

Prof. Raymond Winling

**The Virtues
of the Servant of God,
Mother Alphonse Marie
Eppinger**

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1. FAITH

A Soul of Man – A Passion of Mother Alphonse Marie

*Thoughts and expressions of this virtue during the life
of the Servant of God*

34. From the early childhood of the Servant of God, the spirit of Faith was shown which, in that age, was extraordinary. At the age of four she eagerly listened speaking about God. She took every opportunity to be explained the Christian teaching. At the age of six, she noted in her Biography, “I had a great desire to know God. Either I was alone or among people, I constantly thought about God.” At the age of seven, “This desire was so strong that caused me a great suffering of mind.” When she was ten years old, she paid attention to forget nothing what she heard on religious lessons. She was more and more happy to attend the religious lessons. At the day of her First Communion she prayed: “Good Jesus, now I renewed my baptismal vows. Help me to keep and fulfill everything our spiritual shepherd has been taught us.” Her spirit of Faith was shown in every situation in her whole life. Her mind was focused on God; she was interesting about nothing only God's things. She saw everything from God's perspective. Even during her illness her Faith did not failed. During the period of her first illness, she felt the spiritual aridity, yet, she prayed perseveringly. When she got well, in the spirit of Faith, she received extraordinary graces which help her to proceed in spiritual life and in virtues. During her second illness (1845-1849), her spiritual director had become aware that the Servant of God is

gifted with truly extraordinary graces of God. He said this to his Bishop, who was interested very much about this affair. He was sure that it was God's action. The Servant of God felt unworthy of these graces; she never strived to be famous because of these graces.

With regard to the foundation of the Congregation, the Servant of God confidentially said to her spiritual director that she received inspiration from above to found congregation dedicated to the service to the sick. Reverend Reichard was initially restrained, but finally asked Bishop for approbation.

During her office as Superior General (1849-1867), Mother Alphonse Marie, with total confident, entrusted herself to God's Providence. There were many unexpected events when God has acted in favor of the Congregation and helped to its rapid development. The confidence of the Servant of God was enormous. We can see it by founding Congregation. Without any human help she developed this work expecting everything—materially and spiritually—from God. She felt poor and weak to bear this responsibility, however, she relied solely on grace. With holy courage she prayed to Jesus: “Refuse as long as You want, however, I will tirelessly pray. I give You what You wish – give me what I ask You.” “O my Jesus, look at my misery and weakness. I can do nothing without Your help. Multiply my childish confidence into You.”

“My Jesus, do it by Yourself. You know that I can do nothing without You; it is Your work.” She encouraged to this confidence everyone who came to her, mainly many visitors who witnessed to this. When leaving her, they glorified God's mercy. In the same way, she encouraged her daughters, saying: “If God has been so good to us that He called us to the Religious Life, would (not) be insulting that we won't infinitely trust in Him

in all our needs? Turn to Him in every situation without any distrust.”

Her example, mainly, led her daughters to unlimited trust.

A teaching of Faith: the truths she believed

35. Devotion of the Servant of God to the Teaching of the Catholic Church was ardent and unwavering. She came from the family surrounded by Protestants and who struggled to keep Catholic Faith. Therefore, she was aware of happiness to be Catholic.

“When some Protestants visited me during my illness (in the age of 17) I felt pity for them that they do not live in truth. I thanked our Lord for being born to Catholic parents. I said often: 'O how I am happy to be a child of the true Church!'”

36. She attended with deep interest the religious teaching led by Reverend Reichard, in whom she trusted above all. She believed what was taught: God and God's Providence; Jesus Christ, Who redeemed us by His death on the cross; the Blessed Mother; Saints; Sacraments, mainly Eucharist; a man destined for supernatural things; gravity of sin, and sublime of virtues.

37. The Servant of God had a great devotion to the Holy Trinity. During the day, she often repeated the prayer: “Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.”

38. Since her early childhood eagerly listened the talks about God's matters, she turned directly to God for advice, help, and protection. She did it when she was

looking for right direction, when experiencing sadness, or felt the need to express gratitude to God for graces she received.

“O good God, give me the grace to be pious and learn to pray earnestly as these persons do.” “I want to love You, I will love You, and I want to fulfill only Your will.”

“My Divine Bridegroom, look how I long for You! Take my heart completely and show me the way to be united with you more intimately.”

39. The center place of the spiritual life of the Servant of God occupied Jesus Christ. At the age of five, she was deeply touched when she heard about Christ's Passion. At the age ten, Reverend Reichard talked in school about Jesus' Passion and death on a cross. This marked her for the entire life.

“Those words impressed me so strongly that my whole body was trembled. I stared at our Priest and I saw in him the picture of our suffering Savior.”

As she noted, she was not pleased with any other teaching more than the topic about suffering because she saw in it the love Christ loves us. Since ten years of age, during the Holy Mass she had a habit to observe the Passion of our Lord. Sometimes she was penetrated with it so deeply that her whole body shivered. She searched for solitude to meditate on Jesus' Passion. Since young girl, she encouraged her fellow girls to be pious the same way. She taught this devotion, mainly, to her daughters and kept coming back to it. At the command of our Lord, she ordered her daughters to meditate on His Passion, daily. This is mentioned in the *Original Rule*. The Servant of God showed them the way, how to meditate, which was undoubtedly her own.

She handled cross and opened her heart to the work of grace; she gradually passed from one wound to

another while she asked herself various questions to realize the cruelty of the Passion and the greatness of love of our Savior. Her soul was touched very deeply in that moment. She felt, in a certain way, the pain from Jesus' suffering – it became her own pain. Her days were filled with gratitude, sorrow, and love.

The impression she gained under the cross did not get out of her heart. In the middle of her duties at parents house and in field, the crucified, suffering and dying Jesus for the sins of the world had been constantly before her eyes.

40. The Servant of God had a special devotion to Mary. From the age of three, she learned the Ave Maria and repeated it often as a refrain. From then on she turned to Mary in every situation. She said that she liked no other lesson as much as that of the Passion and that of the Blessed Virgin. At that time she was eight years old. "Hail Mary, full of grace, Mother of God, pray for me, poor child". Her greatest joy was to hear about the Blessed Virgin. She was always afraid only of not understanding well what she was hearing about Mary. At the age of 14, she incessantly repeats the Salve Regina. She decided to imitate Mary in everything, especially in her silence, and her modesty. "I constantly placed myself under the protection of the good Mother of God". She entrusted her virginity to her: "Through your holy virginity and your Immaculate Conception, oh pure Virgin, purify my heart and my flesh". "Oh Mary, I want to imitate you, yes, I want to, I want to imitate your virtues, oh Mary, help me. Oh Mary, support me. I also want to remain a virgin, I want to imitate your virtues". She spread the veneration of Mary through the recitation of the Rosary. She urged Father Reichard to have the Rosary recited at the parish church every Sunday and holiday to compensate for the insults

committed to God on those days. In her ecstasies, she saw Mary as mediator; She understood that everything will be rescued by Mary and that her veneration will be extended. Mary gave her instructions. What she repeated was sublime and very consoling. The Congregation founded by the Servant of God was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The joy of the Servant of God was great when the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which she had predicted eight years previously, was proclaimed. That day, the convent was magnificently decorated.

41. Among the other saints, the Servant of God has a special veneration for St. Joseph, whom she considers an efficient protector, especially, when confronted with financial problems even threatening the life of the Congregation. She has great devotion to Teresa of Ávila, whom she often invoked “to obtain, through her intercession, the grace of loving God as much as she had loved Him and to endure like her the physical and spiritual sufferings which God sent her”. She also invoked St. Alphonsus de Liguori, who was regarded as guide concerning spiritual life and as intercessor for the Congregation. “After the Blessed Virgin, it was St. Aloysius Gonzaga whom she most venerated and most often invoked. She had a preference for this saint because of his evangelic purity.”

42. As far as the sacraments were concerned, the Servant of God always showed great fervor for the Holy Sacrament of the altar. Even as a child, she had a very strong desire to go to church. She slowly passed the door of the sanctuary repeating: “Praised and blessed be the Holy Sacrament of the altar”. She had an ardent desire

for the happiness of receiving Holy Communion. “Oh my Jesus”, she said, “when will the moment come for me to receive You? O! In that moment I will prostrate myself before You and adore You”. After her First Communion, she had such a strong desire for Communion that she begged her confessor to let her have it every week. In her mind she always stayed in front of the tabernacle. Father Reichard could say: “In the midst of all her occupations, she so vividly brought to her mind the altar, the Host, the chalice and the sacred ceremonies and united herself so intimately with the intention and the prayers of the priests and those present that wherever she was, she could receive Holy Communion as if she had been present in person at the Eucharistic Sacrifice”. During her first period of illness, “she had the ardent desire to receive Holy Communion more often, as the only means that gave her the strength for self-denial and for renouncing her own will in order to do nothing but God’s will”. The parish priest gave his consent to this. Once recovered, she felt it as a new grace to be again able to participate in Holy Mass and to receive Holy Communion. The Servant of God prayed a lot and made others pray in front of the Holy Sacrament. She herself spent many hours in adoration. She introduced Perpetual Adoration in communities of more than forty Sisters. In smaller communities or communities without a chapel, each Sister was to spend one hour a day in adoration. She said to her Daughters: “You need to have special devotion to the Most Holy Sacrament. Wherever you are in the house, you have to remember that you are close to Jesus. I ask you not to be noisy. It makes me suffer when I notice indifference and lack of respect to the Holy Sacrament.”

