

**Spiritual Formation Notebooks CSFN  
No. 2**

**On Harmony in Love  
in the Life and Teachings  
of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd**



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## Foreword

Dear Sisters,

I heartily invite you to read this second Notebook in our series of Notebooks of the Spiritual Formation of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, which highlights the spirituality of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, Frances Siedliska. In this manner we wish to continue on our spiritual path. My thanks go to the Sisters who have already accepted our invitation and joined in the labors of preparing upcoming Notebooks. I invite and encourage all Sisters to collaborate for the benefit of us all.

This second Notebook, authored by Sister Jolanta Olczyk from the Province of Mary, is titled: “On Harmony in Love in the Life and Teachings of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd.”

We can probably say that what urged Frances throughout her life to sail into the depths of spirit was love. Love played in her heart a beautiful, harmonious melody. But we do not live the fullness of love for God immediately or effortlessly. The teachings of Frances Siedliska, and perhaps even more her life, model for us one’s development and growth on the path of ever-more-perfect love for God and our brothers and sisters.

Little Franny from the Żdzary Estate in central Poland sensed intuitively that she was loved, and she desired to love. Then at Via Machiavelli in Rome, departing for the House of Our Father, Mother Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, cried: “Caritas. Caritas. Caritas.” What occurred in-between? A path...a path of love, discovered in humility, in the shadow of the cross, in faithful everyday existence.

In this Notebook the author presents to us the aids to spiritual growth which were particularly close and dear to Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, namely: asceticism, humility, the communion of saints, daily examination of conscience, spiritual direction, retreats, the practice of silence, and living in the presence of God. What do these concepts entail? Are they tools helpful only to the few select? The saints? How can we practically apply them in our lives? May this and other questions accompany our careful study and personal reflection. As we grow to know better God's love, may we rise in it, becoming its witnesses here and now, today, always afresh and more radical.

In the love of the Holy Family,  
M. Jana Zawieja, CSFN  
Superior General

## Introduction

The Church today emphasizes the urgent need for new evangelism. It is so because new evangelism leads to a deeper experience of one's faith. In the guidelines of the XIII General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops we read: "To convey faith is to create in every place and at every time conditions allowing . . . a meeting between people and Jesus Christ . . . The expected fruit of such a meeting is to place people in a relation of children to their Father, to feel the strength of the Spirit. (Eph. 2:18) . . . 'New evangelism' is synonymous with a spiritual rebirth of a life of faith."<sup>1</sup>

Let us keep new evangelism in mind as we review the aids to the development of love discussed in the teachings of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd. The more so because, for the Foundress, a life of faith translates precisely into love actualized. Let us also remember that *all the great evangelical movements in Christianity's 2000 year long history were entwined with forms of evangelical radicalism*,<sup>2</sup> and that life in a religious congregation is one form of such radicalism. May the simple methods used by our Congregation help us better convey faith, love, and God's communion<sup>3</sup> and bear witness to Christ here and now.

According to accepted practice in spirituality, the aids to boosting spiritual growth, including love, can be classified into two groups: primary and secondary. The term "secondary" does not describe aids of lesser importance, but only their relation to the primary aids, which are: the sacraments, prayer, the practice of the fundamental Christian virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd in her teachings about spiritual life often refers to the primary aids. In the sacraments she sees above all their spiritual dimension - the grace of the arriving Lord; prayer she sees as a means to and a fruit of the love for God; faith, hope, and love to Frances introduce a Christian to a theological life; the gifts of the Holy Spirit strengthen life in the Triune. For Mother Foundress the Word of God is key. Its daily study and the daily life in faith it engenders was emphasized in our First Notebook of Spiritual Formation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nowa ewangelizacja dla przekazu wiary chrześcijańskiej, Instrumentum Laboris*, XIII Zgromadzenie Ogólne Synodu Biskupów, Watykan 2011, p. 11, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* at 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* at 40.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. W. Gogola OCD, *Teologia komunii z Bogiem*, Kraków 2009, p. 353. (tr.: "A Theology of Communion with God").

This study addresses the secondary aids to spiritual growth, which are particularly close and dear to Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd: communion of the Saints, daily examination of conscience, spiritual direction, retreats, the practice of silence, and living in God's presence. Asceticism and humility provide an environment optimal for the practice of these aids. They should always be part of one's overall posture, part of a fruitful practice of all the aids to spiritual growth. For this reason they will be discussed first, to better understand their importance in the teachings of Mother Foundress.

# I. THE ENVIRONMENT OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN THE TEACHINGS OF BLESSED MARY OF JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

## 1. Asceticism

A human being's calling to love requires a lot of discipline to fully meet its challenges. Hence arises the concept of asceticism in the development of love. Love gives meaning to all actions a human being undertakes including his ascetic endeavors. For Frances Siedliska the connection between love and asceticism is too strong to be overlooked.<sup>5</sup> For Frances the primary goal of asceticism is to leave behind the *old* human being and to take on a *new* one so harmony can dwell in us.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of asceticism holds an important place in the New Testament and in the Christian tradition.<sup>7</sup> St. Paul brings it into Christian life and gives it religious meaning. The term "asceticism" has an established place in Catholic spirituality.<sup>8</sup> Participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ's death and resurrection is the theological foundation of Christian asceticism as well as of mysticism.<sup>9</sup> Christ's grace transforms a believer into *homo novus* - a human born to a new life, a life in the Spirit and under the Spirit's influence.<sup>10</sup> Frances, in her Conferences and Circular Letters refers to St. Paul's teachings (Rom.7:23), which lay the groundwork of Christian asceticism:

*If you have risen with Christ, seek what is up above you; love what is up above you, not that which is on earth. And so, lift yourself up, where Jesus abides at the right hand of his Father. For the Apostle further teaches that "you are dead," dead to all things of this world, dead to yourselves, dead to all human, earthly, natural thoughts, feelings and desires, so that the old human being of sin and error must die within you. In every human being there are two lives: the life of the old being, and the new human being's supernatural life; that is the*

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 494; cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rome, April 18, 1886.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Cf. P. Pinckaers OP, *Życie duchowe chrześcijanina według św. Pawła i św. Tomasza*, p. 229; cf. also Św. Katarzyna ze Sieny, *Dialog*, translated by L. Staff, Poznań 1987, p. 10; R. Garrigou – Lagrange, *Trzy okresy życia wewnętrznego wstępem do życia w niebie*, vol. I, trans. Sister Teresa, Franciscan, servant of the Cross, Poznań 1960, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. W. Gogola OCD, *Asceza*, w: *Leksykon duchowości katolickiej*, praca zbiorowa pod redakcją ks. M. Chmielewskiego, Lublin – Kraków 2002,, p. 63 – 64.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

*life of grace and the life of nature. The life of an old human being is one of our nature, defiled by the sin of our first parents. The life of grace of Jesus Christ within us is brought to us by Jesus, received during Holy Baptism. These two lives continually vie with each other, and not in every human does grace conquer. But if the soul responds to grace then our evil nature is improved and refined.*<sup>11</sup>

Following the thought of St. Paul, Frances Siedliska notices in human beings *two kinds of life*: one is called “*an old being*” and the other “*a new being*.” Persistent, ceaseless asceticism and personal work are the heart of the process of becoming a *new being*. The birth in a human being of the *new life* occurs in the struggle between nature and grace (Rom.7:14-15).<sup>12</sup> This tension inside human beings is for Frances synonymous with the tension between *love* and *non-love*.<sup>13</sup> Repeatedly she emphasizes:

*The natural life must die, i.e. all feelings, desires, thoughts, deeds which do not derive from God nor lead to God, which have no divine impulse, are not done for God, in which self-love, sensuality, or pride find nourishment. All infidelity must die, because infidelity is non-love, non-fulfillment of that which Jesus wants from us and demands.*<sup>14</sup>

Life according to nature is rooted in the original sin. In that life Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd identifies three areas of impact: mind, heart, and will.<sup>15</sup> The mind pines after fame, honor, affirmation, the feeling that one means something and is someone. At such time one is consumed with pride. Under the influence of such thinking a human being craves ever more favors and attention from others. The question arises: *why?* After all, we know that everything we have, we receive from God.<sup>16</sup> For this reason everything we have should be directed to the Creator, to glorify Him. But the heart would seek pleasure for itself away from God, even though its purpose is clearly to love the Creator. (Deut.6:4-7).<sup>17</sup> If in his love Jesus is so generous and magnanimous then how can a human being not reciprocate such love?<sup>18</sup> A human being can show gratitude by allowing the Lord to live within him or her fully through grace. For this reason the heart should always

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<sup>11</sup> *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, April 18, 1886; *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 494.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 494; Cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, 18 kwietnia 1886; W. Sardi, K. Sica, *Żywot Sługi Bożej Marji Franciszki Siedliskiej*, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. W. Sardi, K. Sica, *Żywot Sługi Bożej Marji Franciszki Siedliskiej*, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 495 – 496; Cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Wielki Piątek 1882.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

turn to its God and should love all others only in Him and through Him.<sup>19</sup> In this manner, by learning to love others, a human being shall transform into a *new being*, as these words reveal:

*. . . by extinguishing inside you, with God's grace, the old being, love that which is above, not what is here on earth, so that you persistently aim to be souls living in close inner connection with the Lord Jesus.*<sup>20</sup>

Speaking about free will, Frances repeatedly emphasizes how important it is to offer our free will to the Lord.<sup>21</sup> The more paths we select by ourselves, the more difficult it will be to approach the only Path. For this reason Mother Foundress incessantly offers words of encouragement:

*May each of us, sisters, be the home and tabernacle of God, which shall occur when every one of us sincerely labors to this end with God's grace and toils to die to herself. Where sincerity, simplicity, and the pure intent of seeking only God and fulfilling His Will are lacking there God's love cannot saturate and embrace the heart and Jesus cannot reign in such a soul.*<sup>22</sup>

God's way is the safest, though it may not be the most comfortable of paths. The effort and toil of asceticism will accomplish constant re-orientation towards the path mapped out by the will of the Lord.<sup>23</sup> As previously noted, for Frances Siedliska a life of grace, i.e. a life of God in the human being is the life sacrificed by Jesus.<sup>24</sup> A human being is granted this life of grace at Baptism. Through faithfulness to grace the *new life* in a human being is constantly growing. If one cultivates this new life then natural life is refined. God's grace is capable of transforming vice into virtue and making holy the workings of reason, heart, and will.<sup>25</sup> At such time an internal transformation occurs which Frances describes as follows:

*After such death to oneself, shall follow a life with Jesus, a new life, a supernatural one. Jesus shall dwell in the heart, shall become the*

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 496; Cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, 14 grudnia 1887.

<sup>20</sup> *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, 14 grudnia 1887.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 496; Cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Paryż, grudzień 1891.

<sup>22</sup> *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Paryż, grudzień 1891.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 496; Cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Paryż, grudzień 1891.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, Wielka Środa, 9 kwietnia 1884.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 494; Cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, Wielka Środa, 9 kwietnia 1884.

*Object of its love and the Lord and Master of all its powers. In Him the soul shall find light, strength, force, grace and all the virtues.*<sup>26</sup>

Under the influence of God's love and grace, reason is governed by faith which it accepts as the foundation of its convictions.<sup>27</sup> One's conduct is then guided by the teachings and the will of Jesus, rather than one's own beliefs and conceptions. The heart is fed with hope and seeks the good in God alone. He is its center of gravity and of all its endeavors. More than anything Jesus desires a simple and sincere heart, one which does not care whether its life path is *sweet* or is a path *of the cross and of suffering*.<sup>28</sup> It only cares that the path leads towards the ultimate goal, namely the Lord. Submitting one's will to the plans of Christ will help that occur. After handing over her will to God a human being becomes like wax which can be completely molded by Him until *a new being* is formed.<sup>29</sup> Mother Foundress, familiar with the work of asceticism in the field of love, reveals her concern for those entrusted to her care:

*I wish that you disappear, sisters, so not a trace remains. Oh what holy, deep words, how much they say, how much they mean. To disappear means to die to oneself, to cease existing, so that in that place Jesus can live and can rule in us. Without a trace means that nothing should remain of the old being, no turning upon itself, no searching for oneself. Jesus is to rule over it all by His grace, His spirit, and His holy love.*<sup>30</sup>

Love lies at the core of the labor of transforming *the old being into a new one*. Love helps one bear that which human beings find difficult. It allows one not only to get through humiliating and harsh situations, but *to love them* for the love of God.<sup>31</sup> We notice that people who express joy upon encountering obstacles welcome all unfavorable events with love. A humble heart knows that it deserves greater humiliations and obstacles than the ones it encounters.<sup>32</sup> But while it is important to properly face trying situations, quiet daily existence is equally crucial. In such daily existence the asceticism of love shall be manifest in a delicate treatment of others, in tactful conduct, and in perceiving Christ in others. Examples from the Master's goodness and His teachings offer the best lessons on building relationships filled with respect.<sup>33</sup> In relationships with our brothers and sisters

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<sup>26</sup> *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, Wielka Środa, 9 kwietnia 1884.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 495; Cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, 2 stycznia 1902.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, 2 stycznia 1902.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 435 – 436; Cf. also *RzPJ*, sygn. 1895 13/XI.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *RzPJ*, sygn. 1895 13/XI.

love is increased by giving it away.<sup>34</sup> The love for God is actualized through peacefulness, gentleness, docility, and seeing others as better than ourselves. Spiritual progress is accomplished by responding to God's grace. It is the role of human beings to be responsive and vigilant so as not to overlook God's acts.<sup>35</sup> Vigilance in this realm will be noticeable according to the words God directed to Mother Foundress: "*And you, my child, note how great your strength will be when you fight no longer alone but with Me at your side.*"<sup>36</sup> A heart's overall sensitivity is a great asset in responding to the challenges of love.<sup>37</sup> A person's sensitivity manifests itself in ceaselessly, carefully noting and receiving the *gestures* of Love.<sup>38</sup> When this happens everything feeds the growth of one's love for God and aids spiritual transformation until one feels that the Lord himself acts through one. Surrendering to this process of internal transformation releases in one's heart gratitude for everything one encounters.<sup>39</sup> How from the soul these words of prayer flow: *Lord how miraculous is Your mercy, how everything leads to transformation, the metamorphosis of the old being within us.*<sup>40</sup> The workings of God's spirit are made visible in the *harmony* of human action.<sup>41</sup> Such harmony is noted in interactions with persons who allow the Lord to act through them. The life of *a new human being* is reflected in his relations with others. *Harmony* is noticeable in all undertakings,<sup>42</sup> as Mother Foundress noted:

*Would this be the work of Jesus if it lacked harmony and if any temptation were to cause disruption? Holy souls are characterized by peace, gentleness and sweetness. We shall then have harmony inside us, where God shall reign freely.*<sup>43</sup>

## REFLECTION

### a. In Light Of Theology

Asceticism<sup>44</sup> based on biblical foundations lies in the inner answer a human being gives to God. Thus asceticism should be experienced only in the position of

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<sup>34</sup>Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 436 – 437; Cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, Wielka Środa, 9 kwietnia 1884.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. tamże.

<sup>36</sup> *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, Wielka Środa, 9 kwietnia 1884.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 437; Cf. także RzPJ, sygn. 1889 – 4, 6 35/XI.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. tamże.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. tamże.

<sup>40</sup> *Dziennik Duchowy*, tom II, p. 100.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 101, 268, 347, 412, 458.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268, 347.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Encyklopedia chrześcijaństwa*, edited by H. Witczyk, Kielce 2000, p. 61-62.

acceptance of the Holy Spirit, who guides a person who accept God's plan for that person.

As far as I am concerned, to what degree is the practice of asceticism, one of the elementary dimensions of life, my honest answer to Christ's love?

### **b. In Light Of God's Word**

Eph.6:10-18; 1Tim. 1:18-19; Rom.6:13-14; 1 Cor.9:24-25; Col.3:5- 7.

## **2. Humility**

Humility demands from the person collaboration with grace through asceticism. Humility enables people mutually to come forth, to encounter each other with love. For Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd humility is the first indicator of the emergence of love in someone.<sup>45</sup> She believes that, to be able to grow love within oneself, one must be internally predisposed to do so. That needed fertile predisposition is inner simplicity or humility. A humble human being admits who he truly is. He realizes that everything he has derives from God. In and of himself he owns nothing, short of *wretchedness and deficiency*.<sup>46</sup> Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd rejects all manifestations of pride in a Christian person as mutually exclusive with humility:

*We pride ourselves on many things. For example, some people elevate themselves on account of their birth which they think gives them special rights. Some elevate themselves on account of the talents God has given them or of the knowledge they have acquired. Such self-elevation is foolish because everything we have comes from God. Others elevate themselves because they were brought up in a superior manner. Others still on account of their virtues think they have reached perfection. Some persons pride themselves on their held positions and honors. Meanwhile inner simplicity requires us to give up everything. If we have talents or skills they all must go to God.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, a higher position does not assume a higher level of personal growth. Only one thing truly lifts us to a higher level, namely that we are God's children. No position or post, no earthly honor attests to our perfection*

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<sup>45</sup> Cf.. RzPJ, sygn. 1899 – 1900 20/XI; cf. also *Wybór listów*, p. 9, 21, 44.

