence you keep holy charity; the calumniator is silenced, the innocent is spared. The art of finding and keeping peace of mind and heart is to speak little, and always to the purpose. If you would learn how to speak, learn how to keep silence. Silence in sorrow is a proof of self-sacrifice, unselfishness. Silent reserve during conversation is proof of modesty, the wise show their prudence by silence.

The Art of Governing the Tongue.

1. Prefer to listen, rather than to Speak.
2. Reflect before you speak, then to the purpose.

3. Curb the tongue when the heart is disturbed by emotion.
4. Speak after others, speak well of others, or say nothing.
5. Never excuse yourself, unless from politeness or necessity.
6. Curb curiosity, let worldly affairs speak for themselves.
7. Avoid loudness and vanity, and speaking about yourself and family matters and troubles. We all have our own, let us share them, by all means, to help with our prayers, but don't moan!
8. At recreation say only little nothings. How little is known of what Mary and Joseph said! What is recorded of the Words of Jesus, how great is the worth of every Divine Heart. Imitate the Holy Family in their speech and you will soon be perfect!
9. Repress the urge to make smart remarks that only flatter our vanity, and may wound humility, and perhaps hurt or irritate your listeners.

Chapter VI

Circular Letter, Homerton, 9th February, 1878.

The Death of H.H. Pius IX.

His Love of Children. His kindness to Us.

"May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be Everywhere loved!"

My Daughters,

His Holiness, the Pope died on the 7th of this month at 5.40, assisted by the grand Penitentiary, and surrounded by all the Cardinals. This is the news which at first we refused to believe, and which has come to us from Rome like a clap of thunder!

Pius the Ninth, the great and holy Pontiff of the Heart of Jesus, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, is no more! Mourning is deep in Rome, and in the whole universe! Sorrow and terror have seized all Christian hearts that this news has reached. He was so good, so wise! How can we believe that God consented to let him go? The Church is in such need of him at this sad time! He was so old, in spite of that, he was so strong that people were apt to deceive themselves and think that he would still live a long time. But God has His Eternal Designs which nothing can prevent, may the Will of God be done on earth as it is in Heaven!

Only yesterday we read with deep emotion his counsels full of sweetness and firmness which he gave to the Roman deputation, recommending them to have great solicitude and care in the instruction of youth.

On that day, which was the 75th Anniversary of his First Communion, the children of the City went

to Holy Communion for him, and a great number of children made their First Communion. Never had his face been seen radiant with joy! On the very eve of his death he felt perfectly well, there was nothing to make us fear that so great a misfortune was to happen a few hours later! Happy those who during his long Pontificate had been able to see those cherished features, to kiss his feet, and to hear those words of Benediction which he poured into the souls of all those pilgrims who visited Rome! We have not had that happiness, which we shall regret all our lives. But on several occasions Holy Bishops and distinguished persons have spoken to him of our little family. He listened each time with a Fatherly affection and touching interest, encouraging us, and asking us to come and ask him for the Consecration of the new Religious Family. He has several times blessed us, and as a proof of his Benediction he has sent us a large medal with his portrait on it. This we keep in the Mother House with other Religious objects of the Institute. He also signed and sent back to us with a special blessing in his own handwriting a little account which I had the happiness of sending him of our Congregation and its different works. This account is framed and preserved in the Mother House. After the Sacred Heart, it is to the prayers and blessings of our Holy Father that the Congregation owes its progress in the Religious Spirit, and the spread of their works of zeal and charity, Blessed be God! The thoughts of Pius the Ninth will never leave our hearts and memories, hoping he will be our Protector in Heaven near the Heart of Jesus, and our holy

**Father, Saint Francis de Sales whom he has lately
proclaimed Doctor of the Universal Church.**

Given at Homerton, London, 9th February, 1878.

Victor Braun, Superior General.

Chapter VII

On Fidelity to our Religious Vocation.

London, 18th September, 1872.

"May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be Everywhere loved!"

My Daughters,

One word today on fidelity to your religious vocation. You must not think you have no vocation when the spirit of religious fervour is weakening within you, and you cease to esteem your state of life! But, at that time, open your mind to your Superior or to your Confessor, and be frank and sincere with him. Tell him of the probable cause of this relaxation and temptation. This state is sometimes produced only by the enemy of your salvation who tries more violently and frequently those who really have the most certain vocations. But often it is caused by the sad consequences of cowardice, or the depression of illness. It does not come like a clap of thunder! It is ordinarily the result of accumulated infidelities, and commenced with contempt of little things! Listen to Our Lord's Voice; "He who having put his hand to the plough looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven! Remember, too, those holy desires, "One thing I have asked of the Lord, and I will not cease to ask is, to dwell in His House all the days of my life." "Thou art, O Lord, my God, my Portion for ever!" "Who shall separate me from the love of Jesus Christ? Will tribulation or anguish, or danger, or persecution?" No! No!