Understanding of the Church

43. The Servant of God was obedient to the Church, whose laws she faithfully observed. She venerated the Church in its visible head. She prayed a lot for Pope Pius IX, who was then ruling. She offered her sufferings for him. She had great esteem for the bishops; personally as well as in the administration of her Congregation she was especially loyal to Bishop Raess. She showed great respect for all priests, in whom she saw God himself. "I would have gone down on my knees before anyone of them to ask them for their blessing." And in a special way, during her whole life she had great respect for her spiritual director and was completely obedient to him, Father Reichard, who was called to found the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior. She called on her Daughters to be completely obedient to the ministers of the altar. The *Original Rule* says: "They will always be obedient to the pastor, who, whatever his ministry may be, is to be regarded by them as the legitimate authority." The Servant of God received many priests who came to ask her advice; many of them were edified by her. She spoke kindly of the priests, of the high dignity they were given and of the priestly virtues. She prayed a lot for them. Her prayers were very passionate: "Oh Jesus, my Divine Spouse, look at them with mercy, do not consider their weakness, You only have to say a word, oh my Love. Kindle the fire of Your love in them. Fill them with disgust for everything which is of the world. Imprint into their hearts Your bitter sufferings and make them give up everything that displeases You." For the bishops, she offered her whole life in suffering.

She showed her spirit of faith through very deep sufferings, which she experienced knowing that the

Church was persecuted in Rome, in France, in Switzerland, through the desire which she felt to convert the heretics; through her zeal for leading those who had lost the way, back to the Church, especially the Protestants nearby. It is, at first, through her prayers and her sufferings that she realized her zeal, then she sent out her Daughters to win over the souls by recommending to them above all the prayer and the practice of Christian and religious virtues. She declared herself ready to willingly give her blood and her life for the salvation of those who do not have faith.

Resistance of sin

44. The Servant of God hated sin and everything that was opposed to faith. When she was a schoolgirl, she avoided children using bad language. She cried about it and disliked school for this reason. Later, at a dinner, where people had improper discussions, she preferred fasting. She stood up and went out in order to pray and cry. In her ecstasies, she saw the vices in general and particularly with their different causes. This sight was painful to her, almost unbearable. "She spent all the time of dinner in her room praying and crying, and as her room was next to the dining room, she made the precaution of blocking up her ears so that she was not able to hear through the partition what was said." She was clearly shown how to correct vices. "See, my daughter," said our Lord, "all that must be corrected by you." She sighed and said: "O, what a heavy burden! Your will be done!" She was troubled in her tender joys considering the many insults against God. She herself experienced moments of doubt and discouragement, when she realized that she was a sinner and unworthy of God's grace. On the other hand, when

the Servant of God saw in her visions the conversion of sinners, she felt great joy. Father Reichard testifies to this: “She witnessed many conversions among the enemies of Catholicism, the schismatic and unbelievers, through whom God shows His mercy [...]. From this experience of mercy, of God’s might, again she received great consolation”. As a member of the Sacred-Heart’s Association, she had the concern to compensate for the sins of others through her prayers and the penance she took upon herself.

45. Towards the end of her life, she was provided with the extraordinary chance to prove the virtue of her faith particularly through painful experiences. In fact, for political and juridical reasons, the houses in Würzburg, Vienna and Sopron broke away. Those trials deeply and painfully marked the Foundress, but Mother Alphonse Maria totally abandoned herself to God’s will.

46. The Servant of God wanted to communicate this blessing of faith to everyone who approached her. She excelled in speaking about God, at first within her family, to the children and young girls in Niederbronn, and later to the many visitors whom she received. God made use of her for the conversion of many. One of her goals was to give religious instruction to the ignorant and poor children. She will welcome the poor, abandoned children and look after them until they have received the necessary religious instruction and their First Communion. She gathered them herself, spoke to them about God and helped them to pray.

Conclusion

For the Servant of God, faith in God is not difficult to accept, neither it is an object of learned discussions. It is enthusiasm for God, it is vital adherence to God and His message, and it is personal adherence to God, of whom we expect salvation. Very naturally she holds on to the unity of love with God and Jesus Christ, as we will see later in the section dedicated to the theological virtue of charity. The life of faith lived by the Servant of God was of imminent greatness, because Elizabeth Eppinger was led to live the first part of her life as a person on to whom God had laid His hand and who was called to make an extraordinary spiritual experience. She deeply longed for leading a life totally dedication to prayer and the perfect practice of virtues in the way of religious. She wanted to enter a religious order, but God wanted her to live this idea of perfection at first in the midst of her own people and in the parish community. In a mysterious way, He prepared her for the foundation of a Congregation devoted to nursing the sick and corresponding to the needs of her time.

2. HOPE

Certainty that God's Grace will Replace All Deficiencies in Her Heart

Practice of the virtue of hope throughout the life of the Servant of God

47. For the Servant of God, from her first childhood to her death, God was always her only goal, her only destination, her reason for living and acting. In Him she placed all her trust without reserve. One day, when Elizabeth was sick and Father Busson asked her: "What is the greatest happiness for you down here and in the next life?" She answered: "Only the possession of God (belonging to God). God is everything. Where He is, there is plenitude. Where He is not, there is nothingness. Possessing (belonging to) God down here is substantially the same happiness as that of the saints in heaven. If we rejoice in God less fully on earth, this does not mean that we love Him less."

In everything she saw only God's will to be fulfilled. In fulfilling it, she placed all her hope in God for this life and for eternal life. "Oh Jesus, in these troubled days You must help Your Church. Only You can do it; You can help it. Oh Mary, do not reject this plea. It is for Your Son's glory and for His Church." Constantly and with great strength, she also wished to be able to lead the sinners this way. Her wish and her desire pushed her to pray continuously and vehemently for the conversion of sinners.

Manifestation and expression of the virtue of hope

48. From her early childhood, the Servant of God turned to God to bring before Him her request for a life of perfection. When she saw a Sister pass, she expressed this wish as a prayer: “Good God, grant me the grace to serve You one day like this sister”. Still very young, she says again and again to God: “I want to love You [...]. Won’t You grant me the grace to love You, good God?” Conscious of her weakness before God, she confesses her unworthiness turning to God: “Who am I, oh good God, that You have the goodness to visit me and remain with me?” But she was so touched, so penetrated, by the goodness and mercy of the Savior of the world, that she firmly hoped that through His grace He would complete what was deficient in the inclination of her heart.

49. The virtue of hope found a significant expression in the midst of various difficulties.

During the period of aridity which the Servant of God experienced during her first illness, she was haunted by the thought that all her exercises of piety had lacked the necessary qualities to make them meritorious, and that they also were sin in the eyes of God. She imagined she had become an object of aversion, of hatred and curse and that consequently her salvation was no longer assured. Feeling quite helpless she made efforts to approach God and said: “Even if You have abandoned me, I will not abandon You. I do not want to do anything that displeases You”. Assailed with doubts about divine goodness and mercy, she turned to Jesus: “Oh my Jesus, I believe in You, I hope in You and I want to love You”. And she recited the acts of faith, hope and love.

At the time of the foundation of the Congregation, she was often scared by her misery and weakness. Father

Reichard says about this: “[...] She was always absolutely convinced that she has to rely completely on the holy will of God as far as the Order is concerned. She immerses herself in prayer to the Divine Heart, to ask everything of Him. [...] She is incessantly expecting God’s help, trusting in His mercy.” She also communicates this trust to others. Father Reichard says in a letter to Bishop Raess: “Her sole trust in the divine mercy is the same trust which she communicates to whomever she talks to.” Her instructions to her Daughters are full of exhortations to trust: “Place all your trust in the divine mercy and in the merits of Jesus Christ, our Divine Redeemer”.

Her trust in God in difficult matters was one of the main characteristics of her high virtue. In spite of difficulties of all sorts, she persevered in her trust and prayer. She even vowed that she would not seek consolation from anybody but her Divine Spouse. “Oh my Jesus,” she said, “I want to do everything You tell me, but always come to help me through Your grace, I trust in You.” Through her trust she resisted the tangible attacks of the devil. Her instructions to her Daughters are full of exhortations to trust: “Place all your trust in the divine mercy and in the merits of Jesus Christ, our Divine Redeemer.”

Calm and serenity in difficult moments

50. She impressed her surroundings by her calm and serenity in spite of the difficulties and responsibilities of her charge. Various witnesses confirm this. Father Reichard writes: “Her suffering because of her weakness never reduced her ardor and her calm. Nothing disturbs her, nothing can distract her, not even for a few moments. For each matter she asks for God’s help and

recommends it to Him as His own affair.” She is serious and dignified. One always notices in her a soft serenity, which attracts and delights. Mother Alphonse Maria says in one of her instructions: “I will carry this heavy burden as God wants me to because I have burdened myself with it only by obedience to His holy will”. And Father Busson confirms for his part: “She is always herself. Nothing changes in her outward behavior. The same gentleness, same amiability, same concern and vigilance, same fervor for maintaining the religious spirit everywhere”.

Having to endure sufferings of all kinds – physical and spiritual, contempt, contradictions – she always manifested a calm and joyful soul. She said: “During my sufferings, I always remembered the promise made to God from my childhood on: that I would keep my heart pure, that I would reach holiness and that in everything I would fulfill the holy will of God. In those sufferings I said to myself: ‘O! I want to suffer willingly, if only I reach this’.” And Father Reichard said: “Her physical sufferings are painful. At their peak, she feels such a joy that if you could take those sufferings away from her, she would not let You do it”. In her instructions to her Daughters, the Mother puts it like this: “Your sufferings may make sad neither your faces nor your thoughts. Sufferings can make a soul glad already here on earth. I went through sufferings of all kinds. I can assure you that a soul that has come to accept and to assume them as her share is glad, yes, really glad. She would not want to live even one moment without suffering”.

51. The hope of the Servant of God shined forth above all in circumstances where she recognized the will of God, whatever it was. She committed herself with all her trust that this will, even if it appeared hard, was the greatest

good both for herself and her work, both for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls.

Deliberate renunciation of the vanities of the world

52. From her earliest Youth until her death she kept away from everything that could be a temptation for her senses. She resolutely turned away from false values; she despised all the vanities of the world and kept her attention firmly on Jesus Christ and eternal life. Already as a child she left the games in order to pray. At the age of seven, she told her parents that she did not want any gifts any more. She wanted to become a saint. When she was twelve years old, the desire to become a sister germinated in her soul and she felt the strong need to completely separate from the world: “I incessantly asked God to protect me from the world”. She wants to protect her Daughters from any attack of the world: “You will not find consolation and joy with God as long as you are seeking them in the world”. “You wear the religious habit to show the world that you are dead to it”. “Avoid irrelevant discourses and above all those about matters of the world!” One could multiply the quotations.