<sup>46</sup> Cf.. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 140

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

*or holiness which alone we should care about. Our honor apart from being God's children lies in being the brides of Jesus.*<sup>48</sup>

Consciously accepting the truth about oneself leads to humility.<sup>49</sup> A humble human being has the courage to admit his limitations which naturally stem from his human, earthly existence.<sup>50</sup> So indicates the etymology of the Latin word *humilitas*, deriving from *humus*, which means “earth.” The essence of humility is to affirm the truth about oneself, to recognize one’s limitations, but also to observe one’s good; to reject egotism and recognize dependence on the Greatest Good.<sup>51</sup> Humility is a virtue which *nurtures* and *nourishes* love.<sup>52</sup> Mother Foundress approaches humility on three levels: relative to God, relative to fellow human beings, and relative to oneself.<sup>53</sup> In her teachings humility before God forces a human being to scrutinize his past and present life.<sup>54</sup> An honest, authentic assessment of how one’s responsibilities are met should guide one to inner humility, to apologizing to God for any failings stemming from a shortage of love, and to praising God for any good found in the heart.<sup>55</sup> St. Paul’s words indicate that neither he who sows the seed, nor he who waters it, can ascribe the harvest to his labors. The cause of the harvest is only God who gives directly (1 Cor.3:7). God’s word should penetrate and soften human hearts and make them receptive to His grace. Such receptiveness requires enormous humility before God. One who lacks humility before his Creator does not allow Him to operate in one’s life. He is like one who has ears but does not hear (Matt.11:15).<sup>56</sup> Father Piotr Rostworowski asserts on this point that a human being becomes humble when he stands *small* before God.<sup>57</sup> Humility towards others sensitizes one to perceive others with love, as wiser than oneself.<sup>58</sup> True humility exists when one has respect towards others and sees them as better than oneself. Only humility can elevate a human being, though being God’s child can lift one even higher.<sup>59</sup> A humble person, on recognizing that he has erred, is ready to amend his thoughts and views. A humble person will not be angered by another’s lack of acceptance even when he feels right. Humility leaves no room for judging others, even less for criticizing or condemning. If temptation arises to judge or

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid at p. 160.

<sup>49</sup> 49 Cf. Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. p. Urbański, Pokora, w: Leksykon duchowości katolickiej, op. cit., p. 647.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Ibid.; Cf. Also P. Urbański, Polska teologia życia mistycznego (1914 – 1939), Warszawa 1995, p. 110.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Św. Katarzyna ze Sieny, Dialog, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 38, 140.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 140 – 141.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. P. Rostworowski OSB, Wiara, nadzieja i miłość, Kraków 2002, p. 54.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 38, 141, 160.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Ibid.

condemn others, it must be re-directed towards oneself.<sup>60</sup> Humility towards oneself holds special value in the teachings and life of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd.<sup>61</sup> One who feels *poor* on this earth has no difficulty accepting harsh truths or admonishments from others. A humble person shall accept any reproof of himself or his failings with a grateful heart.<sup>62</sup> He does not try to justify his failings nor is he surprised by them because they are unavoidable. Humility urges one to seek the last place for oneself.<sup>63</sup> A deep conviction that human reason has limitations and is elevated and enlightened only by God's Spirit greatly helps self-critical perception. One then trusts God more than oneself.<sup>64</sup> The portrait of a truly humble person sketched by the hand of Frances Siedliska, looks as follows:

*A humble soul does not trust itself, but depends on God. This is the foundation of humility. Woe is he who trusts his skills, his science, health, or strengths. Such foundation is too feeble. But a soul which depends on God, although in itself is weak, shall conquer everything. Everything can change, can fall apart. He who works for God and trusts in God, he God defends, supports, saves, and sanctifies. When the soul knows its poverty but loves God, it then feels the need to run to God. It sees that everything is meager and temporary.*<sup>65</sup>

Humility is also a means to overcoming temptation because it causes the soul to recognize what it is like in itself.<sup>66</sup> Seeing what inclinations the soul has, and which way it leans, leads to inner humility. Such spiritual self-knowledge is the very foundation for accepting grace into the soul so it does its work there.<sup>67</sup> Recognizing one's true condition clears the path to living fully with grace. Humble acceptance of one's deepest true intentions opens the way to a fuller life as an instrument in the hand of God.<sup>68</sup> In discussing humility, Frances relies on lessons from the saints to whom this virtue was key.<sup>69</sup> Recalling the teachings of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Frances notes that humility comprises two values: truth and virtue. Truth reveals to a human being his nothingness. But one finds joy in knowing that God is everything although he (a human being) is *deeply poor*, a

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.38–39, 142, 185

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.39.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.327.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.327.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.329-330.

*nothing*.<sup>70</sup> Truth embarrasses persons and makes them feel small while virtue elevates and encourages them. Truth enlightens while virtue brings cheer. Humility derives from faith and is dubbed by the saints, including Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, the *mistress and mother of virtues*.<sup>71</sup> Humility, like love, should be boundless, just as boundless as the love, greatness, and holiness of Jesus.<sup>72</sup> It is He who, with zest and sharp insight, looks into pure and humble souls, discriminating against none.<sup>73</sup> Mortifying experiences teach humility and, though themselves unpleasant, re-make a human being in the semblance of the Son of God who has set the example of humility and encouraged us to be humans of gentle and humble hearts (Matt.11:29).<sup>74</sup>

The most beautiful model of humility, alongside that of Jesus, is the Virgin Mary.<sup>75</sup> Her words, “*Here I am, the Lord’s servant*,” shall remain for generations to come the ultimate example to be followed by all believers. Her complete surrender to the reign of Yahweh is the fullest expression of humility and of trust towards the Highest. Mary understood perfectly the Creator’s relationship to creation. She cooperated with the grace given her. Absolute trust, humility’s companion virtue, helped her fulfill the mission of the Savior’s Mother consistently and fully.<sup>76</sup>

## **Reflection:**

### **a. In Light Of Theological Thought**

Humility<sup>77</sup> has its spiritual foundation in St. Augustine’s theology. In counterpoising *amor sui* (love of oneself) against *amor Dei* (love of God), St. Augustine made humility the measure of an authentic return to God. In this context humility is the foundation of all spiritual life, a life attuned to love and service. Humility, the basis of the patience and meekness of a human being who offers his life to God, should become manifest in Christian attitudes.

To what degree does this truth inform my understanding of the need to cultivate humility in my life experiences? In understanding humility, one must also recognize one’s value in the eyes of God. To what degree do I feel that I am a person loved by Him?

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.418.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.329-330.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.199, 222, 285-287, 331.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *Encyklopedia Chrzescijanska*, op. cit., p. 568.

## **b. In Light Of God's Word**

Matt. 11:29; Phil.2:5; John 13:1-17; Eph.4:1-2; Col.3:12-14.

## **II. FACTORS AIDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOVE IN THE THOUGHT OF MOTHER FOUNDRESS**

### **1. The Communion Of Saints**

Frances Siedliska, herself walking the path of holiness and constantly striving towards greater love, shares with us the means of achieving these goals. She invites us to enter the supernatural world through a living relationship with angels and the saints.

#### 1.1 Angelic Intercession

The mission of angels is well stated in the Greek-Polish edition of the New Testament. They are described as *ministering spirits sent into service* to help those who shall *inherit salvation* (Heb.:14). Angels appear quite frequently on the pages of the Scriptures<sup>78</sup> and have found their place in the teachings of the Church<sup>79</sup>.

Saint Matthew writes that angels *see constantly the face* of God the Father (Matt.18:10). He adds that when the Son of Man arrives in glory *all angels* shall be with Him (Matt. 25:31).<sup>80</sup> Angels belong to the Lord, because they were created *by Him and for Him*. All creation, including *invisible beings, Thrones and Dominions, Principalities and Powers* belongs to Him (Col.1:16). The Scriptures state that angels were present during the creation of the world and they are vividly present in the story of Redemption.<sup>81</sup> In a special way their adoration and service permeate the life of Christ. From the moment of the Nativity angels watched over the childhood of the Son of God and later were with Him in the desert, supported Him in agony, protected him from his enemies (Luke 2:13, 43; Matt. 1:20; 2:13; 26:53). They proclaimed the Good News of the Incarnation and the mystery of the Resurrection of Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10; Mark 16:5-7).

Liturgy particularly well highlights the role of angels.<sup>82</sup> During every Holy Mass the Church re-connects with angels and three times adores Holy God. The

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<sup>78</sup> According to the Concordance, the word "angel" appears in the Holy Writ 313 times as a noun, but only once in the collocation "destroying angel" (cf. Chron. 21:15) and once as an adjective, as a modifier in "angel food" (cf. Wis. 16:20). Cf. "Anioł" in Konkordacja Starego I Nowego Testamentu do Biblii Tysiacleńca, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Warsaw 2000, p.2.

<sup>79</sup> KKK 328-330; Cf. also G. Huber, *Moj anioł pojdzie przed toba*, trans. J. Drozd SDS, Warsaw 1982, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. G. Huber, *Moj anioł pojdzie przed toba*, supra, at p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> KKK 332-333; cf. also G. Huber, *Moj anioł pojdzie przed toba*, supra, at p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> KKK 334-336.

People of God benefit from the mysterious and awesome help of the *ministering spirits*. A human being's entire life is surrounded by the assistance and intercession of angels (Matt.18:1; Luke 16:22; Ps 34:8; Tob.12:12).<sup>83</sup> Very revealing is the text of the Liturgy of the Hours of the People of God.<sup>84</sup> The act of contrition carries an important message. It calls on all angels and saints to pray for human beings. The parts of this prayer address the *adoration of God, who has angels in his service*.<sup>85</sup> We find words of supplication for the *holy Guardians* to guide us humans by safe paths to reach the Face of God. The Angel of the Lord can protect from the *pestilence of all sins*. This protection extends to all humans but particularly those with hearts unguarded against *treacherous* forces. A guardian angel walks before a human being so as to protect him on the paths of life. Angels serve as models of listening to the voice of God and of eagerly accepting His will (Exod. 23:20-21).<sup>86</sup>

Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd makes the most of the advocacy of these great and mighty advocates before God.<sup>87</sup> She entrusted the entire labor of her life to the Lord on the eve of the day on which the Church recognizes the Guardian Angels.<sup>88</sup> On October 2, 1883, she reminds the sisters:

*This day is very important and memorable for our Order and should be celebrated with great solemnity. On the eve of this holiday, under the care and protection of the Guardian Angels, the matter of our Order was for the first time presented to the Holy Father Pius IX.*<sup>89</sup>

Guardian Angels are human beings' *most sincere friends*. They guide a Christian only towards the realm of light, towards God.<sup>90</sup> Their voice accompanies the sweet sound of God's grace. Living in their presence a human being must feel very safe. Their sole purpose is to assist the person to whom the Creator has assigned them.<sup>91</sup> As part of the opening prayer for a retreat Mother Foundress writes:

*And to our chapel has flowed today the sweet sound of God's grace, carried by His envoys, the Guardian Angels. The voice of God's grace*

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Modlitwa na zakonczenie dnia*, in: *Lit. Godz.*; cf. also *Teksty Wlasne o Swietych z dnia 2 pazdziernika*.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> cf. also *Teksty Wlasne o Swietych z dnia 2 pazdziernika*.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej matki*, p. 430.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *Konferencje*, p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

*handed to us by our most sincere friends, the Guardian Angels; we shall follow into the realm of light, the realm of eternal happiness.*<sup>92</sup>

According to Frances Siedliska, a human being can learn correct attitudes and behaviors from angels.<sup>93</sup> About the conduct of persons present in the chapel or near it, she notes: “*we should conduct ourselves like Angels in heaven who constantly adore, praise and worship God.*”<sup>94</sup> Angels especially teach how to walk in the closeness of God, to adore His Face and joyfully worship Him.<sup>95</sup> Frequently seeking the help, *assistance*, and aid of God’s envoys helps one abide by the side of God especially at times of personal difficulty.<sup>96</sup> Archangels and angels are guides on the paths of human life.<sup>97</sup> Their presence and watchfulness must be valued and appreciated. Two expressions of such appreciation are: a prayer of thanksgiving and a heart’s gratitude to the Lord for the gift of angels.<sup>98</sup> Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd herself often turns to her angel with these words: “*My Guardian Angel, assist and help me, pray and intercede for me.*”<sup>99</sup>

An expression of gratitude to God for the existence and mission of supernatural beings is our worship of the manifested in variety of ways.<sup>100</sup> It can include prayers for assistance as well as giving persons close to one’s heart the names of angels. Mother Foundress practiced both these forms.<sup>101</sup> She clearly showed so in the early stages of the Order. She named the first three candidates with the names of the Archangels. Thus the foundation of the Order formed Sisters Michaela, Gabriela and Rafaela. In this way Frances paid tribute and gave thanks to the three Archangels whom she truly loved.<sup>102</sup> To them she owed incessant advocacy before God on behalf of her emerging work.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 433.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *ibid.*; cf. also RzPJ, sygn 1889 143/XV.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 1889 143/XV.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Notatki, sygn. 1901, 2 26/X.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Zbior listow okolnych, Loreto, 23 sierpnia 1883.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Zbior listow okolnych, Loreto, 23 sierpnia 1883; cf. also A. Ricciardi, Franciszka Siedliska, Matka Maria od Pana Jezusa Dobrego Pasterza, Zalozycielka Zgromadzenia Siostr Najswietrzrej Rodziny z Nazaretu, tlum. p. M.I. Krajewska CSFN, W. Minkiewicz, Rzym 1987, p. 83-84.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Zbior listow okolnych, Loreto, 23 sierpnia 1883; cf. also A. Ricciardi, Franciszka Siedliska, cited supra, p. 83-84; W. Sari, K.Sica, Zywtot Slugi Bozej Marji Franciszki Siedliskiej, Krakow 1924, p. 153

The Angels' presence and assistance during the Holy Family's journey from Nazareth did not escape the attention of Frances Siedliska.<sup>104</sup> Also the great mystery of the Incarnation allows us to note and appreciate the role of God's envoys who participate in its celebration. For Mary it is the moment of the Annunciation by Gabriel. The Archangel announces Yahweh's plan for her, explains why she is feeling abashed, then reassures her that God shall work through *Miriam's* life.<sup>105</sup> St. Joseph, the righteous man, receives guidance from angels on keeping the Son of God safe and secure.<sup>106</sup> The offered and accepted guidance of angels, as willed by the Highest, gave Joseph strength and helped him persist in fulfilling his life's mission.<sup>107</sup>

## Reflection

### a) In Light Of Theology

Angels<sup>108</sup> help human beings come closer to Christ and leave evil behind. Their absence from one's life could but does not necessarily indicate remoteness from God. Moreover, *angels again and again are represented as messengers of God's anger directed against evil. Angels appear at God's Last Judgment in this dual role as defenders of good and avengers of evil* (Matt. 24:31; 13:41).<sup>109</sup>

Do I cultivate in myself the belief that angels can be ruthless towards sin, mine and yours, but can release in us good and true love? Moreover St. Gregory the Great teaches that *even you, if you wish, could deserve the lofty name of angel. Every one of you, if so inspired by the heavens truly is an angel if she succeeds in leading a brother or sister away from evil, encouraging them to do good; if she teaches those who have erred about the eternal kingdom and punishment and does not begrudge them the holy words of rebuke.*<sup>110</sup> To what degree do my actions and attitudes resemble the services of an angel?

### b) In Light Of God's Word

Gen.16:7-14; Apoc. 1:1.