No creature shall separate me from the love of God! A Religious unfaithful to his vocation is a

fish out of water, a frail ship out of the harbour, abandoning it for the unknown dangers of the high seas! I called you, but you would not come! Alas! How many will lose their souls in the world who would have saved their souls by obedience to their Religious Vocation! Pray then! Reflect before God! Then you will lose your fears, you will come back to better sentiments! To renounce the holy state to which God has, in His love, called you, is to renounce the best security of your Eternal Salvation! The chains of grace being broken, there remain but few resources for those unhappy ones. Unfaithfulness to grace is punished even in this world, the unfaithful may be tormented by remorse, and become a prey to continual restlessness!

Can parents force their children to leave the Convent, and prevent vocations to Holy Religion? Not when the vocation is morally certain. God only is the Sovereign Master of His children and even of their parents themselves. God, then, has the right to call Whom He will, and to open to them the State of Life they should follow to serve Him, and to attain the end for which He has created them. Parents have no right to oppose His call, to render themselves culpable by their opposition. No! One must stay in the barque in which we are, in order to make the safe passage from this life to the next world! Stay there willingly, and with love. Might it even happen that you were placed there by the hand of man rather than by God, you are there in God's keeping! Trust Him! He will keep His Divine Hand upon you if you serve Him trustingly, lovingly! If you

are generous and true, you will consider as temptations the desires for change of place, of occupation, restlessness. While your mind is elsewhere, you will never apply yourself well to the duties under your care, and meriting for you the reward of obedience. This point is so important for the perfection of your souls that I would willingly write it with my blood! There is no vocation that has not its trials and weariness. But those who turn from this and that will never have rest. They will never be at rest but, like one in a fever, will find no quiet, no rest, no sooner in one position, but turning to another, seeking their own satisfaction. It is not the *bed*, but their own fever that disturbs them! I would be better here or there, I would like to do this or that! Our Lord, our Divine Spouse asks us to "Take up our Cross and Follow Him!" Our Almighty Father well knows what He wants of us! Can we not, will we not be generous, He Who suffered so much for us, Follow Me!! Our gratitude and love urge us to obey His Call. Shall contradictions, repugnances, aversions (all so passing away) make us answer, No!

You have been favouring and listening to your temptations, deaf to the voice of God! But now, with all your heart, you should nourish and fortify your resolution to comply with the Holy Will of God in every trial and pain that you may often have to accept in imitation of your generous Lover. But when your enemy renews his temptations fly to the feet of Christ as Magdalene did! Confide also in your Confessor, confide in your Saviour. But remember you are only one of many tempted

souls! Do not selfishly occupy their time, God is always there, and your Guardian Angel! Treat this temptation as you would one to blasphemy, treachery, despair! Reject it with indignation, pass it by! No disputing, no yielding, just prayer and humble faith till death! Remember Our Lord's promises to Margaret Mary for all those who seek light, strength and consolation in His Divine Heart. Invoke Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. What must have been her first anxiety when Gabriel announced God's Will to Her! But let her answer be your answer — Thy Will Be done! Would you persevere in your holy life; then fulfil its duties, its functions, and gain its happiness and eternal Reward! Doubts and trials come from not cherishing the interior spirit, the union of mind and heart with the things of God, living heart to heart with God our Father! Discover in yourself whatever is selfish, defective in action, root it out at once!

I conclude by saluting you in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Your Father, Victor Braun,
Convent of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart,
Eden Villas, The Grove, Stratford, London.
September 28th, 1872.

Chapter VIII

Your First Habitual Fervour!

April 6th, 1873.

*To all Houses of the Institute, London.
My Daughters in Our Lord, Jesus Christ.*

The boundless love with which the Heart of Jesus has accepted us for His servants, and even through your means brought to maturity some consoling fruits, ought not to turn you away from your first habitual fervour. Your small numbers as compared with the wants of the poor, in a word, your insufficiency to do good, these remain still. We have much to ask of the Divine Heart, to speak only of the general wants of the Congregation. There is hardly a House, unless that of London, where the number of Sisters is sufficient for the work. The pecuniary wants are also disproportionate to the resources. All the Superiors and Sisters are, as it were, weighed down beneath their task. The Novitiate, in France especially, is not sufficiently numerous to furnish them with help for some time to come. We must do violence, as it were, to the Heart of Jesus, and, by our tears and prayers, draw from It all that is still wanting to the Institute for the temporal and, above all, the spiritual needs for its very life. Ask Him to send devoted souls in great numbers to work in the same field as yourselves; several aspire to it, but stop there, kept back, as it were, by a sort of fear! Is not this because the Heart of Jesus is not satisfied with your fervour? Are you not wanting in that piety, that purity of intention, that contempt of the world and for your-

selves? That will be necessary to draw Saints into your midst! We must humble ourselves more and more! We must remind ourselves that our profession as Christians and as Religious obliges us to do penance. We must think only of sacrificing ourselves for love of the Sacred Heart in the Spirit of our Constitutions.

May the grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ remain with you all.

London, April the 6th, 1873. Vigil of Palm Sunday.

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