53. The motive of Elizabeth’s desire for suffering was eternal bliss. She said to her Daughters: “Why should we hesitate to embrace the cross, to completely attach ourselves to it for some moments here on earth, when the reward is eternal happiness? As God is much more provident for us than a father is for his children and much more affectionate than a mother, we will never complain when we are visited by sufferings; we will receive them with joy and submission. We will then be sure to enjoy tender peace and to receive great merits for eternity. How

gentle and pleasant will be the death of the soul that is constantly united and in communion with its Divine Spouse! Now, my children, everything is hard in the service of God. I know it from experience! But be courageous and often think of your last hour. Through the love for God, the thought of heaven may always support your courage. Is it so painful to mortify ourselves for a few years when we think of the endless joys awaiting the mortified souls in heaven? Now, my children, is the time for us – for battles, for work, and for sacrifices. Let us crucify the old person. This “giving birth” is painful, but what consolations, what glory, will follow it!”

54. The Servant of God invited to hope, especially those who suffer, who doubt, the poor, the sinners. All the preference of her charity is for them. Many visitors testified that she told them about God’s mercy and goodness with a fervor that deeply touched their hearts. Isn’t the goal of her works to take this supreme hope to the bed of the dying, to tell the afflicted that God looks after them like a father? The Servant of God herself took the first charitable steps at the beginning of her work, and she had such consoling words for all, so that everybody present was won over.

55. For the Servant of God, the virtue of hope is closely linked to the virtue of faith. They both contribute to giving to the spiritual life of the Servant of God this character of authenticity and fervor, which come from her total abandonment to God. And from faith and hope the Servant of God draws the strength to love God unconditionally.

3. LOVE FOR GOD

Constantly Looking for God

Loving God is the constant concern of the servant of God

56. The Servant of God showed great love for God from her earliest childhood. This love constantly grew in her soul animating and marking all her words, thoughts, and actions. Her union with God was deep and constant; nothing could distract her from this.

Manifestation and expression of this love for God

57. Even when she was very young, she felt a pleasant joy in saying again and again to God: “I want to love You, I will love You, I want to long only for Your will. Won’t You grant me the grace to love You, dear God, to love only You and to always and in everything do Your holy will?” She also felt the growing desire to “become a saint.” At the age of eight, she was afraid of not being able to love God appropriately and she wondered: “Could I, oh dear God, love You all my life and always do what pleases You?” The preserved documents permit to say that these inclinations develop with growing age. They show that she often asked in her prayers the grace to avoid everything that could separate her from God. When she experienced a period of particularly painful aridity, she had the impression that God had abandoned her. But she made an effort and said to God: “Even if You have abandoned me, I will not abandon You. I do not want to do anything that displeases You; no, I do not want to”. In the *Original Rule*, there is the pressing recommendation

to do everything out of love for God, in order to avoid being a clanging cymbal, as Saint Paul says.

The conversation of the Servant of God was only about God. One was not able to recall any conversation of hers that was not directly turned towards God and the good of souls. “My consolation and an inexpressible grace”, she said, “is that I cannot talk about anything other than about what serves God’s glory and the salvation of souls”. She vowed not to talk to others about anything but about what had to do with God or what touched the salvation of souls. Father Amhard, a Redemptorist who visited her, said that she talked about God with great ease.

Love for Jesus Christ

58. A distinguishing characteristic of Elizabeth Eppinger was her love for Jesus Christ. Already in her early childhood, she gave a privileged place to Jesus. She discovered Him step by step through the accounts of the Passion, which she attentively listened to. In her autobiography, she narrated that at the age of four, she was so moved by a conversation about the Passion of Christ that she had to cry at the thought of how Jesus had to suffer. The attraction for the crucified Jesus never left her again, and when she herself suffered most, she held a little crucifix in her hand. The teachings of the catechism have a great impact on her; the frequent meditations on the sufferings of the crucified Jesus gave rise to a more personal appropriation. One also has to admit that this parishioner eager to attend Divine service nourished her piety in this regard from ceremonies of the Holy Week or from devotions like the Stations of the Cross or the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

What is striking is the fact that the young Elizabeth was very sensitive to the aspect of atonement in the sufferings of Christ. She saw in them the expression of Christ's love for man and she said in her own way that Jesus had died to compensate for the sins of man, to get from His Father forgiveness for our sins. She always repeated her faith in the mystery of Redemption and it occupied a central place in her meditations and her devotion.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the spiritual life of the Servant of God is her longing to be intimately united with Christ. Concerning this, she used different forms of expression.

When she spoke about prayer, she mentioned her wish to be before Jesus and to bless and praise His name all day long.

At Communion, she made the following request: "Oh my dear Jesus, now I have You in my heart. How long I have been sighing for You! But now You will stay in my heart, won't You? Look, I give myself completely to You. You will embellish my heart with the virtues You like best, won't You? Never again do I want to insult You, so help me always, my Jesus. Oh Mary, my dearest mother, help me adore my beloved Jesus, now I have received Him in my heart". Thus, the feeling of Christ's presence in her and the wish that this presence may last are expressed.

Sometimes she used a language which is more mystical when speaking about Christ, the Divine Spouse. Now we are in the domain of union of love. At her time according to the ideal of virginity under the direction of Father Reichard, she could regard herself as a "consecrated virgin". Later, when she herself was a member of the Congregation of the Divine Savior, she

could also claim this title of spouse of Christ and apply it to the other Sisters of the Congregation.

The *Original Rule* shows that Mother Alphonse Maria was very sensitive to “the merciful love of Jesus, who heals the sick and is attentive to the distressed calling for Him from the depth of their misery”.

Finally, the subject of “Christ, who lives in me”, which can be read between the lines in many passages, is clearly expressed in the *Original Rule*: “The spirit (of the Divine Savior) must animate (the Sisters of the Congregation), must penetrate them so that one can find it in every single one of their actions and words. In summary, they must be able to say with the Apostle: ‘*It is no longer I, but Christ living in me*’.”

Prayer as expression of the love for God and for Jesus Christ

59. Elizabeth Eppinger’s passionate love for God is shown above all through the ardor which she had for prayer and the high gift of the prayer. From the age of four, she knew the joy of praying, at the age of seven she prayed a long time with arms out stretched; without neglecting her work, she took every chance to be alone in order to pray. “I felt strongly attracted to inner prayer and to constant and trusting union with God” (12 years old). “I practiced constant conversation with God all day long” (17 years old). And Father Reichard says: “She got up at night, knelt down in front of her bed and spent hours in prayer”. Father Reichard also reports that after the first period of her illness and the period of aridity “she felt at ease talking to Jesus Christ [...]. She freely expresses her feelings of love and devotion to Him. She asks Him questions in order to learn from Him what she has to do

to please Him. She complains to Him about all the seductions to which she is exposed in the world and all the dangers which she flees, about her distractions in her prayers and all her spiritual weaknesses". Above all during her third illness, the Lord took her to a high stage of prayer and to an ecstatic state. Father Reichard attests: "The conversation with her Divine Spouse is now so intimate that for all the exterior things she is like dead and insensitive". She particularly prays for the salvation of souls with such an intensity that she completely forgets herself and does not pay any more attention to her sufferings." One could multiply the texts. The Servant of God incessantly spoke about prayer to her Daughters: "May it be given to me, my children, to make the attraction of the intimate conversation with God arise in Your hearts. To adore God and to always thank him – what a sublime occupation! What an ineffable joy!" "You have come here to live the life of Jesus Christ, a mortified, a crucified life like that of our divine model. Incessantly study this life, contemplate it night and day, in order to adapt Yours to it."

Fight against sin

60. The first expression of that love at the age of four was avoiding sin. "If that's a sin, I do not want to do it any more; I do not want to insult God!" At that age, a fight began, which became fierce. She pursues sin in her and around her: "I was so scared of sin that I despised people who swore or committed another sin." Father Reichard says: "She heard blasphemy and revolts against God; she could not detach herself from those visions. She suffered very much seeing God insulted. She was urged to pray

incessantly, sighing, but at the same time, she felt peace in her heart; contentment and childlike trust in God.”

61. The Servant of God was not only scared of sin, but she made also efforts to avoid every imperfection, especially concerning prayer and sacraments. She said: “I brought to my mind that Jesus was present. From that moment on, I seriously started to fight against distractions during prayer. I didn’t dare to look around me or carelessly to kneel down or fold my hands just somehow or other. I immediately brought to my mind the presence of the infinite majesty of God.” She was twelve years old and had the strong desire to thoroughly prepare herself for her First Communion; for that she fought against her dominant fault. Later Father Reichard told us about her intensive prayer before Holy Communion and her intensive composure afterwards and how God communicates with her at that moment. She gave her Daughters the following advice for good prayer and Communion: the preceding mortification, spiritual reading and above all love for the neighbor: “But beware of going to the Lord’s table if your souls willingly have for your neighbors feelings which are little loving.” She told them to prepare seriously for the sacrament of reconciliation. For meditation and spiritual reading: “We may not desire knowledge, but we must expect from God grace, help and light. We only have to keep our eyes on God’s honor, the salvation of souls, and the grace of punctually fulfilling His holy will.”

Mortification

62. In order to please God and to show Him her love, the Servant of God took to mortification and penance. At the age of seven, she renounced what she liked to eat. At

about the age of thirteen, she felt the need for physical mortification: "I felt the ardent desire to practice physical penitence. I began to kneel down on something hard in order to pray. With tears in the eyes I said: 'Oh my Jesus, grant me the grace not to spend even one hour a day without loving You!'" She mortified herself when working in the fields, thinking of the drops of blood of her Savior and praying: "You will give me now what I'm asking of You, won't You my Jesus? You will let me know what I have to do to make You happy and not sad." It happens also that she slept on something hard. In this practice of mortification, she was completely obedient to her confessor. Her mortification was also interior: "In my mind I was searching for a small mortification I could do while I was working or being on the way. I did this to be given the grace to love God more and more." She taught her Daughters the practice of exterior and interior mortification and she was continually an example to them.