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<sup>104</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 167, 359.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Cf. *ibid.* at p. 166, 483.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Wierzę, collective authorship, Kielce 2012, p.27.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* p. 28.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

## 1.2 The Intercession of Saints

Like the intercession of angels, Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd also saw intercession by the Lord's saints as an important means to aid the growth and fulfillment of love.<sup>111</sup> In her personal striving for holiness Frances Siedliska clearly saw and emphasized the importance of the intercession of the saints.<sup>112</sup> She left a body of thought about the role and impact of the communion with saints on attaining perfect love but her own spiritual engagement with the invisible world offers the most beautiful lessons in this area. She truly communed with the saints. They were her constant friends helping her put into practice the daily practice of love.<sup>113</sup>

The holiness of human beings is closely related to the holiness of God.<sup>114</sup> In its essence holiness is a quality of Yahweh alone (Isa. 6: 3). Everything in any way connected to Him also merits the term "holy." Human beings are only as holy, as perfect in love, as they partake of the holiness of God. Christ, (Mark 1:24) is chosen as an Intermediary by the Father. It is through Him as well as through the Holy Spirit that the holiness of God may be passed on to those who believe. (Rom.8:14-17; 1 Cor.1:30; 3:16; 6:11; Eph.2:22)<sup>115</sup> Saint Paul in one of his letters expresses this wish: "*May the Father of glory give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in more deeply knowing Himself. May He enlighten your heart so you may know the hope of your calling, the riches of His legacy's glory amongst the saints*" (Eph.1:17-18). As follows from this fragment the riches of glory belong to the saints. A deep union with God places the saints in the reality of eternal happiness. It is through them that the Lord, the source of holiness, can reveal the multitudinous miracles of his grace.<sup>116</sup> In the saints especially is reflected the holiness of Christ. The saints enjoy God's light and His love forever and ever.<sup>117</sup>

The communion with saints, those who fulfilled their holiness in *fear of God*, is a priceless gift in the life and teachings of Frances Siedliska.<sup>118</sup> The saints intercede with God on behalf of those who see the truth. As *temples of the living God*, they are the *fulfillment of love* (2 Cor. 6-7, 1)<sup>119</sup> hence the importance of forming spiritual connections with them. Reading the saints' biographies and

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. Autobiografia, p. 108; cf. also Notatki, sygn. 1901 17/XIII.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Konferencje, p. 6.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Cf. W. Słomka, *Świetosc*, in: *Leksykon duchowosci katolickiej*, op. cit., p. 867.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Cf. *Teksty własne o świętych z dnia 1 listopada*, in: *Lit. Godz.*

<sup>117</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Notatki, sign. 1901 17/XIII.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

teachings will greatly help form such connections.<sup>120</sup> Frances' own practice offers pointers for getting the most out of such reading:

*Before prayer I shall enter into a spiritual relationship with the saint whose life or work I study and I shall ask Him to help me understand that which He had said or had done. Reading introduces us directly into a connection with the God of Truth and makes us, according to one saint's expression, a "library" of Christ.<sup>121</sup>*

The rich childhood memories found in Frances' autobiography show clearly that the saints fascinated her from an early age.<sup>122</sup> She was captivated by those who radiated the love of God. She not only desired to read about their lives but also to meet them and have a close relationship with them.<sup>123</sup> Already as a child hearing about their exceptional personalities she dreamed of meeting those people.<sup>124</sup> In the *Autobiography* she confides:

*I always desired to have close contact with the saints and because Domenica Lazzari, who was marked with the stigmata, resided near Merano I asked Mama to be able to go and visit her but she did not permit me to do that.<sup>125</sup>*

Based on our knowledge of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd's later contacts we can say that her *dream* came true.<sup>126</sup> She would meet and form close relations with many holy persons. She noted being most *moved* by their *simplicity* and by *God's spirit* which reigned within them.<sup>127</sup> Apart from meeting many godly people in various circumstances she was also daily surrounded by the most beautiful spirits in the history of catholic spirituality.<sup>128</sup> Frances often and with great ease called on a large host of saints. From every one of them, according to her writings, a believer can learn something even change something in himself or herself.<sup>129</sup> The saints' work of self-improvement and collaboration with grace encourages new daily spiritual transformations.<sup>130</sup> Such transformations lead to

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Notatki, sygn. 1901 17/XIII.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. *Autobiografia*, p. 108.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Cf. *Autobiografia*, p. 108; cf. also Marta Domenica Lazzari, *Servant of God (1815-1848)*, in <http://mysticofthechurch.com/2010/07/maria-dominica-lazzari-mystic-stigmatic.html>, as accessed on March 27, 2012.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. *Autobiografia*, p. 108.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Notatki, sygn. 1886 31/XIII; cf. also *Dziennik Duchowy*, vol. I, p. 12-13, 254, 268.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 296-297.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

spiritual renewal which in turn is necessary for a life in the Holy Spirit and for truly *loving God's life*.<sup>131</sup>

The saints, through their heroism and spiritual magnanimity, strengthen one's enthusiasm for striving towards ever-greater love.<sup>132</sup> Their example reminds us, that higher values exist in every human life. They are ready to help all the faithful. *"In the saints love has blossomed fully, both love towards God and love towards people, who as pilgrims still wander the earth. That is why the saints have interest in those in their care, support them in spiritual life, and aid them within the limits set by God interceding to receive the needed grace. But some saints have special mandates to intervene on behalf of certain people or categories of people. Those are the saints to whom God entrusted special missions or whom the Church has made patrons of certain dioceses, countries, or institutions. To praise those saints is our religious duty and a means of securing their help in our daily activities and the difficulties of spiritual life."*<sup>133</sup> A liturgical appeal to certain saints is the best opportunity for forming a relationship with them so that their closeness to and love of God can be enjoyed by whoever seeks their intercession.<sup>134</sup> The Lord's Saints remind us of the joyful duty of striving toward holiness. They fascinate us with lives fully immersed in God and surrendered to the Holy Spirit.<sup>135</sup> After analyzing many biographies of saints Frances comes to this conclusion:

*The soul which lives with Jesus is always happy. The saints demonstrate that a soul's unity with Jesus is marked by peace, silence, joy and gladness, sure consolations deriving from the Holy Spirit. Anything opposed to these attributes, such as feverishness, disquiet, sadness, anxiety, is not of God and does not derive from God.*<sup>136</sup>

Christians can draw from the saints, motivation and assistance on the path to their own holiness.<sup>137</sup> That is why it is important to have and worship one's patron saint.<sup>138</sup> An analysis of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd's writings reveals that she had several saints whom she worshipped in a special manner.<sup>139</sup> Closest to

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<sup>131</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Cf. A. Marchetti OCD, *Zarys Teologii zycia duchowego*, vol. I, trans. and edited by O.J.E. Bielecki OCD, Krakow 1996, p. 103.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 398.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* at p. 94.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. *Dziennik Duchowy*, vol. II, p. 315, 336.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Cf. *Dziennik Duchowy*, vol II, p. 19, 25, 77, 315, 336; cf. also *Dziennik Duchowy*, vol I, p. 268.

her heart were two saints: St. Frances of Rome<sup>140</sup> and St. Cecilia.<sup>141</sup> The former, Frances Siedliska's patron since baptism, is honored on March 9<sup>th</sup>. Frances so speaks about her:

*My Lord has deigned to fill my heart with passionate love for my Patron Saint [St. Frances of Rome]. On one occasion I felt so close to her that everything disappeared [from in front of me]. I felt only with her, as though I were speaking with a familiar person and one dear to my heart. That was in the evening. Once when I had gone to bed, my soul for a moment became entirely consumed by an interaction with that dear Saint... I returned to earth as though from another world. Oh Lord, how wonderful you are for giving me such a great holy Patron. I pray: cause her to think about me, pray for me and care for me until I attain You forever and ever. Oh, Lord, my Lord, today you gave me so much: Holy Mass, Holy Communion, an almost constant inner interaction with You, and a reminder about my holy heavenly Patron.<sup>142</sup>*

Recalling one's patron is a perfect opportunity for seeking one's saint's intercession with the Lord, as well as for expressing special gratitude and joy by festively celebrating with that patron one's "name-day."<sup>143</sup>

Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd in her writings expressed a special appreciation of St. Teresa of Jesus.<sup>144</sup> In her *Journal* we read:

*These days Jesus again deigned to send me a great blessing: the desire to read more from the life of St. Teresa which I began reading in Rome but had to interrupt. This reading moved me a lot. My Lord, how Your Saints loved You! How devoted they were to You! How they sacrificed for You! My sweetest Lord, also to this last of your servants (and children) please give the blessing of a deep love of You so that she loves You above everything else, and so that for You, and with You together she lives forever. Oh Lord, my God, I do not know how to move in these wonderful, royal palaces of Yours, I do not know how to walk them. You give me the vestments of Your virtues and attributes,*

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<sup>140</sup> Cf. *Dziennik duchowy*, vol. II, p. 315, 336.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. *Dziennik duchowy*, vol. I, p. 268; cf. also *Dziennik duchowy*, vol. II, p. 114.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. *Dziennik duchowy*, vol. II, p. 315, 336.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. *Dziennik duchowy*, vol. I, p. 268; cf. also *Dziennik duchowy*, vol. II, p. 198, 315, 336.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. *Dziennik duchowy*, vol. I, p. 132, 249; cf. also *Dziennik duchowy*, vol. II, p. 19, 25, 77; *Notatki*, sygn. 1901 17/XIII; sygn. 1886 115/XII.

*and I know not how to wear them. How am I to behave in this palace of Yours, how am I to respond to Your delicate, most delicate Love. Jesus has also allowed me these days to understand more clearly how in the depth of the soul occurs this holy union of a loving soul, His bride, with Jesus, her Divine Groom. All this is true, real, and truest of all. There exist those rooms, those royal chambers, where the Bride with the Groom unite in an embrace of love, where the soul unites with its God (drawn by his grace and love).<sup>145</sup>*

A close study of the *Collected Works* of Saint Teresa of Ávila allows one, in Frances' opinion, to glimpse the goal of human life.<sup>146</sup> It also allows for a person to more accurately assess one's spiritual state and its current place on the path of love and utter abandonment to God. She teaches how to respond to the love of God newly manifested every day.<sup>147</sup> Steeped in the doctrine of spirituality and aided by grace one more clearly understands what occurs in the *depths of a soul*.<sup>148</sup> One finds it easier to see what is hidden but so very real. This reality is *staying within the holy embrace of love* between the soul and God, within the *loving soul's union* with Jesus, the Divine Groom.<sup>149</sup> The soul reaches this condition mostly through the workings of grace. Even the longing for holiness is a fruit of God's grace.<sup>150</sup> If the fruits of grace are not visible in a human life the fault lies in not fully responding to grace.<sup>151</sup> This in turn may lead to a loss of grace and blessings and may lead one astray from the path of love, the only safe path. One's effort to constantly respond to the Holy Spirit's grace will be best supported by the intercession of one which herself had experienced *many trials*.<sup>152</sup> Based on experience and the teachings of St. Teresa, Frances Siedliska concludes that natural love and natural attachment could lead a human being to utter ruin.<sup>153</sup> Referencing the vision of hell painted by St. Teresa Frances emphasizes the danger of not responding to God's grace and blessings. She exhorts human beings to remember that for every one of them there is room in heaven as well as in hell.<sup>154</sup>

Among the personages mentioned by Frances who motivated her labors in the field of loving God and human beings are also these saints: Benedict of

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<sup>145</sup> Dziennik duchowy, vol.II, p. 19, 25, 77.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. *ibid.* Vol. II, p. 19, 25, 77.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* P. 19, 25.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 50-51, 101, 437.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

Nursia,<sup>155</sup> Thomas Aquinas,<sup>156</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux,<sup>157</sup> Ignatius Loyola,<sup>158</sup> John of the Cross,<sup>159</sup> Francis de Sales,<sup>160</sup> Philip Neri,<sup>161</sup> and Alphonsus Liguori.<sup>162</sup> Frances was intimately familiar with these saints' lives and their doctrines.<sup>163</sup> Depending on the situation, Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd called on these saints and their unique manner of solving life's challenges.<sup>164</sup> She especially encouraged recommending oneself to their care during the annual retreat. She entrusted to them her concerns about the functioning of her religious community and about finding God's Truth. She sought their guidance in matters of conscience, confession, spiritual leadership, and conducting retreats. Above all she cherished their joy of living and the beauty of their love for God.<sup>165</sup>

To the circle of holy women whom she mentioned and who challenged her to achieve personal holiness belong: Agnes,<sup>166</sup> Mary Magdalene,<sup>167</sup> Catherine of Siena,<sup>168</sup> Margaret of Cortona,<sup>169</sup> and Angela of Foligno.<sup>170</sup> These saints are the

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. Autobiografia, p. 103.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Dziennik duchowy, vol. II, p. 56; Cf. also A. Ricciardi, Franciszka Siedliska, op. cit. supra, p. 255.

<sup>157</sup> From St. Bernard Frances takes the lessons about humility. Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 329.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 95, 506; cf. also Dziennik duchowy, vol II, p. 124, 210.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Dziennik duchowy, vol. I, p. 27-28; cf. id., vol. II, p.117.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 453; cf. also Dziennik duchowy, vol II, p. 44.

<sup>161</sup> Frances Siedliska devoted a separate conference to Philip Neri, during which she said this: *"On May 26 falls the holy day of St. Philip Neri. St. Philip is considered and worshipped as a patron of the city of Rome, because he worked here, here he converted numerous souls, here he devoted himself to God the Lord, here he lay the example of great perfection and holiness. (...) My dearest Sisters, the life of St. Philip is a great lesson for us; we know that he was filled with love, easy to interact with, approachable to all. (...) We can imitate him in his spirit of prayer. Let us learn humility from St. Philip. The third thing in which to follow St. Philip: to strive for our daily lives and interactions to be filled with goodness, kindness, politeness. St. Philip was full of goodness, love for everyone, but most of all for his brothers. So also should we, in our relations with Sisters, strive to have kindness, gentleness, and love."* Konferencje naszej Matki. p. 398-99.

<sup>162</sup> Siedliska emphasizes St. Alphonsus' great sensitivity of conscience, which set him apart from others. She also calls on his spiritualism in the context of following the order's rule and striving towards holiness, in speech and in act. Cf. ibid. p. 64, 75, 532.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 95, 329, 398-99, 453, 506; Cf. also Dziennik duchowy, vol. II, p. 44, 56, 117, 124, 210, 281; cf. also RzPJ, sygn. 1887 71/XI..

<sup>164</sup> Cf. ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. ibid.

<sup>166</sup> In her Dziennik [tr.: Journal] Siedliska wrote on January 21 this liturgical memory of St. Agnes: *"From first thing in the morning, she stood before my eyes, as Lord Jesus' bride -- this holy, dear. Pure virgin. My Lord, I love this Saint so very much from early childhood, and I would so wish to resemble her -- to be Your pure servant. Oh my Lord! You are Love, so I beg you (...) I beg for Your love: for loving you most heartily and so I may by your love be purified. (...) Today I stopped at St. Agnes' Basilica and spilled many tears there. (...) Oh Lord, deign to give me the purity of love (...)"* Dziennik Duchowy, vol. II, p. 145.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 449.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Dziennik duchowy, vol.II, p. 281.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. ibid. p. 449.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. ibid. p. 56, 153, 449.

most beautiful examples of lives given to the Lord of guarding the purity of the heart and of penance for one's sins and errors.<sup>171</sup>

Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, in creating the Congregation based on the Rule of St. Augustine assigned a special role to his advocacy.<sup>172</sup> In the life of the Saint of Hippona a Christian person will find a gamut of experiences to relate to encountered in the process of re-orienting to God's paths in life. Even the most lost soul can find strength in the example and intercessions of St. Augustine. In Frances' opinion, Augustine makes visible one of the basic truths, that the human heart can find ultimate happiness only in God.<sup>173</sup> He proves that love which has the power to transform human hearts is the most precious pearl to be sought. Frances most often emphasizes his teachings about living through love in community life. Augustine encourages Christians to build and promote community life.<sup>174</sup> The Doctor of Grace exhorts the faithful to *unanimously live in a house and have one soul and one heart* focused on loving God.<sup>175</sup>

Frances Siedliska reminds us in her teachings about the role of the saints that the unity of heart and of spirit was evident in the lives of the first Christians.<sup>176</sup> That is why, in discussing holiness, she remembers those who are titled *saints*. Everything they had, they treated as communal good to be shared with others (Acts 4:32).<sup>177</sup> In this sort of community stand out those who can lead others. They include St. Peter and his holy successors to whom a Christian community can confidently entrust Christ's Church for leadership and advocacy.<sup>178</sup> Those forming the house of Nazareth, Jesus, Mary, and St. Joseph, endow God's love with special meaning. They are constantly present in the life and writings of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd.<sup>179</sup> The aura of *love's harmony*, which pervades relations within the Holy Family of Nazareth, constantly offers itself as something which should be emulated.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. Dziennik duchowy, vol.II, p. 56-57, 145, 153; cf. also Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 449.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 240, 333; cf. also Notatki, sygn. 1901 17/XIII.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> The Rule contains seven chapters. The key points in the chapters of the Rule which Siedliska emphasizes as steps on the path to attaining love are: I. the Goal and regulations of everyday life; II. Prayer; III. Moderation and mortification; V. Things of daily use and their keeping; VI. Forgiveness; VII. Superiors and obedience; VIII. Observing the Rule. Regula Swietego Augustyna, in: [www.kanonicy.cyberia.net.pl](http://www.kanonicy.cyberia.net.pl), accessed on March 28, 2012.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 422-424; cf. also Dziennik duchowy, vol.I, p. 27.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 92, 101-102, 218, 396, 425, 483.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

The Apostolic symbol highlights the truth that the Church is a *communion of saints*.<sup>181</sup> The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the term “*communion of saints*” has two meanings: *communion in holy things (sancta)* and *communion of holy persons (sancti)*.<sup>182</sup> Both dimensions of the communion of saints reveal the communal nature of spiritual goods. Such goods form a sort of bridge between those who enjoy eternity and those who strive towards it.<sup>183</sup>

Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd was acutely aware of those priceless goods. Her life, particularly her deep devotion to the saints and angels of the Lord, proved the existence of that bridge between *now* and *later*.