63. The Servant of God had the desire for humiliations, contradictions, contempt. When she thought about entering a religious order "it is in order to be the last one of all". "Oh my God, let me suffer more, I want to suffer with You." Throughout her life she had to endure contempt and contradictions of all kinds, at first because of her ecstatic state, then because of her works, which were regarded as crazy and not going to succeed. She endured everything without complaining. "See, my daughter, if a soul behaves like this, I open my heart for her. I let her know the love I feel for her. I show her that my relations with her are full of love and how dangerous it would have been if I had given her what she expected of me and how useful were those trials and contradictions

for her. I let her experience my maternal concern and protection. I let her know herself.”

Father Amhard CSsR could say about her: “She had a great desire for humiliations and the cross.” Her instructions to her Daughters were also always marked by this: “Accept, my children, those humiliations wholeheartedly according to the example of the apostles, who were glad to be worthy to suffer contempt and insults in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Acceptation of suffering

64. The love which consumed the Servant of God was nourished through her devotion to the Passion of Our Lord. From the age of five onwards, one can say that this was her constant meditation, the deep and vital need of her soul. Like this she tried to increase her love by understanding better and better the greatness of the love which Jesus has for us; this made her avoid sin at any cost and mortified herself with “holy violence”. After going through hard trials, she reached a stage of wanting sufferings as a grace of choice and she could not live any more without suffering. According to heavenly inspiration she obliged her Daughters to meditate every day on the Passion of our Lord. She told them again and again that well endured suffering is the safest means to advance in holiness. “We will never lose sight of the crucified Jesus”, she said. “O, how sweet and pleasant is it to live and to die in the wounds of the crucified Jesus!”

*The Virgin Mary as a model and her role of intercession
for a life of love*

65. The Servant of God loved the Virgin Mary in a noteworthy way. From her earliest childhood on, at the age of three, she felt the tender concern of the heavenly Mother, and from then on it was Mary she resorted to in all her needs. She wanted to get to God and to Jesus through Mary's mediation. She asked her above all to preserve the purity of her soul. She wanted to imitate Mary in all her virtues which makes this purity flourish. "I continuously recommended myself to the protection of the good Mother of God." She expected Mary to obtain for her the grace to follow Jesus as spouse in religious life. She had a great devotion to the Immaculate Conception. "I often repeated the prayer: Through Your holy virginity and Your Immaculate Conception, oh Blessed Virgin, purify my heart and my flesh." She desired and she hoped that Mary would always be loved and honored more and more in the Christian world. "Everything will be saved by Mary", she repeated. She wanted her Daughters to recite and meditate the Rosary every day. But her devotion did not end with Mary: Thanks to the Virgin, the Servant of God wanted to get to God and Jesus to live in Communion with them.

66. Father Reichard, the Confessor of the Servant of God, and Bishop Raess, to whom she submitted all her conduct, attest to the purity of her conscience. Father Reichard says: "It is true that for that angelic soul, who in all her life was never troubled with a single impure thought, it is a real martyrdom to have to endure, after the Divine revelations, to have to reveal to many people coming to see her, their faults against purity." Bishop

Raess says: “Nothing gives me the right to say that she was filled with another spirit than that of God.”

Concern that God’s love may be spread

67. She had the constant concern to incite not only the people in her immediate surroundings and the many visitors to praise God through the words she said to them, but also all people through the intensive prayer to God for all. “My kind Jesus, have mercy on this parish. May all the parishioners recognize the grace which You have granted them. Have mercy especially on the parents, oh Jesus, enlighten them so that they all take better care of their children’s souls. Have mercy on the Youth. Give them a greater love of virtue and piety; enkindle Your love in them.” “My constant desire and all my wishes are that our Lord’s name may be honored by all and that this name may be better known.”

68. She was favored with extraordinary graces. Her state of ecstasy was frequent, sometimes accompanied and always followed by intensive prayer and the desire to sacrifice herself for the cause she had been shown. This state was regularly observed by Father Reichard and was the object of many enquiries by Church authorities. The conclusion was always that it was a supernatural state. She had the gift to see into the hearts, to reveal secret actions and thoughts in order to lead to conversion. This was confirmed by many Sisters who saw her in an ecstatic state and lifted up off the ground.

The Servant of God showed the strength of her love in an extraordinary way. Nothing could disturb her union with God. Sometimes her physical strength grew from things which should have weakened her: continuous visits,

physical and spiritual sufferings, lack of food. The more she suffered, the more her confidence grew and so did her peace. With Father Reichard's consent, she made vows the practice of which was heroic. In all her life, you cannot find a single fact which would make you think she had not obeyed him most strictly and loyally.

The strength of her love became particularly noticeable in the fact that she had started a work completely for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, without any human means, and she pursued it despite difficulties of all kinds, without failure, until her death.

69. Her constant union with God was remarkable. The testimonies of all those who knew her are numerous. She said: "I don't spend a single minute without having my Divine Spouse before my eyes and without thinking of Him, and I also always have something to ask of Him." Father Reichard confirms: "Her union with her Divine Spouse and her intimate conversations with Him were never interrupted, not even during her daily occupations." Father Busson: "Her meditations were profound. Constantly occupied with God, she adored and loved Him in everything."

Conclusion

The love of God which the Servant of God lived had a very exceptional character. With all her strength she tried to practice a more and more perfect love for God; during her whole life she tried to live from it; with perseverance she accepted being transformed through this love. In her own "heroic" way she lived according to the commandment: "You must love the Lord Your God with

all Your heart, with all Your soul, with all Your mind and with all Your strength“ (Deut. 6:5; Mk 12:30).

4. LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOR

God's Love, the Source of Love for Our Neighbor

The spirit in which love of neighbor is to be practiced

70. In the *Original Rule*, there is a passage which reveals the profound thought of Mother Alphonse Maria about the real basis of love for our neighbor:

“In order to accomplish a good work with zeal and to make it meritorious in the eyes of God, it must be accomplished out of love for God. Without that intention, everything is empty and cold, because every natural motive which drives you to do something good is weak and cannot reach supernatural merits.” “Though I command languages both human and angelic – if I speak without love”, says St. Paul, “I am no more than a gong booming or a cymbal clashing” (1 Cor. 13,1), and St. John says: “Anyone who does not love remains in death” (1 John 3,14).

The love mentioned by the two apostles as motive of good deeds is not only love for our neighbor, but also love for God; love for neighbor and love for God belong together, they cannot be separated from each other. The love for our neighbor always has to have the love for God as its basis, the neighbor must be loved out of love for God.

The love for our neighbor in the Servant of God was nourished by her unconditional love for God. She was constantly concerned about the salvation of the whole person – of body and soul – because of her love for God. The desire to do good to the neighbor and to lead him to God, the highest good, has emerged since her early childhood, and she tried to pursue its accomplishment all her life in various forms. For this goal she agrees to give away not only every temporal good, but also her own life and to suffer everything God would permit of her.

Expression of the love for neighbor

71. Before the foundation of the Congregation, the Servant of God was a member of the Third-Order of St. Francis and a member of the Sacred-Heart Association. Father Reichard had organized groups to visit the sick. Elizabeth Eppinger participated it actively during the time when her health permitted it.

72. From her early days, she was concerned about the sanctification of her neighbor, all those in her surroundings: her parents, brothers and sisters, domestics, her schoolmates, and her friends. Her constant concern is to make them avoid sin and love God, to be virtuous and this in spite of all mockery and insults.

73. The love for our neighbor in the Servant of God first of all wanted the salvation of her neighbor. She untiringly prayed for sinners and worked for their conversion. She said:

“I feel an intense tenderness for the sinners. I see in them God’s creatures and the objects of His love.”

Father Reichard said:

“She constantly feels irresistibly attracted towards God, her Savior; always and with just as much strength she wishes to be able to lead all sinners to Him.”

74. Later, during her third period of illness, she maintained this intention, while receiving many visitors all day long and despite every fatigue. She talked to them only about God and the salvation of their souls. Still later, she said to her Daughters, whom she inspired with the zeal burning in her soul:

“No effort, no pain, no sacrifice must be too much for you if the love of neighbor demands it.”

75. Many conversions occurred through the contact with the Servant of God. Father Reichard says:

“Nobody goes to her without being moved to tears.

Father Glöckler says:

“The impression she makes is beneficent, and nobody leaves her without being deeply touched and without making salutary decisions for life.”

Father Busson says:

“All those visitors left her with content hearts. Some of them felt consoled in their sorrows, others agreed to bring their lives in order, others again were confirmed in doing good.”

76. Many people suffering from fears, worries, doubts and temptations turned to the Servant of God and found light, peace and comfort, and they talked about it. She told them that in such trials they must not lose courage but with confidence they must raise their hearts towards God and expect their salvation from Him alone.

Concern for the poor, especially for poor children

77. The Servant of God dedicated herself to the instruction of the ignorant and above all poor and abandoned (neglected) children. She assembled them herself in order to talk to them about God and to lead them gently to pray. This was one of the aims of her Congregation: teach these children until their First Communion.

78. From the beginning of the Congregation, the Servant of God organized a service for poor children of the villages belonging to the parish of Niederbronn. These children received daily breakfast and lunch. Soon their number increased: After a month, there were 25, a few months later 42. Most of the children were also provided with clothes.

She wanted her Daughters to take in the children in their houses, to give them food and clothes, to attentively supervise them from morning to evening and thus to form their hearts according to Christian values. She wanted the young girls of 14 to 18 years to be saved from the dangers of idleness and to learn to work. Many municipalities appreciated the good deeds that were being done.