## REFLECTION

### a. In Light Of Theology

A saint is one who has allowed the Holy Spirit to guide him towards a fullness of life, i.e. a life with and through faith and love. As noted in *Lumen Gentium*, every Christian is called to a full Christian life and to holiness.<sup>184</sup> Public worship of the saints derives from the cult of the martyrs and honors those who practiced the Christian virtues to a heroic degree. By partaking in the spiritual goods which God gives to the saints, Christians are united among themselves.<sup>185</sup>

Which saints do I cherish most? What do those saints bring into my friendship with God and with other human beings?

### b. In Light Of God’s Word

Eph.1:1-18; 1 Thess. 4:1-12.

## 2. Daily Examination Of Conscience

Frances Siedliska, inspired by a vision of living in the fullness of love, searches out the most fruitful means of reaching this goal. Her writings disclose the means best tested and most cherished through centuries.<sup>186</sup> One of those was a daily examination of conscience, as presented by St. Ignatius Loyola. Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd brings to her Congregation this method of self-improvement on the path of ever-greater love focusing on such of its aspects as the

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<sup>181</sup> Cf. KKK 946.

<sup>182</sup> KKK 948.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. KKK 947-948.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. LG 5.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Encyklopedia chrzescijanstwa, op. cit., p. 710.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 294.

role, nature, purpose, and frequency of performing daily examination of conscience. About its role, she writes:

*Daily examination of conscience has great importance and according to the Saints is a key means to the end of self-improvement. For how can a human being strive towards God, how can he beg for grace and virtues, if he does not know his weaknesses and needs. One cannot pray effectively nor effectively work on self-improvement when one does not know what one really needs. One cannot make progress blindly.*<sup>187</sup>

According to St. Ignatius, the nature of a daily examination of conscience is best captured by the term *examen*.<sup>188</sup> It denotes the process of separating that which is good and noble from that which is evil and ignoble. *Examen* entails a meeting and a relationship between a person and the Lord. The object of the examination is a human being's life, as he comes forth to meet God and other human beings. Its form is dialogue, consisting of silence, listening, and discourse. Such examination could be seen as a human being's answer to this question of his loving God: *Adam, where are you?* The provided answers address one's responsibility for a given period of time and an appraisal of one's conduct during that period.<sup>189</sup>

The examination of conscience is bound to shape one's lifestyle.<sup>190</sup> An honestly practiced prayer of responsibility, as an examination of conscience is also called, shall shape a Christian person's life, prayer, and faith. It will teach how to approach one's life as its own work of art, a work which emerges precisely in the clashes between habit and constant watchfulness. While examining his conscience a human being discovers his own *melody* of life.<sup>191</sup> Frances' writings form one of the most beautiful melodies illustrating a human heart's responsiveness to the process

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. W. Lambert SJ, *Najwazniejszy kwadrans Ignacego*, Krakow 1992, p. 5-8.

<sup>189</sup> An examination of conscience is considered one of the fundamental compulsory spiritual exercises. It is usually referred to as "*examen generale*" and "*examen particulare*," depending on whether its more general or more specific character is stressed. In Roman legal terms "*examen*" denotes the balanced arms of a scale while weighing precious ore. If there is no balance, then the ore must be purified, so it may attain its full value. So "*examen*" denotes balancing and weighing, to attain an inner balance with the precious ore of will. "*Examen*" also denotes a legal proceeding in which the accused proved his innocence, thus proves that he aligned with what is right, with the law. The Fathers of the Church used this term while writing about martyrs and candidates for baptism -- thus situations where a human being is subjected to testing, purification, and his life is compared to God's will. Later the term "*examen*" was mainly used relative to monks who devoted their lives to God. The common denominator of all these expressions is that "*examen*" is a process in which that which is good and that which is evil reveal themselves. Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 16-21.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

of examining her conscience.<sup>192</sup> The Word of God gives the examination of conscience its depth and a unique aura.<sup>193</sup> Frances' good *spiritual hearing* allows her in the course of the day to hear the beauty of humility, love, and poverty of spirit, all of which can derive from a juxtaposition of one's life with the Word of the day.<sup>194</sup> Frances Siedliska shares her own personal example of performing daily self-reflection. Bowing before God she performs an incisive analysis of the Ten Commandments which reflects her calling and lifestyle.<sup>195</sup> Frances' examination of her calling is a concrete example of an examination of conscience. Most likely the questions of that examination were written during the retreat of 1891.<sup>196</sup> Although they reference Frances as the then-leader of the Congregation, these questions can usefully guide any human being's daily reflection but especially that of any Sister's:

1. *Do you consider yourself in this position only an instrument which does nothing for itself, does not act by itself, but only for and through the Lord?*
2. *Relative to your Sisters do you always place yourself last and are you at every moment ready to serve them?*
3. *Do you love all the Sisters irrespective of their attitude to yourself?*
4. *Are you forgiving, merciful, understanding, and ever-ready to pay any service to those most weak, most difficult, most disposed against you?*
5. *Are you under the influence of any Sister or have a unique feeling for any Sister, so as to be governed by emotion in your relations with her?*
6. *In your outward behavior are you the same towards everyone: serious and loving, but not overly attentive or submissive?*
7. *What is your conduct like? Do you offer bad example?*
8. *Do you remember those words of the Constitution: that the Mother Superior, while being the head of the Congregation, should strive to exemplify the religious virtues? Do you work towards this goal? Do you pray for it? Do you try to implement it in your life?*
9. *Do you remember that you alone must watch over yourself and over others and collaborate with my grace, so your God, can live and reign in you and all the Sisters?*
10. *Do you faithfully perform the duties which the Congregation's Rule imposes on you: do you regularly hold scheduled conferences, do you*

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<sup>192</sup> Cf. Notatki, sygn. 1890-91 41/XI.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Notatki, sygn. 1890-91 41/XI.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 92, 268, 334, 377-378; cf. also RzPJ, sygn 1887 64/XI; Cf. Dziennik duchowy, vol.II, p.86. Notatki, sygn. 1890-91 41/XI.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Notatki, sygn. 1890-91 41/XI.

*receive sisters when they so request, do you rebuke them and teach them, and put before them God's truth and God's will, no matter how they may receive it and how it could dispose them towards you?*<sup>197</sup>

A person endowed with charisma can cultivate her own sensitivity, a certain spiritual beauty which is found in her alone. Thus, for example, such love relationships are opportunities for training oneself in making an examination of conscience that takes on a special character.<sup>198</sup> Frances sees an examination of conscience as a key factor teaching faithfulness in one's duties, a faithfulness sealed by love.<sup>199</sup> Its role is to cast on human thoughts, words, and acts the light of God's gaze. This light most fully reveals to a human being the truth about oneself and can also reveal solutions to improving one's life. It teaches authentic living free of sham and illusion.<sup>200</sup> Discussing the role of an examination of conscience Mother Foundress recalls the words of Jesus Christ:

*...during your daily examination of conscience, attempt my child, to examine yourself strictly, consider all your affairs, fully account before yourself. Do not discount anything, do not treat anything lightly, but remember that a short time is left, so do not waste it; make good use of every moment. Confess everything to me, admit to everything, regret it, submit in humility, and mortify yourself.*<sup>201</sup>

Following this advice, she next writes:

*One must account for all imperfections, all tremors of the heart and thought, for all acts contrary to love, for unnecessary words, for every duty unmet.*<sup>202</sup>

The modern approach to an examination of conscience sees it as an instrument of loyalty to one's own calling.<sup>203</sup> This is also Frances Siedliska's approach.<sup>204</sup> In her opinion an examination of conscience allows one to ask whether one is following God's plan: to inquire about simplicity in living and striving for perfection in one's calling, about submitting to the leadership of the Holy Spirit,

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<sup>197</sup> Notatki, sygn. 1890-91 41/XI.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 268, 334, 377-378; cf. also RzPJ, sygn. 64/XI, Dziennik duchowy, vol.II, p. 86; Notatki, sygn. 1890-91 41/XI..

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Notatki, sygn. n.a. 10/XI; cf. also Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 294.

<sup>201</sup> RzPJ, sygn. 143, p. 294.

<sup>202</sup> Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 294.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. J.W. Gogol, Teologia Komunii z Bogiem, op. cit. p. 362-363.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Notatki, sygn 1901 17/XIII.

and about noticing God's presence in and around oneself. A daily examination of conscience is a prayer for God's guidance, for the guiding light of the Holy Spirit, in living a life consistent with one's calling.<sup>205</sup> Frances not only teaches others about the role of this religious practice but implements it in her life:

*Oh my Jesus, give me a religious spirit I beg You so that Truth revealed may reign in all the powers of my soul and so that my will, preferences, feelings, and words are truly sincere, inimical to any vain pretense, free of all falsehood which could deceive others and delude myself, and nullify my life as a delusion. You give me Your grace, light, love.*<sup>206</sup>

Equipped with knowledge and correct intuitions Frances identifies the goal of an examination of conscience: the shaping of the heart.<sup>207</sup> A systematic examination of one's conscience bears fruit in self-improvement. For example, through constant scrutiny of one's interactions with others one sees all dangers to the freedom of the spirit, a pre-condition for correct conduct.<sup>208</sup> One more easily identifies and adopts in daily life the attitudes of a child of God and a bride of the Lord. Perfect focus on spiritual work protects one from even the tiniest shades of vanity and anger. One who prioritizes his relations with God may soon enjoy a rich harvest. This shall happen when he allows the Lord constantly to purify and transform him. One who undergoes a continuous examination of the heart, allows the *old human being* to fade within him, and a *new* one to emerge.<sup>209</sup>

A skillfully and regularly performed examination of conscience also fosters one's responsiveness to inspirations.<sup>210</sup> To this end Frances passes on what she heard the Lord saying to her:

*My child, whenever you question whether an inner voice comes from a good spirit you shall know it does when that voice does not go against God's Commandments or the Church's teachings or your monastic duty but leads you towards humility and self-abnegation while helping you to love me, your Lord and God, and to give yourself to Me in everything. When that voice leads you towards the good then it is not a wayward delusion but God's business because an evil spirit leads*

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<sup>205</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Notatki, sygn. n. a. 10/XI.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 154-155; 505, 511.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 154, 505, 511; cf. also Dziennik duchowy, vol.II, p. 86.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 1889-4, 6 35/XI.

*not to what is good but to what is evil. And in ordinary matters of which you know for certain that they are good and shall cause no harm to your soul or body, you can follow these inspirations and consider them My work, because everything driving towards what is good comes from Me. Thus, my Child, be faithful to Me in this, and should that inner voice guiding you even in the most petty, daily things, use you for something untoward or for something which could harm you or something which you would question whether it is permitted or not, at such times restrain yourself from following it.*<sup>211</sup>

Frances notes that the inner voices we may hear during our pursuits can derive from various sources. Their origin can be deduced from a close study of the likely fruits of such inspirations. This is a complex and difficult analytical skill, but attainable. Helpful here will be the knowledge of the respective fruits of good and evil inspirations.<sup>212</sup> The simplest and most basic test is to compare them with the commandments of God and the church, and with the rules and duties of the Order.<sup>213</sup> After all what matters is how the inspirations relate to the spirit of love: do they help perfect your way to the love of God? The inspirations which souls receive from Christ are His gift.<sup>214</sup> One performing an examination of conscience should always remember to express gratitude towards the Loving Giver.<sup>215</sup> Drawing on the words of Jesus, Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd passes those words to others for their benefit.<sup>216</sup> She identifies the basic guidelines for recognizing God's inspirations:

*The practical rule is to put one's Christian and monastic duties first, as this is the simplest thing. If the voice calls to something untoward, one should be careful and not proceed without taking counsel. My child, always lovingly follow the inner inspiration which leads you towards godliness, towards self-denial, towards humility and My Love. But if there were to arise some suspicion, distrust, fear, or appetite for vain glory, then immediately you would recognize that such inspiration is not from Me, your Lord and God. I guide towards love and boundless trust in Me and on your part to humility and self-denial.*<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 18898-4, 6 235/XI. See also Zbior Listow Okolnych, Rzym, December 15, 1882; Rzym, Dec. 31st 1884; Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 294.

<sup>217</sup> RzPJ, sygn. 1889- 4, 6 35/XI.

In writing about the process of spiritual transformation Frances Siedliska notes the power of God's gaze.<sup>218</sup> She points out the importance of constantly surrendering oneself to this gaze which *penetrates the soul*. Jesus' gaze has the power to look and see inside the very core of a human soul which He alone knows. Moreover, the *gaze of Jesus penetrates the pure soul and destroys in it the old human being*.<sup>219</sup> That is why an examination of conscience must involve constant attention to appearing before the Face of God and allowing His freeing gaze to transform oneself.<sup>220</sup> Jesus' gaze focused on the depths of a human heart allows for trust to form and hope to return, exposes the spark of love, and despite the timid human impulses highlights one's faithfulness.<sup>221</sup> Standing before the Face of the Lord during an examination of conscience makes Frances notice that time was gifted to us by God.<sup>222</sup> According to Frances, a good examination of conscience cannot miss the truth that every human life is before God's gaze every single day.<sup>223</sup> Realizing this helps a Christian person to properly utilize every moment of every day. Every moment should be lived to glorify God for his greater love and the benefit of other people.<sup>224</sup> Frances leaves a special lesson for those who abuse words and do not value the time given them:

*Dear Sisters, if we were to perform a good examination of conscience every one of us surely would find many unnecessary words and much wasted time: she entered here without reason; she stopped there for a chat, so many of such moments. Through them she did not bring glory to God or benefit to her brothers and sisters. Let us now count in light of God's judgment how many unnecessary words we said during one day. Now let us multiply these words. How many during a year, over the years. Such an enormous number of years wasted on nothing! What enormity of useless words! But did God not give us time to gain the heavens?*<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej matki, p. 155.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. NMI 15; cf. also F. Armellini, G. Moretti, Jego twarz I słowa byly ludzkie, Trans. T. Trus FSP, Lublin 1999, p. 20-21.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej matki, p. 44, 347.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. at p. 347.