79. The poor and the sick were the preferred target groups of the Servant of God. For them she began her work because she was very sensitive to their needs; she taught her Daughters how to help them. She herself administered the first nursing care to be their model. She wanted the sick poor who were likely to come to the Sisters to be given preference. She wanted the donations of the rich to be distributed among the poor; she wanted those donations to help bring them closer and to

reconcile them. She wanted her Daughters always to see the suffering Savior in the poor: “The intention of the Daughters of the Divine Savior must be to serve the person of Jesus Christ in each of the sick poor, remembering the words of the Savior: ‘Whatever You did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, You did for me’.”

Without making distinctions, the Servant of God practiced charity towards the most poor and deprived. Herself poor from her birth, sick and deprived of everything the world estimates, she deeply felt the needs of the poverty-stricken and showed herself sympathetic for all distress. Any form of poverty – spiritual, physical or material – evokes compassion in her heart and the will to find a solution.

In a region where Catholics and Protestants live side by side, she also accepts to care for the Protestants asking for her help, and she carries out this care devotedly and lovingly.

80. The Servant of God prayed a lot for the dying and the souls in purgatory. Inspired by Our Lord, she insistently recommended this practice to her Daughters and put it down in her regulations concerning daily prayer.

81. She had enemies and opponents and had to suffer obvious hostility; she never expressed words or feelings against charity. In certain circumstances, she found it difficult to accept her responsibilities as Superior General. She taught what she heroically practiced: “We will continue to esteem them, even if we are insulted and humiliated by them in different ways. We will do more good for them than for those who appreciate our charitable deeds, honor us and praise us. As long as we

are not decided to endure everything our neighbor does, without being annoyed, we will not reach perfection”.

Father Glöckler could say:

“Mother Alphonse Maria always remained even-tempered and did not get angry in the face when annoyed, even if the pain pierced her wounded heart and she felt powerless confronted with hatred.”

Mother Alphonse Maria practiced active charity towards her Daughters. She did not shy away from any fatigue and inconvenience, when required to accommodate, visit and encourage them because she remained a sick person. It was necessary to ask her to take care of her health.

The Servant of God did her utmost to make peace and harmony reign around her. In her instructions to her Daughters, she very much insists on sisterly charity; this was the object of her first instruction, proving that this was one of her essential concerns. She said:

“Learn, my children, to bear each other in everything. If one of you is disrespectful to the other, the other one must forget it at once; she must show even more affection to the first one than she usually does, so that the one who did wrong does not even notice that she hurt the other.”

In the difficult trial caused by the separation of the houses of Würzburg, Vienna, and Sopron, Father Reichard could say:

“The Reverend Mother has always treated Sister Theofile with great benevolence and charity, even if she had to reprimand her.”

82. God had chosen His Servant for great works of charity in the Church, and she heroically responded to the divine will. Although she lived in intensive union with God, she declared:

“I would not like to join a cloistered religious order, but I would like to live where I could work for the salvation of souls.”

From the time of knowing God’s plan for her, she did not allow any human difficulty to stop her. She exhorted her Daughters to practice heroic charity through self-gift to the poor and the sick out of love for God, without counting the pains, the fatigues, without thinking of themselves, up to the sacrifice of their lives. Her letters to them before sending them to care for the cholera patients prove this.

Considering this we can better understand the passage of the *Original Rule* defining the “Order’s” aim:

“The Order will take care of the sick poor in their own houses, if they have one, they will serve them and provide them with nutritious food, with the remedies they need, bed linen and clothes. They will nurse the other sick who ask for help. They will above all and primarily take care of the salvation of souls of the poor and sick. They will receive poor abandoned children and look after them until they have received the necessary religious instruction and their First Communion.”

Thus a Congregation that responded to an urgent need of the time was founded and experienced a surprising expansion within a few years.

Conclusion for the theological virtues and charity towards our neighbor

The key for a better understanding of the spiritual life of Mother Alphonse Maria is provided by the theological virtues representing the dynamic principle according to which her life evolves. The characteristics are the following:

- The theological virtues are closely linked with each other, in the sense that faith, as practiced by the Servant God, is closely linked with hope and that these two virtues spontaneously tend towards the love for God, which is like the crown and which in itself expresses the actions dictated by love for our neighbor.
- One can say that the love for God is the soul of all the other virtues.
- These virtues are the unifying factors in her life and the sources of motivation for her efforts.
- The prayers and convictions of the Servant of God reveal that for her these theological virtues imply the awareness of a specific personal relationship with God and with Jesus Christ. She was aware of God's presence. She desired a trusting union with God and with Jesus Christ.
- The Servant of God made an effort to live these virtues more and more perfectly in very difficult conditions all the more so since before she lived an ideal of total surrender to God in the midst of her surroundings. Her will to love God more and more perfectly was extraordinary.

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

5. PRUDENCE - WISDOM

Extreme Simplicity

83. The Servant of God heroically practiced prudence, because in all her life one cannot find any action having a purely human aim. Everything in her was orientated towards God, eternal salvation, sanctification, giving glory to God, and the salvation of souls. Her constant efforts tended towards the realization of this only goal.

84. Not trusting herself, from her earliest youth on, she turned to her wise and prudent spiritual guide, Father Reichard, searching for the light of truth and practical advice on how to behave. She had the great wisdom to keep him as her guide all her life, deeply convinced that God wanted it that way. In her inner pains, at the age of 17, having tried to find consolation from a different confessor, she very soon recognized her error and returned to Father Reichard. She followed in everything and always the directives of Bishop Raess. She recommended this prudence to her Daughters: “Oh, my children, if you could only understand how useful it is for you in temptations to immediately ask the advice of your Director or your Superiors and to obediently follow their advice.”

85. The Servant of God had great fear of God. She was very sensitive to everything that could distort the purity of her conscience and her union with God. She immediately resorted to the direct and safest means:

prayer, penitence, avoiding dangerous occasions. While working hard in the fields at the age of 14, she noticed that she had spent hours without remaining in the presence of God.

“After those first ten days, I remembered everything I had promised myself to do on the day of my First Communion, and I considered my half-heartedness. Then I was seized by fear and shame, which awake my zeal. I took recourse to the practice of penance.”

Father Reichard says:

“Above all she asked the Queen of Virgins to keep the purity of her heart and she herself watched over this precious treasure with tender concern.” “... it is true that this angelic soul was never troubled by a single impure thought.”

86. Having constantly been fighting against her dominant fault, a certain violence of temper, she reached a remarkable sense of moderation and discretion, as many people who had approached her confirmed. She was right in her decisions because she always adjusted herself to the heavenly inspiration and the advice she received, for beginning as well as developing her work: constructions, foundation of houses, relations with authorities, choice and discernment of vocations. It is confirmed that though she was animated by ardent zeal, she was never seen doing anything with haste and hurry.

87. This moderation, this appropriateness of decisions came from her spirit of prayer, her union with God. Father Reichard says:

“Fully convinced that she has to leave everything to God as far as her Congregation was concerned, she immersed herself through prayer into the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in order to ask everything of Him.”

She asked our Lord to show her His holy will with regard to the admission of the postulants [...], she heard Lord's answer:

"My daughter, your prayer pleases me; always turn to me and leave everything to Me".

That was just what the Servant of God did; her total surrender to God was nourished by her prayers.

She gave her Daughters this rule of conduct:

"At the beginning of her occupations, the Sister of the Divine Savior must renew the good intention and have a right and pure intention in all undertakings; she must begin everything in the names of Jesus and Mary."

"Having taken your resolutions in the morning, offer them to our Lord at the moment of the Holy Sacrifice and ask of Him the graces you need in order to accomplish them. Receive, with the same intention, the Holy Communion that will be the seal and assurance of completion."

88. Concerning the goal of her work, the physical and spiritual care of the poor and sick, the Servant of God recommended to her Daughters the same prudence, with these words of admirable wisdom:

"My dear children, I want to provide you with an effective aid before going to the poor and the sick, in difficult situations without help, where you do not know how to begin. I recommend you place yourselves at the foot of the cross for a few minutes and pray: 'Jesus, teach me what I have to do for this person; give me the appropriate means so that I may accomplish Your holy will for this poor or sick person. Oh Jesus, I will not leave You before You have answered me. I ask You to grant grace and mercy to this person'.

Then go with confidence. If I recommend you inner prayer, this will not hinder your action. On the contrary

God will give you more clear-sightedness and discernment.”

89. The Servant of God knew how much effort she could ask of each one of her Daughters. She said to them:

“It is good, especially at the beginning, to limit your resolutions to a short period so that you are not discouraged at the sight of a task, a constraint the duration of which could frighten a weak person or a novice.”

90. In the exercise of her functions, the Servant of God had the constant concern to ensure for her Daughters’ living conditions which allowed for the Rule to be observed, even more, for sufficient material conditions needed for a normal and effective accomplishment of their charitable works.

“It is my responsibility”, she said to a mayor, “to take care of the health of my Sisters. That is why I ask you to consider this and to take an interest in this house so that the Sisters have their living and clothing assured. That is what we ask wherever they are sent”.

And to a parish priest: “I seriously insist on my Daughters’ fulfilling the aim of their holy vocation, but at the same time I have the great concern that they should always have – as the Apostle says – the necessary food and clothing.”

91. Mother Alphonse Maria always knew how to combine work and prayer. Being a farmer’s daughter, she says in her autobiography about her first years:

“Already at the age of five I liked working”.

As a young girl, she dedicated herself without neglecting her duties: the work in the fields. Working hard, she prayed and remained united with God. Thus she learned

through experiences what she had to teach her Daughters, to lead an intensive life of prayer combined with hard work as demanded by the care for the poor and sick. Father Reichard could say:

“She divided all her time between work and prayer, or she was rather praying constantly, even while she was working.”

92. She loved and practiced a perfect simplicity. Maybe that is what was most striking about her. Those who came to her were impressed by this trait. Father Reichard says:

“The calm and simplicity with which she passes on the revelations give me strong proof of a direct influence of God.”

Bishop Raess says:

“I recognized in her all the characteristics of a privileged soul, a wonderful purity of soul, a noble simplicity, sincerity in all respects and faith in all trials.”

Father Busson says:

“The sincerity, uprightness, love of truth are the dominant characteristics of her personality.”