To know our conscience well Frances Siedliska recommends we examine it twice a day, the first time at noon, the second, in the evening.<sup>226</sup> The fundamental motif at both times is asking questions about love, about knowing oneself and self-improvement work, and also about gratitude towards God and other people. Frances believes there must be contrition for any mistakes in the art of love and an honest look at the purity of the intentions behind all our conduct.<sup>227</sup> This is the fundamental goal and purpose of examining one's conscience. Frances stresses that, the desire of the heart to live in the *harmony* of God's love and in unity with others should outweigh all forms of non-love.<sup>228</sup> Repeatedly Frances Siedliska points out to her sisters the importance of this exercise:

*Every day we are obligated to perform examinations of conscience, whose goal is to know yourself, to regret your sins, to give thanks for the received graces and blessings, and to maintain yourself in living love. During the noon examination, we can give thanks for the Holy Mass, for meditation, for adoration, for our labors for God's glory, for the received light, and for all spiritual aids and exercises. At that time we shall have inside harmony in which God will act freely. We know that without God's grace a change for the better cannot take place inside us. If in our souls we do not resist that grace, the Holy Spirit can constantly work within us. In her examination of conscience may every Sister study herself to gauge her intention in prayer. Was she focused on increasing God's glory or on her own satisfaction? Did she gauge her intention during Holy Communion? Did she accept Jesus as a teacher and Healer or for her own comfort? What intention was behind all her feelings, thoughts, and words? Were her relations with Mother Superior and the sisters free from flattery? A soul united with Him in its intentions is always calm, submissive and patient, indifferent to whether it is loved or not. We examine all matters because although certain deeds may seem good, their intentions may be evil. Inside us can be found thousands of whims and inclinations, self-love, pride and vanity. Only those deeds, done from pure love for God, however small, count towards eternal life. In ourselves we all tend towards perversity, hypocrisy, dimness, so we must always keep a keen eye on directing everything to Jesus and keep that eye trained on nothing beside Him. Everything must be done with Him, as He wishes. We must internalize the purest intentions and turn*

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<sup>226</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 44, 294; cf. also Notatki, sygn. 1890-91 41/XI; sygn 1894-96 6/XI; sygn. 1901 17/XIII.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid, p. 44, 80, 101, 265-258, 275, 347, 412, 435, 459.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

*our thoughts and hearts towards God. Let us consider our sins, our errors, and perform our examinations of conscience in the light of the Holy Ghost. Have we thanked Jesus for the grace of our holy vows? Let us remember that every grace is paid for with the Most Precious Blood of Jesus. How have we accepted the enormous grace of our vows? Grace is needed for everything. For us to retain everything we must pray, account with our conscience, and study our duties, intentions, and what Jesus expects from us. If we thus stand before God, then our conduct shall gradually be more perfect and its source shall be prayer.*<sup>229</sup>

The labor of cleansing one's conscience and creating inner harmony shall lead to an outer order in all things a person undertakes. By this means one shall reap the fruit of collaborating with God's grace. A moment of loving attention during an examination of conscience transforms into love throughout the entire life. Simeon has said: "*Now, oh Lord, allow your servant to depart in peace.*" These words are the culmination of the examination of conscience at the end of the day.<sup>230</sup> They crown our daily labors of faithfulness, love, and the building of a spiritual Nazareth.

An examination of conscience helps us follow God's will in everyday living. A human being often needs outside help in this pursuit. This help will also come from spiritual direction.

## **Reflection**

### **a. In Light Of Theology**

The contemporary approach to an examination of conscience<sup>231</sup> brings into focus its two features:

- It involves positive reflection emphasizing primarily the presence of God and always calling for a dialogue unlike in the past when focus was on the wrong or evil conduct of the day.
- It underscores the importance of an informal examination teaching responsiveness to God's presence throughout one's life as opposed to a formal examination, based on rigid timing and formula.

What form does my examination of conscience take at this time?

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Wybor listow, p. 13, 37.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. J. W. Gogola OCD, *Teologia Komunii z Bogiem*, op. cit. p. 362.

For St. Ignatius the following points are crucial in every examination of conscience: a request for the light of the Holy Spirit necessary for effective examination because it prevents us from shutting in on ourselves; giving thanks for the received gifts and living with such thankfulness at all times; a review of one's conduct, i.e. taking note of what has occurred since the last examination; accepting one's weakness to become more open to God's action; a resolution of improvement for the future with a renewed heart and hope in God.

In my examinations of conscience which of these points requires more attention in order to be deepened?

#### **b. In Light Of God's Word**

Luke 12:54-57.

### **3. SPIRITUAL DIRECTION**

Frances Siedliska for years relied on spiritual direction and this subject was close to her heart.<sup>232</sup> But before we discuss it from her perspective, let us review how a contemporary theology of spirituality approaches this subject.

Spiritual direction is currently experiencing a *renaissance*. It is counted among the highest forms of interpersonal relations. This interest in spiritual direction is a necessity in a Church alert to the fact that in this era of new evangelism we must heal ourselves spiritually and help others do so as well.<sup>233</sup> Spiritual direction is seen as an art of guiding human souls toward God from the beginnings of spiritual life, all the way to the heights of perfection.<sup>234</sup> It offers assistance and counsel to human beings striving towards the fullness of love. The objective of direction is spiritual growth of the person who desires such assistance and seeks it out.<sup>235</sup> Strictly speaking, "direction" denotes revealing the path of a spiritual life.<sup>236</sup> It will involve leading a person, offering assistance in experiencing faith, and also assistance in sensing how to respond to God's calling.<sup>237</sup> Today's literature on spiritual direction<sup>238</sup> offers various expressions and descriptions of the same process. Included are such terms as: spiritual dialogue, spiritual assistance, spiritual mediation, spiritual leadership, and friendship in Christ. This is

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<sup>232</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 1889 143 XV.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. J. Augustyn SJ, J. Kołacz SJ, *Sztuka kierownictwa duchowego*, Kraków 2007, p. 17 – 21

<sup>234</sup> Cf. J. W. Gogola OCD, *Życie mistyczne Teresy od Jezusa Marchockiej*, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. P. Mojek, *Kierownictwo duchowe*, w: *Teologia duchowości katolickiej*, Lublin 1993, p. 332.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. H. J. M. Nouwen, *Spiritual direction*, New York 2006, p. 14 – 15.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. J. W. Gogola OCD, *Ogólne wprowadzenie do formacji zakonnej*, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. J. W. Gogola OCD, *Wprowadzenie do kierownictwa duchowego*, Kraków 1998, p. 6, [mps]; Cf. also p. Mojek, *Kierownictwo duchowe*, op. cit., p. 333.

accomplished through reliance on the guiding person's experience of God. It must be remembered that the Holy Spirit plays a central part in spiritual direction.<sup>239</sup>

The topic of spiritual direction is revealed in several passages of Holy Scripture. They confirm the existence of such aid to spiritual growth, but do not teach that reliance on it is absolutely necessary.<sup>240</sup> The process of gaining spiritual insights through direction is complex. It relies on dialogue and an acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit. The understanding of God's will is a key objective of perfecting insights. Insights bring one closer to attaining the fullness of love and holiness.<sup>241</sup>

Frances Siedliska herself so very familiar with spiritual direction notes many benefits of this practice.<sup>242</sup> According to her with and through such direction one learns to discern God's inspirations.<sup>243</sup> It can be difficult to correctly tell them apart from Satan's temptations. A spiritual director can throw new light on this difficulty, teaching how to recognize the guise of goodness and see through the subtle temptations which would lead us away from God's path. With a better understanding of the laws of spiritual growth and internal struggle a person is able to overcome concrete personal life challenges.<sup>244</sup> He then experiences peace within his heart and is reassured that his spiritual director leads him according to the Holy Spirit. In his life he perceives interdependency between obedience to God and obedience to the director. In discussing direction, Frances invokes the words of the Lord Himself:

*As to spiritual direction, it is given to you from Me, so it leads you and shows the way to Me, to My love. You should consider it as an aid given to you from Me, guiding you to me. Thus you should follow it, be grateful and worship, and feel and act with Me in all this. When a soul hears the inner voice it should, if it has the opportunity,*

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<sup>239</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> Cf. P. Mojek, *Kierownictwo duchowe*, op. cit., p. 333 – 334.

<sup>241</sup> "A conversation concerns the plain of passing information and until it becomes dialogue, it touches solely the cognitive sphere, but not the sphere of "being." Dialogue, on the other hand, is a matter of a person's being. It entails a human being's entire existence. Dialogue is the tool which makes possible to achieve the goal of spiritual directing -- namely bringing up the person being directed to a place where he allows God to lead him. Recognition/rozpoznanie requires certain steps, including: starting from one's personal history, entering deeply into one's own heart, and the requirement of time, love, and humility." J. W. Gogola OCD, *Wprowadzenie do kierownictwa duchowego*, op. cit., p. 17 – 21.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. *Autobiografia*, p. 18, 37.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. *Autobiografia*, p. 54.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

*ask Me whether to follow this or that inner voice and should do nothing until it receives My answer.*<sup>245</sup>

In spiritual direction one sees a human being's labor of purifying his heart out of love for God and practice in properly seeking the Lord.<sup>246</sup> A person seeking spiritual comforts, sweetness, and emotion as symptoms of Christ's presence can learn precious lessons from the process of authentically seeking out God. The directed person can discover the soul's purity by considering sin in the context of God's love; and that in weeping over sins one can find true sweetness and prayer.<sup>247</sup> But one can only know the Lord's highest sweetness by learning to detest egotism. One, who under the influence of grace and spiritual direction enters the path of deep spiritual transformation, shall know the beauty of living through evangelical love.<sup>248</sup> For Frances spiritual direction approximates the work of a good educator.<sup>249</sup> What previously seemed to exceed one's capabilities become attainable thanks to spiritual direction and God's grace.<sup>250</sup> The words of Frances' discourse with Jesus offer a good example:

*You gradually led me, Lord, farther and farther down the path of self-denial and fulfilment of Your Holiest will. Oh my Lord, You do everything with such unfathomable, boundless love; slowly and gradually you lead the soul to that which you demand from it. What previously seemed impossible to our paltry nature, that later, with the help of Your Holy grace, becomes easy and sweet.*<sup>251</sup>

Spiritual direction constantly supports a person in the practice of unconditional love.<sup>252</sup> It teaches that love is actualized by fulfilling the wishes of the loving God. True wisdom sees that its strength and energy come from love. Providing direction is equivalent to accepting the love of God and sharing it with others. (1 Cor.16:14)<sup>253</sup> Love leads one to become completely like the Groom, indeed to become the Groom. This is particularly important when one experiences spiritual crises.<sup>254</sup> During such crises one may feel and usually does feel abandoned by the Lord. She experiences a sort of painful loneliness. The presence of someone

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<sup>245</sup> RzPJ, sygn. 1889 143 XV.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. *Autobiografia*, p. 54, 59, 62, 74, 68, 161.

<sup>247</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> Cf. *Dziennik duchowy*, tom II, p. 370 – 371.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 372-373.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

experienced in faith can then be a priceless gift. Even when one subsequently loses a spiritual director, the experience of having been spiritually guided, gives a person internal strength.<sup>255</sup> While experiencing the feeling of abandonment Frances herself feared that she would lose her love for God and for people.<sup>256</sup> The sensation of the loss of all love caused her enormous pain. She then often received only from her confessors the assurance that the Lord was with her.<sup>257</sup> Spiritual direction allows one to see and better understand one's past, present, and future.

## Reflection

### a. In Light Of Theology

Spiritual direction accounts for a human being's holistic development. Thus of importance are one's basic religious maturity, calling, and psychology. Among the preconditions of attaining insight through spiritual direction are: starting from one's personal history, delving deep into the heart, and making room for time, love, humility, and penance.<sup>258</sup>

In my own spiritual direction, which of these elements require greater integration and which ones require deepening?

### b. In Light Of God's Word

John 4:1-38; John 10:2-4.

## 4. RETREATS

Catholic spirituality underscores that retreats allow one to enter more deeply into a relationship with the Lord.<sup>259</sup> The Church recognizes many forms of retreats. But every form has for its goal a holistic revision of one's spiritual life and conversion. The pages of the New Testament give the example of retreating to the desert as a place of seclusion so one may ponder the sense of life. Jesus Christ himself illustrates the value of time spent in seclusion. He spent thirty years in the quiet Nazareth home and immediately before starting His public activities He retreated to a secluded spot, the desert (Luke 3:23; 4:1-13). He often interrupted His work in order to spend more time with the Father. He encouraged His disciples to retreat to secluded places (Matt. 14:13; Mark 1:35; Mark 6:31).<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 168, 378, 382 – 383, 398.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> Cf. J. W. Gogola OCD, *Teologia komunii z Bogiem*, op. cit., p. 369 – 370.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. M. Chmielewski, *Rekolekcje*, in: *Leksykon Duchowosci katolickiej*, op. cit. P. 744-746.

<sup>260</sup> *"The example and encouragement of Christ inspired hermits for centuries to come. People came to hermits for help in spiritual matters. (...) From early on a form of prophecy emerges which calls for human beings to change their lives, which could be considered a prototype of today's retreats. The following saints, among others, were active as*

The time of the desert, as retreats are often called, is a special time in which God's grace works in a human being.<sup>261</sup> One must leave behind one's daily activities before one can look at oneself in the light of faith. That is after all, the goal of seeking prayerful seclusion.<sup>262</sup> It is a time in which one constantly asks the Holy Spirit for light so one can *enter within oneself* and be *one on one* with God and in the presence of the Master consider one's goal and any obstacles in reaching it.<sup>263</sup> The goal of a human being is to love God during his earthly life and subsequently enjoy eternal happiness. According to Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd two preconditions exist to attaining this goal: God's grace and a human being's good will.<sup>264</sup> If these preconditions are met the Holy Spirit will enlighten a soul which is humble and open to God's guidance, and reveal to the retreat's participant his errors and *his poverty*.<sup>265</sup> Frances Siedliska explains to those wishing properly to experience retreats:

*Retreats are a look at oneself in the light of faith which God gifts to a soul of good will. The Holy Ghost enlightens the soul which like a good child apologizes for its errors, asks for grace, simply and humbly asks what it must do in order to please God. The Holy Ghost brings light, points out to the soul where it lacks faith, what is expected from it, and what it must do to persevere in faith.*<sup>266</sup>

In her opinion, retreats bring spiritual renewal and sometimes may be the cause of human redemption. One may experience a conversion of the heart, if one properly and authentically experiences a prayerful meeting with the Lord.<sup>267</sup> It may lead one to abandon everything which does not lead to our ultimate goal.<sup>268</sup> At the same time one may become attached to God. Frances Siedliska makes this relevant note regarding this matter:

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*preachers-retreat leaders: St. Ignatius of Antioch (decd.115), St. Irenaeus (decd. Ca. 200), St. Anthony the Hermit (decd. 355), St. Anastasius (decd. 373), St. Ambrose (decd. 430), and St. John Chrysostom (decd. 407). The history of preaching and retreat work in post-patristic times is very rich. Starting with Saint Simeon Stylite the Elder (decd. 459) and St. Augustine (decd. 430) through St. Francis (decd. 1226), St. Hyacinth (decd. 1257), and up to St. Ignatius Loyola (decd. 1556). The last one published in 1548 his "Spiritual Exercises," which became an epochal phenomenon affecting the conduct of retreats. He then became recognized as the patron of the retreat movement."* M. Chmielewski, *Rekolekcje*, in: *Leksykon duchowosci katolickiej*, op. cit., p. 745.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 475.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 530, 537, 539.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 530.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 475.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 475, 540.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.* p. 475.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.* p. 476.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

*Retreats are inner renewal. They are the matter of our redemption. When retreats are properly experienced, fickle souls become deeper, vain and proud souls become humble, sensuality calms down, and souls overly preoccupied with themselves become attached to God and in Him alone seek redemption.*<sup>269</sup>

Frances herself frequently participated in retreats including ones based on Ignatius' method and she personally organized spiritual exercises for others.<sup>270</sup> She shared her observations about how to experience them:

*Today I wish to point out several lessons from our previous retreats. It is a very laudable custom which we also see practiced by St. Ignatius to write down, after every contemplation and every resolution made, one's main thoughts and that which most moved and struck us so that when our ardor passes our spirit can be refreshed, our resolutions can be remembered and we can be reignited in the service of God.*<sup>271</sup> *Tonight I begin our eight-day-long retreat. I shut myself in with the Lord as though at the Desert to rest in Him and from Him draw light, life, strength, and to prepare for our road ahead. With you, Sisters, who share everything with me I want to share this as well. I ask for Your assistance, for your prayers, for offering Holy Communion on my behalf so I leave these holy exercises reborn in soul and so you will find in my soul the Lord for whom we live; whom you came here to serve and with whom we shall share eternity if we so deserve.*<sup>272</sup>

While constantly dialoging with Jesus, Frances does not limit herself to addressing only the typical themes of an Ignatian retreat.<sup>273</sup> With time she develops her own retreat theme: relations of love. In her opinion, during retreats we must revisit the truth that a human being's fundamental calling is to be in a relation of love with God.<sup>274</sup> God's love also enables a human being to accept His love and to *return love for love.*<sup>275</sup> With this in mind the Creator properly predisposed human

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 531 – 532; RzPJ, sygn. 1889, 4 – 6 35/XI; Dziennik duchowy, tom II, p. 173; Notatki, sygn. 1882, 3 82/XV; sygn. 1886 31/XIII; M. Starzyńska, Czas ukrycia, Warszawa 1995, p. 135; Hidden life, Chicago 1997, p. 140.

<sup>271</sup> Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 531 – 532.