A priest says:

“I had hardly entered her house, as I was impressed by the air of sincerity, whereas I had expected some of those playacting which you find with people who consider themselves favored by God. I could not find the slightest trace in her behavior, which free from any fuss, showed only gentleness and that noble humility which, in spite of all efforts, one cannot imitate.”

93. Above all concerned about guiding her Daughters on the way of perfection, she incessantly tried to warn them against anything that could lead them astray or retard

their progress. She invited them to conversation with God:

“If only it were given to me, my children, to induce in your hearts this attraction for familiar conversation with God! How happy would I be if I saw you making progress in such a beneficial knowledge, which is so easy to acquire and so agreeable to practice”.

She wrote in her Rule:

“During the whole time that the Sisters spend with the sick, they may never get involved in useless conversation. Free time will be dedicated to prayer, to work or conversation which tend to bring glory to God and salvation for neighbor.”

94. The prudence of the Servant of God can be clearly seen especially in the reflection she made that it is absolutely necessary to maintain the single novitiate and the annual retreat of the Sisters in the Motherhouse, no matter what sacrifices there were to make, because she was convinced that this was a vital question for keeping the good spirit and the unity of all members. She struggled and suffered for preserving these two principles. It cost her the hard trial of the separation of the houses of Würzburg, Vienna, and Sopron, a trial which affected her health so much that she never recovered from it.

6. JUSTICE

Obligations Towards God and Our Neighbor

95. The Servant of God in a heroic way made an effort to bring glory to God. By a special grace, she understood very early the right of the Creator over His creatures and that everything has to be related to God. From then on, during her whole life all her thoughts, all her words and all her actions were focused towards this single aim.

96. Her understanding of the worship of God can be seen clearly in her way of praying, in her collectedness, in her humble attitude, in the mortification she imposed on herself in all circumstances in order to make this attitude more worthy of the presence God, an attitude which impressed everybody who approached her and which led them to God.

97. The Servant of God had such a zeal for the sanctification of Sunday and she suffered a lot seeing young people amusing themselves mainly on this day in a way that was very dangerous for their souls that she asked Father Reichard to permit the recitation of the Rosary on Sunday evenings. She went to all the houses of the parish to persuade people to come to the Church at the time agreed upon. She had the habit of decorating the altars, no matter how tired she was.

98. She honored Mary with a very remarkable devotion. She had absolute trust in the power of her intercession and invoked her in all circumstances; she celebrated her feasts with deep devotion – she dedicated her Congregation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. She

dedicated to her the altar of the original convent and had written on the doors:

“Oh Mary, conceived without sin”.

She gave the Rosary as the first rule to her Daughters. She recommended that they should turn to Mary in all circumstances and especially at the occasion of conversion of sinners. She talked about Mary in a way which promoted a strong and profound devotion and total trust in her.

99. Mother Alphonse Maria had a very ardent devotion to her patron saints, St. Teresa and St. Alphonsus de Liguori. She wanted to imitate St. Teresa in her love for God and her patience in suffering. St. Alphonsus inspired her through the particular nature of his institute which was consecrated to the most poor and abandoned. St. Joseph was chosen as the main protector and consequently the Sisters turned to him in all their needs; all the extraordinary help at the beginning of the Congregation received was attributed to him. His veneration as a provider and protector always remains a great honor in the Institute. The Servant of God also had great devotion to her guardian angel. In the *Original Rule* of the novitiate, there was written: “The Sisters’ first thought must be to give themselves completely to Our Lord, to invoke the Virgin Mary, their patron saints and their guardian angels.”

100. She gave to the Holy Father, Pope Pius IX marks of veneration, of filial devotion, expressed in her words, in her ardent and continual prayers towards heaven at the occasion of the trials of the Holy Church in the person of its head, in the sufferings she joyfully accepted in order to obtain heavenly help for the persecuted pontiff. She

professed total obedience to the supreme Magisterium (the teaching Church). Father Reichard testifies:

“She also recommended the perfect obedience she practiced with such fidelity, to the children towards their parents, to the parishioners towards their priests, to the priests towards their bishops, to everybody towards the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church”.

She ardently wished the approbation of the Statutes by the Holy Father:

“O, how I aspire and wish from the Holy See the approbation of our Statutes. May God remove all obstacles and grant us this grace!”

She expressed a joy beyond comparison when this approbation was given.

101. The Servant of God was perfectly aware of everything she had received from her parents, above all that they had given her the Catholic faith, that they had taught her truths of the religion, that they had given her the example of an honest and very Christian life. She thanked them through complete surrender in everything that was not against God’s order. She obeyed them by going to work every morning as they commanded her to and against the powerful attraction she felt to attend the Holy Sacrifice at Mass. When she was sick, she suffered because she could not give her family her share of work and service. She looked after her parents as far as the Rule of her Institute permitted her. At her Father’s death, she offered to suffer anything God wanted in order to deliver him from purgatory.

102. The Servant of God fulfilled her duties to justice without making exceptions. She wanted her work to be above all in the service of the poor, but she did not neglect the rich, who also have their needs. She received

all her visitors with the same affability; none was refused.

She said to her Daughters:

“Rich or poor, you are all equally dear to me. I only look at your vocation and your fidelity in responding to the divine graces. I must not value destitution or treasures, and through God’s grace, [...] I do not value one of the children our Lord gives to me [...] more than the other”.

She does not make differences between races or nations:

“It can be observed that the religious spirit is the spirit of Jesus Christ, that this spirit is the same for all countries and all peoples, that it can exist with the character and customs of all nations. The care the Sisters give to the sick is the same for the suffering humanity in all countries.”

103. She always behaved with liberality and generosity. She did not permit the Sisters to ask any remuneration for their care. She did not ask the postulants for a dowry, she only accepted what was offered. She wanted the Sisters to take the poor abandoned sick in their houses. She had a supplementary ration distributed to the workers. If the sick did not have sheets and bed-linen, she brought them some or made Sisters bring them. She fed the poor, although she did not have any reserves.

104. The Servant of God was kind to everybody, even when she suffered exceedingly. Father Reichard testifies: “She is kind in spite of her sufferings.” “Mother Alphonse Maria suffers, same gentleness, same affability.” “The happy mood on the face of the Superior can also be seen constantly in her Daughters.” “She expressed gratitude for all services rendered.”

105. Her words and actions were always true and sincere. She was sincere and straightforward towards the guide of her soul and did not hide anything from him, although it was extremely tough for her to have to tell him everything. She made a vow to reveal to him everything. She incessantly prayed for having this uprightness of conscience:

“Grant me the grace to know myself and the obstacles opposing Your grace at work in my soul. Show me these obstacles in such a way that I can be open about them towards my confessor. Then help me through my confessor’s mediation so that I can remove these obstacles.”

She was truthful to the people who came to her to ask her advice and to whom, under the inspiration of grace, she had to reveal their vices, their lapses, and their faults. No matter how much it cost her, she did not disguise the truth in any way and did it with the greatest charity. Many conversions followed this openness. She was truthful to her Daughters, and she reprimanded them for their mistakes without diminishing their seriousness. She wanted a will power which could be said to be heroic to form them according to the ways of truth, no matter what it cost her.

7. TEMPERANCE

A Firm Decision to Fulfill God's Will Always and in Everything

106. The Servant of God practiced the virtue of temperance to a heroic degree. She knew how to keep her senses under strict discipline. The grace of God let her know very early the measures to be taken and perfectly adapting herself to these inspirations, she achieved to let order and harmony reign in her faculties and to show perfect measure in everything.

107. The main occasion for disorder came from her temper which had a certain violence, a stubborn, obstinate character. From the age of six, she felt that this was the obstacle she had to overcome in order to better find God:

“A violent stubbornness seized my soul when I did not get what I wanted, but it did not last long. Immediately I came back to myself; I thought that this was not good, I cried about my faults. I said to myself: ‘Where will I go if I behave like this? I am not to disobey my parents’.”

So she won through obedience; she imitated “the obedience of the Infant Jesus”. Later, the love for prayer could make her disobey, but Jesus said to her: “I do not want your prayer but your obedience. What I like most is obedience.”

Although she felt strong impatience coming up in her, she made efforts to gently correct her brothers and sisters; she reached a state of calm so that Father Busson could say:

“She deploras abuses and lapses, but she talks about them regretfully. When she sometimes insists, she does it

sighing, without vivacity and bitter reproaches ... No imperative forms in her words. She hardly gives advice. Her language is that of wish and supplication.”

108. The Servant of God loved the poverty of her environment and never longed for any comforts of life. What is more, she avoided everything that could have given any satisfaction to her senses. She loved hard work in the fields out of love for God, who required it from her. She looked for occasions making her body suffer because thus she could overcome herself: she slept on a plank and prayed kneeling on sticks [...].

“I also felt a strong desire for exercise of physical penitence. I started this by kneeling more often on something hard while praying. With tears in my eyes, I prayed: ‘Oh, my Jesus, grant me the grace not to spend a single hour of the day without loving You!’”

She lovingly accepted the inconveniences of all kinds caused by her long illnesses in her hardworking family and by her state of physical sufferings, which lasted almost all her life.

“During practicing those small physical mortifications, I often repeated this request in my heart: ‘Won’t You give me now, my Jesus, what I ask of You? Won’t You let me know what I have to do to bring You joy and not to make You sad?’”

109. She showed great temperance as far as the consumption of food and drink is concerned. As a child she mortified herself at table. Later she vowed to eat only what her confessor permitted. Father Reichard attested that she took very little food. She wanted her Daughters’ food to be that of the poor.

110. She felt strongly attracted to solitude and silence. As a child, it was her constant need to withdraw herself to a hidden place to pray and to meditate. When she was a young girl, this need only increased.

“My love for solitude became more ardent.”

Father Reichard testifies:

“More and more she searched for solitude in order to be able to communicate more freely and more lovingly with her Divine Spouse.”

Inspired by heaven, she took this rule of conduct: 1) speak little and only when it is necessary – 2) close the ears to useless conversation – 3) keep the eyes from any curiosity.