<sup>272</sup> Zbiór Listów Okólnych, Lugdun, 4 września (September) 1879.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 1887 71/XI.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>275</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

beings. He endowed them with reason through which one can know the Truth. He endowed them with hearts which can taste the Highest Good and unite with Him for eternity. He gave them free will so they freely give themselves to Love. Concerned with safety on the path to redemption, the Creator gives a human being the Decalogue together with the commandment to love.<sup>276</sup> Through them His love is fully expressed. One following the commandment of love best fulfills creation's duty towards the Creator. Along with his Commandments the Lord gave human beings all created things to serve that goal. A human being, as a child of God, is the child of His love.<sup>277</sup> The time devoted to retreats is a special form of the soul's closeness to God.<sup>278</sup> Here one may boldly open one's heart and mind to the workings of God's light, to be strengthened in good things and to discover difficult truths about oneself. The latter is particularly important for the ability to be converted, transformed and improved on the path of a calling to love. Seeking intercession and advocacy of the saints and angels will help make a retreat experience fruitful.<sup>279</sup> Retreats greatly aid in spiritual life. One who misses out on the depth of retreat time risks losing the gift of God's grace: instead it will flow over *the surface of [his] soul* like water over a rock.<sup>280</sup> Because of the importance of retreats Frances Siedliska offers guidelines for optimally experiencing that special time of grace. First is the calling for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those beginning a retreat. Next Frances outlines a concrete plan for a retreat devoted to the theme of love.<sup>281</sup>

Frances Siedliska recommends that, alongside retreats, every month we practice a day of recollection.<sup>282</sup> It is a time of *rest* and of the *soul's respite* near God. In starting it according to Frances one must ensure external and internal seclusion.<sup>283</sup> That day primarily offers one a better opportunity to be *one on one* with the Lord in prayer. The day's goal is to assess the preceding month's spiritual progress. It should help one see what, and how well, one managed to change for the better, and what still remains to be done in spiritually improving oneself. As Foundress, Frances suggested specific days and hours as well as specific topics for

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<sup>276</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>277</sup> "Thanks to your grace, oh Lord, I began a retreat. (...) My first contemplation focused on our beginnings, the fact that we are created from love, that love is our goal and the path leading to that goal. (...) The love of Lord God for us, that unending love which also endowed us with the ability to accept love and to repay love with love..." *Dziennik duchowy*, vol. I, p. 270; cf. also *RzPJ*, sygn. 1889 1/145; *Notatki*, sygn. 1893, 4 47/XI.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. *RzPJ*, sygn. 1887 71/XI.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 521; Cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, 26 listopada 1882; *Notatki*, sygn.1889, 4 – 6 35/XI.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. *Notatki*, sygn. 1889, 4 – 6 35/XI.

<sup>282</sup> Cf. *Notatki*, sygn. 1884 117/XII; sygn. 1886 31/XIII; sygn. 1890 – 91 41/XI; Cf. also *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Rzym, 26 listopada 1882.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

meditation.<sup>284</sup> She recommends that sisters, after praying the Hymn to the Holy Spirit and entrusting themselves to Mary, meditate on a first meditation theme. This meditation should last one hour. Built into the day of recollection, alongside the Holy Mass and daily prayers are two meditations, a conference, and an examination of conscience.<sup>285</sup> There is also an opportunity for confession or for spiritual direction with the proper person. The entire day passes in silence so every sister may more deeply ponder her conscience and be spiritually renewed.<sup>286</sup> Silence during retreats serves to aid in implementing a refined *reform* of one's spiritual life and in making resolutions geared towards acquiring greater love.<sup>287</sup> Silence should also help one make better use of grace after retreat's end.<sup>288</sup> All this serves greater self-knowledge so we may more fully respond to the calling to perfect love.

## Reflection

### a. In Light Of Theology

During retreats<sup>289</sup> individuals make or renew their covenant with God. Just like the covenant of Mount Sinai, retreats should contain such elements as: *theophany*, a meeting with God through a personal spiritual experience; *a free and knowing acceptance of the covenant*, including the participant's personal history of salvation needed for adequately assessing one's past, present and future; and the covenant's *formal re-affirmation*. A similarly formal re-affirmation of the participant's covenant with God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit occurs through setting a format for the retreat, with reference points for faithfully searching and implementing God's will in the Church community. Retreats are a good time for the Lord to arrive and address the human heart. They are a unique time of being guided by Christ. During a retreat everything has its time and place. Theology offers the term *Kairos*, a specific era in history, in which God's saving action, is fulfilled. In the context of retreats this question especially comes to mind: do I experience retreats as *Kairos – the time of Christ's action*? Is the gift of life and are the situations of daily living new opportunities for realizing value and do they reach their *fulfillment* (Gal 4, 4) through God's presence?

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<sup>284</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 476 – 478, 481 – 487, 490 – 499, 504 – 513, 518 – 527.

<sup>288</sup> On many occasions Frances Siedliska makes recommendations regarding retreats, so they are most fruitful. Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 476 – 478, 481 – 487, 490 – 499, 504– 513, 518– 527; Cf. także Zbiór Listów Okólnych, Rzym, 26 listopada 1882; Notatki, op. cit. sygn. 1894–96 6/XI; sygn. 1884 117/XII; sygn. 1886 31/XIII; sygn. 1890 – 91 41/XI; sygn. 1890 – 91 41/XI; sygn. 1884 117/XII; sygn. 1886 31/XIII.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. M. Chmielewski, Rekolekcje, in: Leksykon duchowości katolickiej, op. cit., p. 749 – 750.

## **b. In Light Of God's Word**

Matt. 4:1-11; Exod. 15:22-27; Exod. 19:1-9.

## **5. The Practice Of Silence**

One's love for the then-contemplated Word of God should induce silence.<sup>290</sup> Silence is so crucial on the path to holiness that Frances Siedliska calls for it not just during retreats but during the entirety of a Christian life and devotes to it special conferences. Frances primarily sees silence as a way of making a real connection with Christ as well as with other humans. Her writings address three aspects of silence. The first is the value of silence and its goal and the other two are the internal and the external dimensions of silence.

### 5.1. The Value And Goal Of Silence

A call to silence for Mother Foundress takes the form of an appeal. A human being through his love for higher values is invited to a life in the silent posture of recognizing those very values.<sup>291</sup> All spiritual transformation into a *harmony* of love requires silence of the heart.<sup>292</sup> In a quietened and calmed heart love can be fully actualized. One then hears and notices the delicate presence of the Loving God who seeks to give of himself to human beings. The need for greater love urges a human being to seek out the path to complete unity with Christ in this concrete time and place.<sup>293</sup>

The values and theme of silence reappear quite frequently in contemporary theology.<sup>294</sup> To hear God's inspirations the heart needs quietude and an aura of silence. Silence is also the basic component of deep spiritual service.<sup>295</sup>

Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd recognizes silence as the foundation of a focused, prayerful life and of all convent life.<sup>296</sup> She comments:

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<sup>290</sup> Cf. VD 66; cf. also G. Ravasi, *Animacja biblijna całego życia Kościoła*, a conference held during the 1st Biblical Congress, trans. by Father T. Trafny, Warszawa – Toruń UKSW 29. 10. 2011, w: *www.transmisja*: Warszawa 29.10.2011 – Pierwszy Kongres Biblijny, April 1st, 2013.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. *Notatki*, sygn. 1886 31/XIII.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> Cf. H. J. M., *Nouwen, The Way of the Heart*, New York 1991, p. 15.

<sup>295</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>296</sup> Cf. A. Ricciardi, *Franciszka Siedliska*, op. cit., p. 271.

*How sad it is to see one of the sisters ready for laughter, interrupting silence. Without silence there is no concentration; without concentration there is no prayer; without prayer there is no convent life.*<sup>297</sup>

Frances offers sharp insights into the phenomenon of silence in human life.<sup>298</sup> Her great concern about silence and quietude highlights their value. In her teachings she stresses the goal of one's striving for silence:

*Persevere in silence in order to hear God's Voice, the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and the rebukes of the Guardian Angel. In silencing the spirit you shall hear the voice of God but never in bustle and disquiet. Mary, the Holiest, was silent, concentrated, and prayerful. As God's servants you must always seek only God's approval.*<sup>299</sup>

Silence has a formative impact on life in a deeper love relation.<sup>300</sup> While in prayerful silence one more easily enters into a deeper relation with God and His Word, with another human being, and with herself. It is love which essentially gives taste and meaning to silence. It is love which shall determine the quality of one's relation with Jesus in prayer and which will be the indicator of the spiritual maturity of a person internally silent before the Mystery.<sup>301</sup> For love towards others a human being shall strive to maintain silence so as not to disturb their inner unity with God. In a silent heart there is still time for a love dialogue with the Creator who first loved a human being (John 3:16; 15:9).<sup>302</sup>

In analyzing Frances' lessons from many conferences on silence one notices two kinds of silence: internal and external.<sup>303</sup> These two kinds are closely related. In striving to maintain silence Mother Frances turned to the saints for help. She so addressed St. Benedict: "*I implored that Saint to intercede on my behalf and beg on my behalf for the spirit of silence both internal and external.*"<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Cf. Notatki, sygn. 1883, 84 147/XIII.

<sup>299</sup> Notatki, sygn. 1883, 84 147/XIII.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 47 – 49, 295, 347; Cf. also Notatki, sygn. 14/XIII.

<sup>301</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>302</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> Cf. Notatki, sygn. 14/XIII.

<sup>304</sup> Notatki, sygn. 14/XIII.

## 5.2. Internal Silence

The first kind of silence concerns the inner sphere of a human being, the silencing of thoughts, feelings, imagination, and passions.<sup>305</sup> Most important is the calming of thoughts often distracted by clinging to various subjects. Silence serves to concentrate the heart on God so one can attain *harmony* in which He can *freely* reign.<sup>306</sup> Following the teachings of the saints Frances concludes that silence is earnestly ordered and recommended as the *holiest duty* and a primary aid to holiness.<sup>307</sup> It is the source of virtues, it teaches an ordered life and it teaches perfect life. But most of all a soul truly silent and concentrated hears God's voice more clearly, more easily follows him, and prays better. Without silence a human being cannot be *a soul of prayer and contemplation*.<sup>308</sup> Being able to keep silent proves one's great progress on the path to inner concentration and a life fully immersed in God.<sup>309</sup> A soul which reaches the depth of concentration perceives through silence another dimension of life. It experiences great peace and quietude whose core and source is Christ.<sup>310</sup>

In order to maintain inner silence, one needs to rule over one's thoughts and over all forms of human curiosity.<sup>311</sup> This presupposes a spiritual struggle with the enemies of spiritual life. The aura of silence prevents distractions with their various sources. First one must take note of that which one is doing at the moment, and focus on fulfilling one's duties.<sup>312</sup> Faithfully meeting one's obligations manifests faithfulness and love for the Creator especially when no opportunity exists at that time to immerse oneself in contemplation and *fully devote oneself to thinking of God*.<sup>313</sup> Focusing one's thoughts on work as an expression of God's veneration shall benefit one's spiritual growth. In fulfilling God's will, one comes closer to the Lord. Work thus becomes a means to holiness. The Biblical House of Nazareth serves as a model of performing one's work.<sup>314</sup> In that house Jesus, God's Treasure, was the center of all activity. During daily activities the minds and hearts of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were concentrated primarily on fulfilling God's will. The time

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<sup>305</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 47 – 49, 295, 347; Cf. also Zbiór Listów Okólnych, Kraków, 15 września 1882; Notatki, sygn. 14/XIII; Dziennik duchowy, tom II, p. 133; Dziennik duchowy, tom I, p. 27 – 28.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 48, 349.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> Cf. C. Carretto, *Miłość w ciszy, czyli jak kochać i być kochanym*, tr. G. Niedźwiedz, Wrocław 2003, p. 265; Cf. also P. Teilhard de Chardin, *O szczęściu, cierpieniu i miłości*, Warszawa 1981, s. 100 – 101, 108, 115.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 339, 348.

<sup>312</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>313</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

spent in concentration and silence is one component of seeking God and paying him tribute.<sup>315</sup> Mother Foundress teaches:

*We must attend to all our duties but in such a manner as though we lived without touching the earth. We should carefully fulfill our duties but with a disengaged heart as though we had one foot planted in our heavenly fatherlands so that we feel like exiles. Otherwise spiritual and supernatural life is impossible. Jesus worked and helped his holiest Mother, but spent the rest of his time in prayer. So Jesus' life was one of prayer and work. May Jesus in Nazareth be our model and as we look at Him let us not waste time. Let every moment be devoted to fulfilling duties and let it be filled with what we are ordered to do.*<sup>316</sup>

Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd personally strove for the grace of inner silence.

*With Your Grace, my Lord Jesus, I have resolved: to speak little; not to speak at all other than during recreation time; to beg for the grace of attentiveness, prayer, inner silence. But especially please give me Your grace, as with it I shall be able to perform all my duties without even for a moment disconnecting from Your presence.*<sup>317</sup>

According to Mother Foundress, a human being living in God's presence more easily manages to direct all thoughts to the Lord.<sup>318</sup> A soul truly searching for God in daily activities approaches Him sooner. A person whose thoughts, feelings, and imagination are dispersed on various matters and things cannot at the same time be focused on Christ.<sup>319</sup> As a result one is focused neither on earthly nor on eternal life. Another area on which to focus one's thoughts are matters related to the life of the Church and the community in which one lives.<sup>320</sup> One who sincerely loves Christ is interested in His Mystical Body. The joy and sadness which befall to God's people become objects of inner contemplation.<sup>321</sup> Finally, one should focus one's thoughts on those who lead others to God so the Holy Spirit can work within them. Such persons are bishops, priests, confessors, and spiritual guides. Also those

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Notatki, sygn. 1901 17/XII.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 50, 349 – 340.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 48, 347.

<sup>321</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

who serve as spiritual companions belong in this group as do persons helping to organize and implement retreats.<sup>322</sup>

Any kind of curiosity in human life can distract from the inner life of spirit and silence.<sup>323</sup> Noble and virtuous individuals display restraint in that area. When they have something of value to convey they await the appropriate moment in which to pass it on to others. On the other hand when people desire to feed their hearts with curiosity for *news* and *trivialities*, they reveal that in their hearts dwells emptiness. Instead of the fundamental attention to God and the desire for Him alone their hearts contain the *world* and the *old human being*.<sup>324</sup>

### 5.3 External Silence

External silence supports internal silence. The two are closely interconnected and indispensable for the proper development of love.<sup>325</sup> External silence concerns the sphere of human senses. Frances Siedliska highlights its key role in the development of love. She notes the dangers of failing to cultivate this silence, the spiritual benefits of practicing it, and the areas of its special observance.<sup>326</sup>

Working with and on what the senses convey can be enormously challenging. Speaking about the silence of the senses Frances primarily focuses on the senses of seeing and hearing.<sup>327</sup> She notes directly that we waste much time on unnecessary conversations leaving *the heart empty, sad, even sorrowful*.<sup>328</sup> Frances calls the condition of a soul constantly busy with what the senses convey to it a “*morbid state*.” Unnecessary words are like worms that destroy the *vineyard of the soul*.<sup>329</sup>

Emphasizing the nature and role of outer silence, Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd clearly explains the purposes for which we must maintain silence.<sup>330</sup> They are: to optimally execute God’s Will in daily life, to attain the spirit of prayer, and to keep the soul focused. These are all crucial in striving for perfection and abiding in closeness to God. A person outwardly silent is able to

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<sup>322</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 48, 347.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 344.

<sup>324</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 47 – 49, 295, 347.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 49 –50.

<sup>328</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>330</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 339 – 340.

control herself inwardly.<sup>331</sup> It is difficult to say that a certain convent or community belongs to God if it lacks silence which helps reach the prayerful state.<sup>332</sup> Jesus is supposed to be the King and Lord of every convent and everything should be arranged according to His will.<sup>333</sup> Silence, quietude, and concentration are the external signs of His reign.

Silence during the day is complemented by evening silence. After Compline, one should attempt to fall asleep while thinking of God so as to awaken with that thought as well.<sup>334</sup> That is why faithful silence in some ways aids one to more precisely sum up the day, to more deeply understand what was good and to worship God. It helps to sincerely regret that which was *non-love*.<sup>335</sup> Evening repose is to resemble the moment of death. One should end every day of life as though it was the last. Thus, after the final prayers only something of extreme importance could force one to attend to other matters. If a necessity to converse arises it should be done in a low voice and quickly. The silence of the evening should be the crowning moment of the silence of the day.<sup>336</sup>

Maintaining external silence helps build spiritual unity within the person and strengthens the spirit of the community.<sup>337</sup> A community gathered in the Name of God serves to shape a person in every aspect related to works, thought and speech.<sup>338</sup> This is most important for persons who work outside of their religious communities. That's why having inner strength and spiritual stability is so vitally important. External circumstances should not impair the identity of the consecrated person. When those who choose religious life are able to live in the spirit of inner silence then their religious communities shall be reflections of the Nazareth home.<sup>339</sup> Solemn and perfect silence prevailed in Nazareth encouraging prayer and concentration, and such silence can exist only among attentive persons who cultivate silence.<sup>340</sup> Frances points out the silent demeanor of Jesus whose unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit affects all his attitudes and relations. Next silence is modeled by the silent lives of Joseph and Mary. Frances points out that just like Mary visited her relative Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-40), so also she (Frances) should visit people and bring Jesus to them for where Mary is there is also Her Son.