Her conversation was full of reticence and dignity. Bishop Raess testifies:

“She answered everything with admirable precision and clarity. There is never a word too much, nothing embarrassed or obscure in her responses.”

If she had to receive so many visitors, it was in order to obey the divine will and her spiritual director; it was suffering to her, which bit by bit turned into the joy of working for the glory of God. In her instructions she particularly insisted on silence and modesty. She said:

“My children, she said, in order to know what spirit reigns in a religious house, one only has to observe whether silence is respected.”

111. The Servant of God, whose dominant fault was to be obstinate, started to apply self-denial to her will, as soon as she recognized her fault: “In order to make progress in mortification and to reduce my stubbornness, I tried to do the contrary of what I wanted to do.” She took refuge to prayer and promised “to offer You all my present sufferings in order to receive the graces to overcome myself”. She obeyed her parents and Father Reichard in

what was hardest for her. She made much progress that her confessor could write to Bishop Raess: "She practices the most sublime virtues, a profound humility with great interior and exterior mortification." Above all she had to renounce her own will when she felt lost, rejected by God and when her spiritual director told her to continue to pray. She renounced herself so well that she even prolonged her prayer, despite the aversion she experienced. Inner pains remained her lot during all her life. This state imposed upon her hard inner mortification, which she generously accepted, not letting anyone notice anything, and there she found her peace and joy.

112. She had to endure much opposition. Her sensitive and stubborn nature was surely shaken by this, but she was never seen troubled or impatient. Opposition from her parents with regard to her devotion – "She is accused of being a burden to her family", Father Reichard said; "that increases her suffering.

Local people make fun of her calling her "St. Lizbeth". She endured it all", Father Reichard said, "with unchangeable patience; she never complained about those who made malicious remarks about her, she did not consider any of the many injuries caused to her." Many priests very strongly disapprove of her. One bishop insults her.

"They would despise us, they would persecute us, if God permitted it", Father Reichard said. "They try from different sides", Bishop Raess said, "to introduce discontent in the Congregation, and I notice with bitterness that the attack is directed against the Superior". The most painful opposition came from the houses of Würzburg, Vienna, and Sopron and the Episcopal

authorities of these regions. Our Lord had announced all these sufferings and contradictions to the Servant of God. “Suffer, be silent and pray”. That was the instruction she scrupulously observed.

113. The Servant of God very much loved the simplicity of life in everything. She gave it as a seal to the Congregation; she demanded great simplicity in the fitting out of the Sisters’ houses: only the strict necessary, but she insisted on cleanliness. She wanted the habit to be simple; she recommended that the Sisters should pay attention to keep it from stains so that it would not be worn-out by lack of care, “because it is very expensive, and we have to save money in order to be able to better help the poor”. In all this, the Servant of God shows her great concern for details and for the right measure in everything.

8. FORTITUDE

No Lack of Joy and Perserverance in Difficulties

114. The Servant of God showed to a heroic degree the virtue of strength. According to the world, she was weak, deprived of all the things which mark the strong and mighty in the world, but she was strong through the strength of God. In her the word of the Apostle was reflected: “I am strong in Him Who strengthens me.”

115. She drew this virtue of strength from a spirit of faith and her ardent love for God. Thus she became strong in her responsibility. At first she tried to know it well; she

took advice. Once she knew the responsibility, she was uncompromising in its accomplishment. As a child, she was aware of how she had to help her parents. Although she had a frail health, she did for them all the small services she could; in the same way she considered it her duty to be instructed in the Christian doctrine, but she had great difficulties and she fought firmly and constantly to discover the “hidden manna”. As an adolescent, she was obliged to work hard in the fields and she did it without neglect. As Foundress and Superior General, she did not let responsibilities or difficulties of any kind get her down.

116. Mother Alphonse Maria showed herself untiring in work. Father Reichard could say:

“Incessantly, she feels an irresistible push to her duties as Superior. She not only does not escape meeting anyone, she also feels the urge to do more, despite temptations of disgust she feels”.

Father Busson: “She is steadfast in the accomplishment of her duties. When the demon tries to distract her from them, far from listening to the temptation, she goes on doing good with an even more intense fervor”.

Though she was suffering, she often traveled because an urgent call of duty demanded it.

117. She was heroically patient in her illness. She did not let one complaint escape her, despite the duration and intensity of the trial. “During my constant sufferings, I incessantly remembered what I had asked of God in my childhood: that I could keep my heart pure, that I would reach holiness and that in everything I would accomplish God’s holy will, and I often thought: ‘O, willingly I want to suffer if only I reach this’”.

She patiently continued suffering physical pain all her life.

118. The Servant of God was patient in insults, contempt and opposition, as mentioned above in N° 81.

119. She shows heroic strength of mind in the midst of spiritual aridity and fears. Already at an early age she proved this: "Already as a child I hid my inner pains and complained only to God."

At the age of 17, when suffering from aridity, contempt and the whole trail of emotional distress, she said sighing: "Oh Jesus, even if I do not pray well, I will still continue praying because my confessor told me to."

During a period of aridity, she turned to Jesus: "My Jesus, although I do not feel any love for You in my heart, I am willing to remain faithful to You until my death. Teach me how I must use this kind of suffering".

Father Reichard testifies: "She remained faithful and constant in this suffering and continued accomplishing God's will".

Father Busson: "Subject to this trial, the sick girl became more patient, more resigned every day."

120. She had to endure humiliations by the demon, who tried to trouble her, to frighten her, who threatened her visibly oppressing her with curses and blasphemies. She pulled herself together, thus recognizing that it was the tempter, she took her cross and found calm and peace again. She also taught her Daughters how to behave towards Satan: with contempt. "He will flee, embarrassed."

121. The Servant of God showed a joyful soul in the midst of adversities in order to edify her neighbor.

Everybody who approached her testified to this. She also said in her instructions:

“What a good example to the world do the persons give who in their hard sufferings are calm and subdued, who do not complain, suffer with patience and silence and receive everybody approaching them with joy and serenity.” “Your sufferings may not make your faces or your thoughts sad. Always fight within yourselves against sadness for the edification of your Sisters and of everybody who sees you. Calm, serenity and joy appropriate to the children of God.”

122. The virtue of fortitude in the Servant of God became especially visible when it was about bringing glory to God and the salvation of souls. With obedience and respect, but with unshakeable firmness, she fought against the reluctance which Father Reichard felt to start a work which, humanly speaking, was doomed to failure; she pursued the construction without swaying, although interiorly she was filled with fear given her awareness of her weakness and nothingness. So she directed this work as a prudent and at the same time audacious pilot. She was eager to expand the scope of her activity.

In this regard, Sister Lucrétie testifies: “One day, Father Reichard tried to moderate the Mother’s zeal asking: ‘What, another new house?’ The Servant of God was coming into the refectory in the moment when this sentence was read: “Thus the name of God must be extended over the whole Earth”, she took the book and went to the Superior. ‘Have a look, Father, God wants our work, which is His, to be extended. So please have the goodness to agree.’”

123. The Servant of God was persevering. She fought so well against her own senses that one did no longer see

any stubbornness in her, but an unshakeable will to reach God through practicing virtue, however without rigidity. She incessantly asked for this perseverance: "I constantly prayed sighing interiorly to obtain perseverance". She persevered above all in prayer and never had a doubt about God's help, no matter how long He delayed in granting her His graces. She said: "We will continue to pray and will never stop until exhaustion."

124. The virtue of fortitude of the Servant of God was especially visible in the silence she knew to keep in all painful situations, unless her duty required her to defend the interests of the Congregation and the Sisters. She was heroically faithful to the rule she had been given by Our Lord: "Suffer, be silent and pray."

125. She learned not to be dependent on what others thought of her. As a child, her zeal to win other people for Jesus Christ and to reprimand the evil she saw was great, although for that she was despised and made fun of. She was tempted to keep quiet; but she said: "To see to it that God is not offended and the salvation of souls is assured, I fulfill my duty. This must be done, even if the whole world despised me".

She also had the temptation to shorten her devotional practices in order not to appear as eccentric in the eyes of her brothers and sisters, but instead she asked "her heavenly Father to grant her perseverance", she kept quiet and endured the mockeries. In the church, she felt such an interior devotion that she could not hide it exteriorly.

She was tempted to distract herself so that others might not notice it, but instead she prayed like this: "Oh Jesus, my Divine Spouse, why should I be against Your holy will in order to please the world? No, that will not

happen. I do not wish to please the world but You; and if I do not please the world, what does it matter to me if only I please You.”

126. The Servant of God tried all her life to teach others the virtue of fortitude so that they may detach themselves from the world and its false goods: Her brothers and sisters, the surroundings, the many visitors confirm this. She constantly exhorted her Daughters to fight the world and fight themselves, and she showed them the strategic lines of the battle: “Fight with courage. Be like soldiers who every day return to the battle with the same boldness. There should be no weakness, no cowardly self-pity, always do the contrary of what your natures tell you to. Live as if in constant martyrdom”.

These powerful instructions appear in the letter she addressed to those who expended themselves in the care of cholera patients. After having exhorted them to the total sacrifice of themselves out of love for Jesus Christ, she begged them to close their ears to any human praise in order to please God only.

VIRTUES CONNECTED WITH THE VOWS AND OTHER VIRTUES

9. OBEDIENCE

Live Rule

127. Throughout her life, the Servant of God was a model of obedience. As a child, she practiced this virtue, which was going to mark her life. She understood that God's will expressed itself through the voices of her parents and of her spiritual director. Since then she started a tireless fight against the defect of her temper, knowing that stubbornness could lead to the failure of what God's grace had sown into her soul. For her, the chaff is above all her own will and as "she wants to become a saint", she knew that she could achieve this only by surrendering her own judgment. She will be obedient, no matter what it costs her.