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<sup>331</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>333</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>335</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 339-340.

<sup>336</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>337</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 74, 75, 83, 112.

<sup>338</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>339</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>340</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

Human weakness unavoidably always needs God's help and Mary's care. St. Joseph, the most silent one, is the perfect model of attentiveness to Godly things.<sup>341</sup>

Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, so intimately familiar with human nature, anticipates the dangers which words can cause (James 3:1-12). She resolves to serve as an example to others of *speaking little*, even *not speaking at all*, other than during time allotted to recreation.<sup>342</sup> Thinking highly of others and listening with a keen ear to opinions differing from ours help sustain external silence.<sup>343</sup> The more one knows of human inclinations the more one should follow the rules of silence. If we did not live in communities there would be no need for rules governing silence. But in communities, lives intent on striving towards perfection are difficult without maintaining silence.<sup>344</sup> Cultivating silence is unnecessary only among holy people whose hearts and thoughts are fully focused on God. Such people truly living in God's love and speaking no words from *self-love* or their *own imagination* are rare.<sup>345</sup> Their words flow out of a deep unity with God. The problem arises when we deal with faulty human nature and with the human tendency to infringe on the love of others. Frances warns, inter alia, against the passing of judgment and evaluating others. She notes that while surely evils should be called out we must still be considerate towards those who committed the evils.<sup>346</sup>

Failing to maintain external silence first of all creates disorder which invades people's hearts and could permeate the entire community.<sup>347</sup> In homes so permeated the spirit of God cannot reign. Wherever love and holy silence are abandoned Jesus Christ cannot reign at the same time especially if prejudices and

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<sup>341</sup> She leaves for her spiritual daughters a rather peculiar picture of being a Nazarene sister: "You want to be a real Nazarene sister? Then be in prayer like a Carmelite, like a Carthusian train yourself in silence (...) Be like the holy sons of Alphonsus -- strict and convent-like in act and speech. In obedience be like a Jesuit, and in sacrifice like a Grey Nun. The Holy Family is your model (...) Follow the path of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!" In setting such lofty goals of perfection in silence, Frances Siedliska also provides her own prayer in the intention of meeting those goals in everyday life. She lays special trust in the Mother of God of Perpetual Help, so She may simplify the spirit of solitude, silence and prayer, even though Nazarene sisters are not in a closed convent. In her mind, all the difficulties which could arise on the way are not important. Important is only the goal we set in life: just like a traveler who pays no heed to tiredness, but only to his destination. Convent life is similar: its goal is progress towards God, via a path of holiness on one concrete road and under one concrete convent rule. That is why, in looking at the goal of our journey, which is unity with God, the convent home should radiate silence. Hence caution against unnecessary words and haste. Abandoning silence could engender much unpleasantness among people. The Foundress sees in silence a way of closing entryways to Satan, so he cannot insert himself into human, often immature, relations. Cf. *ibid.* p. 74, 75, 83, 112, 338-350.

<sup>342</sup> Cf. *Notatki*, sygn. 1901 17/XIII.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 342.

<sup>344</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>345</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>346</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>347</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 343-344.

personal dislikes are also present. The beauty of a life focused on God should induce a person to maintain radical silence.<sup>348</sup> As Henri Nouwen puts it, a lack of silence could lead to the secularization of community life.<sup>349</sup> But where the minds are truly busy with God there will be no issue with silence, prayer, and living in the Holy Spirit. Thomas Merton believes that solitude in God allows a human being to be more within oneself deepening the sense of identity and enabling a fuller life in the moment.<sup>350</sup> With this awareness, Frances Siedliska recommends that silence be an ongoing duty of every sister.<sup>351</sup> Everyone should love silence and feel happy daily to return to it after fulfilling one's duties. A heart which protects its silence and solitude with the help of God is like a secluded garden visited by its owner and appointed caregivers.<sup>352</sup> The owner of a sister's heart is Christ and he entrusts the care of that heart to confessors and spiritual directors. The *garden* should remain closed to others so its *flowers* forever keep their freshness.<sup>353</sup>

Much good comes from silence and abiding with God notes Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd.<sup>354</sup> Silence is a source of virtues and it teaches a life of love, strengthens inner maturity, helps one control oneself, and guards against a frivolous life. By maintaining silence a soul lives more fully with the Word it contemplates. One can more clearly fulfill God's will and more fully respond to its calling.<sup>355</sup>

According to Frances Siedliska, the need for strict silence in order to attain a deeper closeness of solitude with God is reflected in the holy days of the liturgical year.<sup>356</sup> External silence is here recommended as a method of better preparing for such holy days so as to experience them more deeply. A special example of silence for the Lord is the time of the Paschal Triduum. Frances stressed the value of silence in the year of her death when for the last time she prepared to celebrate the Easter holiday.<sup>357</sup> She saw in it an opportunity to uniquely unite with Jesus Christ and with his experiences during those days. She strongly recommends we maintain strict silence during the Triduum, contemplate the Redeemer's suffering and torment, and turn all thoughts, feelings, and desires to Jesus. On Holy Thursday we should study his humility as we unite with Christ veiled in the Holiest Sacrament.

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<sup>348</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>349</sup> Cf. H. J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. T. Merton, *Znak Jonasza*, tłum. K. Poborska, Poznań 2001, p. 271.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 345.

<sup>352</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>353</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>354</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 346-348.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 387; Cf. also *Dziennik duchowy*, tom II, p. 357.

<sup>357</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

On Good Friday we should unite with the suffering Jesus<sup>358</sup>, be all heart during his flogging, the crowning with thorns, during the Way of the Cross and death upon the Cross. On Holy Saturday we should be near the grave of Jesus Christ and persevere silently by His grave.<sup>359</sup> According to Thomas Merton, accompanying Christ, particularly while He is on the Cross is a *source* of prayer and prevents *sterility* in life.<sup>360</sup>

Frances Siedliska understood the need for greater silence also during other holy days.<sup>361</sup> For example she advocated maintaining silence prior to Pentecost. She believed one would then be able to more fully experience this important holy day, during which one asks the Holy Spirit to take possession of *one's entire being*.<sup>362</sup> Silence also plays a crucial role during retreats which are by definition focused on listening to the Word of God.<sup>363</sup> Without strict silence during a retreat effective listening probably cannot be implemented. Mother Frances finds inspiration in Mary's conduct who in her heart contemplated the Angel's words after the Annunciation, and in Joseph's keeping silent confiding his doubts in no one but God.<sup>364</sup> She emphasizes that as long as love for God reigns in human hearts maintaining silence will not be difficult. Love is the reason for seeking God through silence, solitude, and a quiet heart. And so by deepening one's love for God, a Christian grounds oneself in silence.<sup>365</sup>

For Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd silence is an external expression of a human being's spiritual life.<sup>366</sup> She believes that in order to live in the Holy Spirit and be a *child of light* one must use the most reliable instrument - silence. Excessive external busy-ness and distracted attention would go counter to the operation of the Holy Spirit. With proper preparation, with closing off the heart and the senses to all earthly things, the Holy Spirit will generously dispense the grace needed to contend with one's own weak human nature.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>359</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>360</sup> Merton points out that a contemplative life become sterile if for a few days in a row one does not think about the Passion of Christ. "*I do not necessarily mean pondering it, but at least to accompany Christ on the cross with love and humility. His cross is after all the source of our entire life and without it prayer dries out and everything dies.*" T. Merton, *Znak Jonasza*, op. cit., p. 270.

<sup>361</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 403.

<sup>362</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>363</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p.339, 481-484.

<sup>364</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 488 – 489; Cf. also *Wybór listów*, p. 32, 124.

In thinking about silence Frances Siedliska relies on the model Nazareth household and adopts the ways and customs associated with that home.<sup>368</sup> As she herself creates communities she calls them *homes*. She mentions the silence zones of every convent *home* by which she means places where one is raised spiritually.<sup>369</sup> The concept of *home* carries special and significant meanings. Jesus calls *home oikia*,<sup>370</sup> which denotes not just the physical space of the household but also its atmosphere and the community of living together. The Son of God uses the word *oikia* in the context of His relationship with the Father (John 14:2-4). For His disciples that relationship with the Father shall become their *dwelling* which they will share with Jesus. The disciples will settle down in that *home* feeling warmly received and connected by bonds of friendship. In *home* so understood it becomes possible to guard and preserve the Word of God.<sup>371</sup>

Based on this meaning, Frances notes, all spaces within the *home* acquire a special aura<sup>372</sup> but especially the chapel, the sacristy, the refectory, and a Sister's cell. These places are particularly important because individuals join the order out of love for God and prove that love by faithfully maintaining silence. They also prove it by loving the labor to which they are called. Frances first mentions the *Santa Sanctorum* chapel.<sup>373</sup> This place of prayer, where one enters into a dialogue with God alone, is in its own right holy. The nearby sacristy should remind one of the closeness of the Lord. The refectory, where meals are shared, is a space for praising God's Providence. It also brings to mind the truth of the *final food* on one's journey to eternity. Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd warns that no one should dispense with the silence required by the Congregation's Rule because it has a redeeming impact on the soul.<sup>374</sup> According to centuries-long tradition<sup>375</sup> one's room, as the dwelling of the Lord and of the convent soul, is a unique locale promoting the concentration of thoughts and the heart.<sup>376</sup>

Silence is an expression of love for Christ as well as a means to uniting with Him and partaking in His Holiness.<sup>377</sup> By maintaining silence one more easily finds the spirit of prayer, hears the voice of God in daily life, and with love responds to

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<sup>368</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 472.

<sup>369</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 238, 472, 488.

<sup>370</sup> Cf. K. Wons SDS, *Trwać w Jezusie. Rekolekcje lectio divina*, Kraków 2007, p. 291 – 292.

<sup>371</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>372</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 64 – 68, 90, 184, 238 – 239, 283 – 296, 340 – 341, 433, 455.

<sup>373</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>374</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 64-68.

<sup>375</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>376</sup> Cf. E. Makowiecka, *Cele – wyniki badań archeologicznych*, in: *Apoftegmaty ojców pustyni, gerontikon, tom I*, in: *źródła monastyczne (4)*, work edited by Father M. Starowieyski, tr. M. Borkowska OSB, Kraków 2007, p. 63.

<sup>377</sup> Cf. Notatki, sygn. 1901 17/XIII.

His Word. Silence also helps to more consciously seek solitude in God which tends to give the calling of a consecrated person a call similar to those found in the Bible. The most beautiful evidence of this aspect of silence is Frances' personal resolution: "*I shall keep absolutely silent, so that You may speak in me.*"<sup>378</sup>

The beauty of a life focused on God should induce Christians to maintain silence.<sup>379</sup> Undoubtedly persons who ask much of themselves will know the true meaning and sense of silence leading to a life immersed in God.

## Reflection

### a. In Light Of Theology

Silence exemplifies a spiritual approach towards God and His Word. In this context silence forms the source of our words and *exemplifies an evangelical way of life*.<sup>380</sup> In an era of informational and communicational overload, St. Ignatius of Antioch's *dictum* has special meaning: "*It is better to be silent and exist than to speak and not exist.*"<sup>381</sup> Thanks to silence a human being may re-integrate after being dispersed and distracted from using too many words. Keeping silent is a form of cleansing for human words.<sup>382</sup>

With silence understood this way: what weight do I ascribe to my own silence? What is the flavor of the silence I cultivate within myself?

### b. In Light Of God's Word

Isa. 42:1-2; Wisdom 18:14-15; Luke 2:51-52; Matt. 27:11-14.

## 6. LIVING IN GOD'S PRESENCE

According to the teachings of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, living in God's presence requires solitude. Being *one on one* with the Lord is a precondition for abiding in His presence and walking in His light. These in turn are reflected in one's obedience to God's will. Two elements, solitude and obedience, are key to attaining love which depends on God's close presence.

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 344.

<sup>380</sup> M. Zawada OCD, *Zaślubiny z samotnością*, Kraków 1999, p. 21.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>382</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 34-35.

## 6.1 Solitude

In describing Jesus St. Francis characterizes His solitude as the fruit of *prayer in unity* with the Father.<sup>383</sup> Solitude in God is a very prominent theme in the teachings of Frances Siedliska.<sup>384</sup> She believes that alongside resting in unity with Jesus one should also constantly seek out the Groom in daily activities. Such seeking is an expression of love and is indispensable for being able wholeheartedly to abide in God and share with Him one's joys and sorrows. This relation presupposes a daily spiritual hygiene of one's feelings, will, and all actions.<sup>385</sup> Frances here means a pure intention of abiding in the Lord with one's entire being. Even while one struggles with personal issues and problems one must remember that one *is not alone*.<sup>386</sup> This reminder gives one the feeling of being with God in everything one experiences. The words Mother Foundress heard from Jesus in November 1888 clarify the meaning of "solitude in God:"

*I want to give to you, My child, a similar grace of Mine. I call you to solitude. I want to speak to your soul and you, sitting at My feet like Mary must take it all in so as to produce the best fruits in your soul. I wish to fulfill great things in you and give you an abundance of My blessings. I desire to renew you internally.*<sup>387</sup>

Jesus' words invoke the biblical scene with Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42; John 1:1-8). As is clear from this language solitude, shared primarily with God, is the Lord's grace. A human being's role is to sit because through such passive engagement he may have the opportunity of receiving further graces and blessings from the encounter. One of the greatest graces a human being can receive is spiritual renewal. It occurs through listening to the Word and living with It. Renewal is possible only on a foundation of love which operates on the principle of voluntariness. Passively abiding is also one of the most dynamic elements of cultivating a loving intimacy with Christ.<sup>388</sup> It presupposes a desire for the grace of renewal, an honest openness to truly know oneself and readiness for anything the Groom asks of one. Frances addresses three aspects of solitude: the posture of seeking out solitude, solitude's ability to reveal the identity of the human soul, and solitude's dialogic character.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> M. Zawada OCD, *Zaślubiny z samotnością*, Kraków 1999, p. 21.

<sup>384</sup> Cf. *Zbiór Listów Okólnych*, Kraków, 15 września 1882; Cf. also *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 349.

<sup>385</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 1889 143/XV

<sup>386</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> RzPJ, sygn. b. d. 49/XI.

<sup>388</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>389</sup> Cf. *Konferencje naszej Matki*, p. 348 – 350.

The posture of seeking out solitude and loving it as a form of abiding in unifying love is fundamental for one in love with God.<sup>390</sup> This does not preclude human contacts and relations but only denotes a unique relationship with Christ who takes priority. It is a posture of inner unity with the Groom and of solitude in the midst of various situations. In refining the concept of solitude, Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd speaks of a *heart disengaged*.<sup>391</sup> This posture skillfully melds the earthly dimension with the eternal one. Along a certain involvement with life and all it carries there co-exists a separation, a disengagement, a complete turning towards God as life's ultimate goal. Samuel's words to the Lord are a human being's best answer in every moment of life: "*Speak, because your servant is listening.*"(1 Sam. 3:10).<sup>392</sup>

Absolute solitude reveals the true identity of a God-loving person.<sup>393</sup> God is the dwelling for the soul as the soul is a dwelling for the Lord. These verses from *The Song of Songs* especially spoke to Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd: "*O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the steep pathway, let me see your form, let me hear your voice. Your voice is sweet and your form is lovely.*" (Song of Songs 2:14)<sup>394</sup> To Frances the images of remaining isolated in mountain crevices signify the presence of love in the nooks of the human heart. They bespeak a self-abandonment to Jesus through solitude. An intimate, authentic life for Him and in Him is possible only in the climate of love.<sup>395</sup> Solitude presupposes a dialogue of love with the Lord.<sup>396</sup> A person in this relationship is happy as she knows that she is always loved and understood. Abiding in solitude with Christ allows for God's spirit to enter the soul for a dialogue with the Creator. Such dialogue improves one's interpersonal dialogues with people.<sup>397</sup> All discourse with people becomes discriminating and harmonizes with the dignity of the calling. The saints, who lived judiciously, calmly, according to God's light, are perfect examples here. The work of improving the quality of one's relations with others is part and parcel of respecting what life brings. Cultivating solitude so as to maintain that dialogue is so important because God gives humans time to attain *heaven*.<sup>398</sup> Solitude which brings one closer to the Groom should be the most desired and

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<sup>390</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p.348.