128. She put all her actions under the rule of obedience. She was completely obedient to Father Reichard's guidance, which she recognized as designated by God to show her His will. She revealed to him her interior with the constant concern not to hide anything from him; she asked his advice for all the details of her behavior; she strictly followed his advice in the midst of the hardest pains and regardless of any disgust. Later, she vowed, "to obey her confessor as her spiritual director and Superior, to completely reveal her conscience to him, without the slightest reserve as far as her inner life is concerned". Father Reichard could testify:

“She does everything in the spirit of obedience”. “Your Excellency (Bishop Raess) knows that she was all the time perfectly obedient [...], I repeat and I confirm that everything in her conduct was pure obedience and that with a docility of heart and spirit which never denied even a moment from her childhood on until this day”.

She asked Jesus: “Oh my Jesus, grant me the grace to be obedient to my spiritual director, whom You have given me. Show him the way to lead me; enlighten him about my passions; place on his lips those words which he must put in my soul. I want to recognize Your will in his words.”

129. The conscience of the Servant of God was always guided by obedience. From her earliest childhood, her conscience was so delicate that the slightest deviation towards her own plans made her afraid of offending God. She overcame temptation and if ever she disobeyed her parents the slightest bit, she immediately did penance. She kept this sensitivity of conscience towards Father Reichard and Bishop Raess. She was heroic in the pursuit of its literal sense. She said, “What a powerful weapon is obedience to fight against the demon! It supports the battle with courage; it makes the face serene, fills your heart with joy. You feel supported, and guided in the battle; you do not need to be afraid of steps being led astray, dangerous steps. Victory is assured.”

130. Mother Alphonse Maria followed the Rules of her Institute. Father Reichard could testify: “She is like the living Rule. She observed the Institute’s prescriptions with meticulous exactness, preferring to hold on to the ascetic practices which were most revolting to her nature”. She was unshakeable in her obedience. The Servant of God had to fight heroically to maintain the

Congregation's spirit as it had been inspired from heaven and especially in the crisis which broke out with the houses of Würzburg, Vienna, and Sopron.

131. She taught her Daughters the heroic obedience she had practiced herself and which consists in obeying those equal and those inferior. She said: "Concerning temporal things, in everything that is not against God's commandments, the soul must give preference to the will of others, mainly when things are painful to one's nature. You may not think, my children, that everything is done when you do your Superior's will; you must also be disposed to do, in the smallest things, the will of your Sisters, even if they are younger than you or less educated, and when you have to command the others, you still have to make an effort to do their will as if it were yours. You have to think that it is God Himself asking you to do this or that. O, lucky the soul that does not do anything according to its own will, but only that of others! The merits are great before God."

10. POVERTY

Constant Effort to Serve in the Name of Christ

132. The Servant of God loved poverty in an extraordinary way. She loved her humble condition and the privations due it, or rather she did not desire anything except for what she was given, and of what she was given she gave away everything she could. Before founding her Institute, she vowed to practice poverty. She wanted to possess only – with her confessor's

consent – what was strictly necessary for subsistence, all the rest had to be used for the glory of God and for the relief of the poor according to her confessor's opinion.

133. Mother Alphonse Maria founded her Institute in absolute poverty, without any other resource than her trust in God. Very often they lacked the necessary, but help always arrived in time. Our Lord had said to Mother Alphonse Marie: "I will send a lot of help for this work, but I want everything to be left to me". The Servant of God also wanted the spirit of poverty to animate not only each member but the Institute in general and as a whole. Each house may not save anything except for what is strictly necessary for a limited time. The surplus must be given to the poor or given in order to found other houses."

134. She asked her Daughters to observe strictest poverty: in their dwellings, there should be only what was strictly necessary; their food should be that of poor people; their clothing, objects they use. She revealed that Our Lord had told her that the Congregation would live as long as poverty and charity would be practiced there.

135. The Servant of God frequently asked her Daughters to practice and love poverty. She said to them: "Where the spirit of poverty does not reign, there is no progress in virtue. You will relapse instead of advancing: your flesh will triumph over your spirit. Reject everything that is against the spirit of poverty and you will soon notice a total change in yourselves".

136. She gave the example of the strictest poverty. A parish priest who visited her says: "Mother Alphonse Marie lived in the small room; that cell was very poor".

Father Reichard wrote to Bishop Raess: “As strictest poverty must be observed by all members of the Congregation, the Superior finds it difficult to wear the Rosary Your Excellency has blessed. Only if Your Excellency orders her to do so, she will wear it”. To teach a lesson to the whole Community, one day she had burned a book which a Sister possessed without permission, in the presence of everybody. The elderly Sisters reported this fact: The Servant of God was lying in her deathbed, she was in coma. Suddenly she sat up and accused a Sister of having waxed the stairs even though she had forbidden this. She ordered to remove the wax, as oral tradition tells.

11. CHASTITY

Transparent Life

137. The Servant of God always carefully preserved her virginal purity. She loved this virtue with preference, and her prayers as a child, and as a young girl reveal this: “Oh my Jesus, grant me the grace of always maintaining my heart very pure. Won’t You, my good Jesus, give me the grace of serving You in the state of virginity and to be able to die in the same? I do not want to be a virgin only in name, but my heart must be adorned with virtues which You demand of a virgin”. At the age of 14, she made the vow of virginity for a year and at the age of 21 the vow of perpetual chastity.

138. In order to preserve her purity, she did everything with constant vigilance. Not only did she pray a lot, she

also decided to imitate the Blessed Virgin in her modesty. Usually she lowered her eyes, speaking only when necessity and charity demanded this. Also her exterior, her bearing, her looks reflected an angelic purity which delighted all who approached her and led them to God. Father Reichard testifies: “Her purity was such that she trembled at the hint of subjects representing the opposite of this virtue.”

139. She wanted to protect her Daughters from any danger to their purity recommending that they should immediately flee the world and loose manners: “I beg you, to start living as is fitting to a spouse of Jesus Christ. Follow your Divine Spouse who lived a secluded life to the highest degree. Meditate Him as you want, you will find only in Him collectedness and modesty.”

12. HUMILITY

Unconditional Continuity of Spirit Despite of Changing Situations

140. The Servant of God practiced heroic humility. From an early age, she was enlightened by grace about the holiness, greatness and majesty of God; she trembled with respect and considering her weakness, her nothingness. Those two impressions were deeply rooted in her soul; they formed the solid basis of the spiritual edifice, the sanctification of the Servant of God. Through her faithful relation to grace, these precious grains marvelously grew in her.

141. She, who was by nature inclined to stubbornness, showed that she had overcome it through the compliance with which she accepted her parents' orders and rebuked and bowed to their will, just as through her humble and constant submission to the guidance of Father Reichard and Bishop Raess. However, as Superior General, when she thought it her duty to give her opinion, she did it with humble respect but firmness and without any affectation.

142. The Servant of God showed deep humility by always considering herself unworthy of any esteem and consideration. She wished to join a religious order "to be regarded as the last of all". When Our Lord asked her to found a congregation, she exclaimed: "Oh Jesus, my Divine Spouse, how can You do that, I am such a poor and ignorant servant. How can You use me for anything?" Sister Leonie confirms: "I heard the Foundress say: 'I ask our Lord to be forgotten after my death so that nobody will speak about me any more'."

143. The humility of the Servant of God was manifested in the sincerity of her awareness regarding her lowliness and nothingness. She considered herself an unworthy sinner. Father Reichard could say: "I always had to reassure her against her excessive fears and to keep her away from the nothingness in which she always wanted to retreat with the gifts communicated to her". "She saw and was made to understand that she could not rely on herself, but only on God [...]. She regarded herself as so small, so miserable that she could not have the least confidence in herself."

144. Aware of her deep weakness and misery, she was never discouraged by them but found in this insight a possibility of loving God more ardently: "After sighing

for some time about her unworthiness and nothingness, she was abruptly brought to consider God's goodness and mercy, and finally she was so penetrated by it that her heart burned with love and gratitude."

145. The Servant of God constantly showed herself humble and kind towards others. Father Reichard confirms: "You always notice in her a gentle serenity which attracts and delights". Sister Leonie says: "She was pleasant and kind in her contacts with the Sisters. There was nothing hard in her manners". In her Rule, the Servant of God prescribed her Daughters kindness, fruit of humility. "Coming to the sick, they greeted them friendly with these words: 'Praised be Jesus Christ.' Then they gently asked the sick in few words for information about their sufferings, and then the relatives, also with great kindness."

146. She loved and searched for humiliation; she thought that it was the best and shortest way to reach humility. All her life she had to endure humiliation and contempt and never complained. Father Amhard says about her: "I immediately recognized the high illumination of her spirit, her total abandonment to God's will, and her great desire for humiliation and for the cross". She said to her Daughters: "Oh! My children, if only you understood how useful humiliation is! It is almost the only means to reach humility". "The grace of recognizing our faults, of acknowledging them, of accusing ourselves and of standing up again is more precious than that of visions or miracles". Father Glöckler says: "When a Sister had humiliated herself, she immediately showed herself disposed to pardon what deserved blame and said: 'I would like to kiss the feet of a Sister who is willing to accept a reprimand without making excuses for herself or

being upset’.” She also firmly insisted on the chapter of faults.

147. Mother Alphonse Marie made an effort to hide her virtues, her extraordinary graces, the holiness of her life. She did it with simplicity which was due to her thinking that there was not anything good in her. She never spoke to anyone about the extraordinary graces she had received except to her spiritual director. Sister Leonie testifies: “She never talked about her visions”. She said herself: “We always have to consider ourselves unworthy of spiritual favors and we may only receive them trembling”. Father Glöckler: “As far as her love for a reclusive life is concerned, she wished to be admitted in a convent and never thought of being a Foundress herself”. Father Reichard says: “Concerning her revelations, she thought that they were illusions; she tried to accuse herself”. Father Amhard speaks of “her fear of extraordinary things”. The Servant of God gave to her Daughters this line of conduct. “With the grace of God I will accomplish only His will, I only wish to be ignored by everybody, I want privations, the last place, the last jobs. If others are preferred to me, may God be praised for it! It is all the better for me. What do I need other than being humiliated?”

148. She completed her life in heroic humility. She had often said this prayer: “I ask You, oh my Divine Spouse, my Savior, to make me similar to You so that I can suffer in contempt and die in abandonment.”