<sup>391</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>392</sup> Cf. Konferencje, p. 16.

<sup>393</sup> Cf. Kronika nr 11, p. 2; Cf.also Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 350.

<sup>394</sup> Cf. Konferencje naszej Matki, p. 350.

<sup>395</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 346 – 348.

<sup>397</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

loved value.<sup>399</sup> Therefore one should be a solitary soul even when surrounded by people and objectively not alone. Also inner solitude is necessary for properly performing one's assigned duties.<sup>400</sup>

## Reflection

### a. In Light Of Theology

Thomas Merton believes that Christian solitude, which signifies being one on one with God, serves this purpose: “*so that through struggle we determine who we really are, so we can stop using a mask. A human being who is able to live happily without constantly hugging another human being, institution, or addiction is a promise of freedom for other people.*”<sup>401</sup>

Do I perceive solitude in my life as faithfulness to myself, which helps strengthen my identity? How much does my solitude lead others to the hidden reality which lasts eternally?

### b. In Light Of God's Word

1 Kings 19:8-13; Hosea 2:16-23.

## 6.2 Obedience

Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd associates living in the presence of God with fulfilling His will.<sup>402</sup> For one living in God's presence, there is a desire to want to fulfill the Lord's will. The principle of SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE allows for nothing less. The one who loves seeks out the presence of the one loved and desires to fulfill His expectations. The dialogues of Frances throw light on this issue.<sup>403</sup> An excerpt from her *Conversations or Discourses* from the year 1889 reads as follows:

*And you, my child, after surviving all your challenges, pressures, losses and while remaining faithful throughout and holding on to Me, you shall find Me. I shall reveal myself and you shall have Me already here on earth by being united with Me in love and by faithfully fulfilling My Holy Will. Later in eternal glory you shall inalienably hold me in love eternal. Now, My child, hold on to Me alone and fulfill My Holy Will in the tiniest detail. It is not enough to guard against even the smallest sin and disloyalty. You must also*

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<sup>399</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 349 – 350.

<sup>400</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>401</sup> Cf. T. Merton, *Chrześcijańska samotność*, in: *Znak* 4 (1991) t. 431, p. 22 – 23.

<sup>402</sup> Cf. *RzPJ*, sygn. 1889 143/XV.

<sup>403</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

*fulfill My Will in every detail and make every effort to please Me. Follow only that path which I point out and faithfully fulfill My Will in all details. That is the very essence of your relationship with Me, that you fulfill My Will in every way from your love of Me.*<sup>404</sup>

Notably, these words of Jesus clarify the synergy between unity with God and fulfilling His will. A union in love with the Lord manifests itself through seeking to satisfy God by implementing His plan for one. Notable is the “essence” of the relationship.<sup>405</sup> Clearly, fulfilling God’s will out of love flows from the very same impulse as fulfilling the wishes of the Beloved. Love, the foundation of the relationship, is simultaneously its fruit. God himself dispenses this gift as He wills. Frances Siedliska repeatedly highlights the model for such gifting, Mary.<sup>406</sup> From Mary one learns how to trust Love which serves as a roadmap for fulfilling God’s will. Her words “*I am the Lord’s servant; may it be done to me according to your word*” (Luke 1:38) serve as the model of readiness to meet His will even when one does not fully understand it. It is necessary to give up one’s own personal plans, desires, and intentions.<sup>407</sup>

To adopt this posture of absolutely fulfilling all of God’s plans one needs the special grace of faithfulness to God’s inspirations.<sup>408</sup> One who does not faithfully follow God’s plans may feel an inner vacuum. It will come from a lack of union with God, who is the fullness of Love. One who seeks to fulfill his own plans strays away from the *Source of Love*.<sup>409</sup> This could happen when God’s plans seem difficult to adopt and the emotional sphere perhaps rebels out of an emerging fear for oneself. We should remember that despite momentary disruptions in implementing God’s will we can always return to such implementation. Remembering God’s love and mercy will make the return much easier.<sup>410</sup>

Thinking of this issue, Frances Siedliska recalls the Person of Christ as He faced death on the Cross.<sup>411</sup> Jesus’ posture in the face of impending death best illustrates courage despite fear: “*My Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*” (Luke 22:42). A person, who, in facing his fears adopts a posture similar to that of Jesus Christ, shall find true peace of the

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 143/XV; sygn. 1887 71/XI; sygn. 1899/1900 20/XI; sygn. 1896/1897 11/XI.

<sup>406</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>407</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>408</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 1896/1897 11/XI; sygn. 1895 13/XI.

<sup>409</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>411</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 1887 71/XI.

heart.<sup>412</sup> Also remembering Jesus' humanity and His humility shall aid in accepting that which humiliates us.<sup>413</sup>

It is crucial that one voluntarily follows the call of God's will.<sup>414</sup> The Lord gives the soul inner freedom in decision-making. But absolute faithfulness to His will requires a closer relationship of love. It in turn shall cause one to be more ready to actualize God's plans for one thus becoming a better instrument of His action in the world. The most absolute unity in love occurs in the moment of fulfilling God's will.<sup>415</sup> How should one position oneself relative to the plans of the Highest? The answer comes in the words of the Master, spoken to Frances in London on August 13, 1897:

*My child, worship and praise Me, and thank Me for everything and that I stoop to use you as My Instrument in fulfilling many good things. If you hold on to Me, I shall use you still as My Instrument to do many more good and holy things.*<sup>416</sup>

The Lord expects from human beings a lofty readiness to be an instrument in the plans of the Creator. Understanding this expectation should help one say "yes" and follow the Lord's voice to whatever place He picks. Such readiness is everything. It is a readiness of love which does not keep track of losses and sacrifices in performing a service.<sup>417</sup>

In fulfilling God's will the challenge is to correctly recognize that will.<sup>418</sup> Frances Siedliska offers several guidelines on this subject. First she recommends the desire to know God's will for one and prayers for the grace of knowing it. Once that will is known one should ask God for the strength, courage, and love needed to fulfill it in every detail.<sup>419</sup> One should perform the assigned tasks as best one can to satisfy the will of the Lord. A constant spiritual connection with God requires deep emotional engagement in any human being.

This is a process of surpassing one's idea of oneself in favor of God's vision, a fuller and richer one.<sup>420</sup> Living in the presence of God is manifest in sharing His

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<sup>412</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>413</sup> Cf. *Zbior listow oklonych, Wielki Piatek 1882.*

<sup>414</sup> Cf. *RzPJ, sygn. 1869/1867 11/XI.*

<sup>415</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>416</sup> *RzPJ, sygn. 1888 67/XI; sygn. 1887 71/XI.*

<sup>417</sup> Cf. *RzPJ, sygn. 1888 67/XI, sygn. 1887 71/XI.*

<sup>418</sup> Cf. *RzPJ, sygn. 1887 71/XI.*

<sup>419</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>420</sup> Cf. *RzPJ, sygn. 1888 67/XI; sygn. 1887 71/XI.*

vision of us and of the world.<sup>421</sup> Participating in the life of God occurs through entering into communion with God so as to share in His plans. A human being will not enter the thought of the Highest, no matter how hard he tries, unless He first chooses to reveal it to the human being. That is why on September 12, 1895, the Foundress, herself craving to more fully and deeply live in the presence of God, understood a key truth about such living.<sup>422</sup> That truth is that all human efforts are too small and faulty and only the light from the Holy Spirit may lead a human being to God's presence and towards fulfilling His holiest will. It is the Holy Spirit which allows us to know and correctly understand that to which God invites us. Hence openness to the actions of the God of Love is openness to the Holy Spirit's operation in one's life.<sup>423</sup> In his generosity the Lord gives a human being as much light and love as he can accept.<sup>424</sup> For this reason it is important for a human being to have a desire of completely giving himself to God's Spirit. The human being who entrusts to God his thoughts and desire offers a very precious gift.<sup>425</sup> Christ's caring for a human being is shown in placing that human being in various situations so he may, not just in theory but in concrete actions and attitudes and in collaboration with grace, actively fulfill God's will for himself.<sup>426</sup>

Frances Siedliska adopted as her own the golden thought of St. Martin, who confessed: "*Oh Lord, if I continue to be needed by your faithful, then I do not refuse any effort for them. May Your will done.*"<sup>427</sup> She took private vows which included, alongside loyalty, purity, and obedience, also eternal love and always performing God's will.<sup>428</sup> She chose as her motto "*Fiat Voluntas Tua*" and left it to her spiritual daughters as well.<sup>429</sup>

## Reflection

### a. In Light Of Theology.

Jesus Christ's obedience is an expression of his complete love toward the Father and toward people. The obedience of the Son of God as an expression of pre-existing love becomes an existential call of love. Similarly, in religious obedience the person called to religious life is engaged in realizing one's vocation and mission

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<sup>421</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 1895 13/XI.

<sup>422</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>423</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>424</sup> Cf. RzPJ, sygn. 1887 141 a/XII; Cf. także Kronika nr 11, p. 5.

<sup>425</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>426</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>427</sup> Autobiografia, p. 166.

<sup>428</sup> Cf. Autobiografia, p. 166–165; Cf. także W. Sardi, K. Sica, *Żywot Sługi Bożej Marji Franciszki Siedliskiej*, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>429</sup> Cf. *Konstytucje Zgromadzenia Sióstr Najświętszej Rodziny z Nazaretu*, op. cit., 1.6.

in life.<sup>430</sup> Obedience so defined stops being just one of the virtues and becomes a field of searching for the meaning of one's mission and its concrete mediations, for example. the specific roles in which one can fulfill it.<sup>431</sup> Considering that God's will is the highest value in a Christian's life we can pose the question *how authentically do I search for and actualize God's will in my daily life?*

**b. In Light Of God's Word.**

Luke 1:26-38; 1 Pet.2:13-15.

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<sup>430</sup> Cf. *Formacja zakonna*, collective work, edited by J. W. Gogoli OCD, Kraków 1995, p. 23.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

## CONCLUSION

In the writings of Frances Siedliska love, the essence of spiritual life, is depicted as something in danger of being lost. The cause of such loss always lies with a human being who allows love to die down. That is why consistent with the teachings of the Church we must cultivate the various means of strengthening spiritual life.

The first such means which allows us to hear the voice of Love is the Word of God. Just as at the beginning of the world the Creator through his Word created humanity, so now, still through His Word He can create human beings again. Through the force of his Love He can create in human beings new hearts and new spirits (Ezek. 36:26-27). A certain receptiveness to the voice of the Lord is required on the part of human beings. Angels, as pure spirits, are examples of such receptiveness. Their constant openness to the voice of God translates into service to human beings. Other examples of being completely focused on listening to the Lord are the saints. Their fulfilled lives of love and their intercession assist human beings on their path to the *realm of eternal love*. The saints' labors of self-improvement and their collaboration with grace should encourage us to attempt new spiritual transformations, to attain spiritual renewal. This, in turn, is absolutely necessary for us to live in the Holy Spirit and to truly *love God's life*. Studying the saints' role in our struggle towards personal holiness reminds us that Jesus asked his Father for holiness for his disciples (John 17:17). God is the sole path towards our holiness. Those who fully open up to Love make their own holiness possible by fully knowing and accepting Love. They come to know the Truth which frees them from the slightest shades of *non-love*. They reach the heights of Christian perfection which originates in God alone. The saints invite every human being no matter the nature of his calling or origin to follow the path of Love. Love, which is the essence of holiness, can develop and thrive amongst any life circumstances if only one collaborates with grace. Intercessions of persons who enjoy full communion with God are priceless to those on the path of love.

But human beings can find assistance in becoming a *work of Love* elsewhere as well. Every day offers itself as a space in which to develop oneself especially when one has perfected the precious habit of performing an examination of conscience. Such examination is a form of *weighing of the burden* of one's daily love. Also spiritual directors provide support in the process of shaping one's conscience. Helpful is also any internal strength derived from the spiritual nourishment gained in retreats and days of recollection. Human efforts towards gaining ever greater *agape* require the unique atmosphere supplied by silence. Silence is an aid. Thanks to silence one may attain richer hues and dimensions of

love. Human beings should know the value of silence and should practice silence. Living in God's presence throws into relief the importance of solitude in God and obedience to God. Human efforts on behalf of increasing love are labor-intensive particularly in the area of asceticism and humility in daily activities.

All the factors and elements discussed above help one more fully actualize the call to love, facilitate a deeper entry into the realm of a more mature faith, and serve God and humanity. Mindful of the communion of the saints, we must trust that Mother Foundress will assist all those who beg her intercession in making full use of the aids, factors, and instruments of developing love.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGCSFN	Archiwum Generalne Zgromadzenia Sióstr Najświętszej Rodziny z Nazaretu. Tr.: <u>General Archives of the Order of Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth</u>
APKNaz	Archiwum Prowincji Krakowskiej Nazaretanek. Tr.: <u>Archives of the Krakow Province of the Nazarene Sisters</u>
Autobiografia	Autobiografia, czyli dzieje miłosierdzia Bożego nad grzesznicą. Pisma Bł. Franciszki Siedliskiej. Tr.: <u>Autobiography, or the Story of God's Mercy over a Sinner. Writings of Blessed Frances Siedliska.</u>
Dziennik Duchowy, tom I	Dziennik Duchowy. Pisma Bł. Franciszki Siedliskiej, tom I. Tr.: <u>Spiritual Journals. Writings of Blessed Frances Siedliska, Vol. I.</u>
Dziennik Duchowy, tom II	Dziennik Duchowy. Pisma Bł. Franciszki Siedliskiej, tom II. Tr.: <u>Spiritual Journals. Writings of Blessed Frances Siedliska, Vol. II.</u>
KKK	Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego. Tr.: <u>Catechism of the Catholic Church.</u>
Konferencje	Konferencje Matuchny Własno Ręczne. Tr.: <u>Mother's Conferences by Her Own Hand.</u>
Konferencje Naszej Matki	Konferencje naszej Matki Założycielki Marii of Pana Jezusa Dobrego Pasterza. Tr.: <u>Conferences of Our Foundress Mother Mary of Lord Jesus the Good Shepherd.</u>
LG	Sobór Watykański II, Konstytucja dogmatyczna o Kościele <i>Lumen Gentium</i> . Tr.: <u>Lumen Gentium, Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church.</u>
NMI	List apostolski <i>Novo millenio inuente</i> , Jan Paweł II. Tr.: <u>Apostolic letter <i>Novo Millenio Ineunte</i>, John Paul II.</u>
Notatki	Notatki Matki Założycielki. Tr.: <u>Notes of Mother Foundress.</u>

- RzPJ Rozmowy z Panem Jezusem, czyli przestrogi dla duszy.  
Tr.: Conversations with Lord Jesus, or Warnings for the Soul.
- VD Adhortacja apostolska *Verbum Domini*, Benedykt XVI.  
Tr.: The Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, Benedict XVI.
- Wybór Listów Wybór Listów Sługi Bożej Marii od Pana Jezusa Dobrego Pasterza,  
Założycielki Zgromadzenia Sióstr Najświętszej Rodziny z Nazaretu  
Tr.: Selected Letters of God's Servant Mary of Lord Jesus Good  
Shepherd, Foundress of the Order of Sisters of the Holy Family of  
Nazareth
- Zbiór Listów Okólnych Zbiór Listów Okólnych Naszej Matki Założycielki 1879-1902.  
Tr.: Collected Circular Letters of Our Mother Foundress, 1879-1902.

Translator's notes:

1. The translation below preserves the formatting found in the original list of sources, although the formatting does not consistently follow any generally accepted citation format. For example, some titles are italicized, while others are not; citations to internet resources dated in uh a way that it remains unclear whether the date listed is the date on which the internet source was accessed (or some other date); abbreviations (of titles of printed sources, but seemingly also of authors' religious order affiliations) are used, which do NOT appear in the "List of Abbreviations" (see the abbreviation highlighted in bright yellow) and/or which the translator was unable to decode based on available resources.
2. The list below states the sources (titles and authors) as listed in the original "Bibliografia" and in the translated text (in footnotes and citations). This is done so the reader can find, in the Bibliography, the sources cited in footnotes and in the body of the text (under their original titles). For example: Grecko-polski Nowy Testament, Warszawa 1994.  
BUT the list below also offers translations of the titles and publication details of the sources, so the reader can get a sense of the nature and subject matter of the cited sources, their age, and their origin. For example: Tr.: The Greek-Polish New Testament, Warsaw 1994.

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