

PARTICULAR MAXIMS (PM) and SANCTIFICATIONS

PARTICULAR MAXIMS (PM)

INTRODUCTION

The Particular Maxims form part of the third chapter of a book of Maxims edited by Servien de Montigny and published in 1694. Servien was N. Barré's second successor and a close collaborator of his in the foundation of the Charitable Schools.

The full title of this document is :

'Particular Maxims for the Charitable Schools of N.Barré's Institute', with a sub-title :Maxims of guiding principles for the Sisters.'

The Particular Maxims are the fruit of N. Barré's human and spiritual experience and recall the essentials of the formation which he gave to the Sisters :

- a) to take Jesus as our model
- b) to participate in Jesus' mission and inner dispositions towards God and others.
- c) to give oneself generously without being concerned about oneself so that Jesus Christ be known and loved.
- d) to enable each person to grow in the image of God and thus sanctify oneself.

These Maxims, with a certain firmness and freedom of thought, present an apostolic spirituality to women attracted to religious life. The known form of religious life at the time was uniquely monastic and not compatible with apostolic service of the poor «†in their own surroundings†». These women were being called to follow Jesus Christ in his apostolic life which would involve a deep spirit of service, love and trust in God's providence. As in all N.Barré's writings, we note here more than ever, his constant reference to Scripture, whether by direct or indirect quotation on ideas which are obviously Scripture based. All this reflects his own deep knowledge of the Bible. His particular focus was on the person of Christ.

PARTICULAR MAXIMS (PM)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE SISTERS

1. When a Sister of the Charitable Schools is tempted to leave her work in order to enter a religious house (1), she should give careful thought to what she is about to do. She is giving up a state of life that is more evangelical (2), more dependent, more difficult, poorer and more despised by the world (3), in favour of another that is easier and more esteemed but which is to her own advantage only.

2. She now takes on the sterility (4) of a Rachel in the religious life, whereas before, hers was the marvellous fertility of a Leah. In the mission of the Charitable Schools, she suffers the pains of childbirth but she is enabled to give to her spouse a splendid number of children.

3. In her desire to enclose herself in a monastery, she is like a cowardly soldier who wants to remain always in garrison and never march out to battle. She is abandoning the spiritual warfare (5) in which she has enlisted for God and for Jesus, in favour of a life of rest and contentment in a secure place (6), disregarding the interests and the glory of her King (7).

4. Some of the Mistresses may be disturbed by the temptation to withdraw from their mission and from the exercise of charity towards their neighbour, under the pretext of working at their own perfection (8). The idea may even occur to them that before leading others to love God, they must first love Him themselves and love Him perfectly. This would be a big mistake and a grave error. Pay special attention to the reasons for this and the following maxim.

5. The Divine Lover chooses those He pleases as His specially loved ones (9). He does not want, and cannot be forced, to accept always those who are offered to Him, nor any claim on our part to reach the degree of holiness we ourselves would wish. In both of these ways of offering oneself, it is self love that is at work. No. No. That is not the way. It is enough to present ourselves before Him and to want to be His, without considering ourselves worthy to be His favoured ones or His loved ones. Then we should get on with the task of forming and fostering the development (10) of those whom He has entrusted to us in His love as His very own children. It is already too great an honour for us to have been entrusted by him to such a great and holy task.

6. Yes, in this way, the Charitable Mistresses must have as their sole purpose to form likenesses of Jesus Christ (11) and strive to make them so like the original as to reproduce perfect images of God (12). «In His image and likeness He created them» (13). God is holy and it is He who makes people holy (14). Human beings, however, make others holy and then become holy themselves. It is easier to make others holy than to become holy oneself.

7. There should be no limit to our efforts to ensure our neighbour's salvation. St. Paul said : «I am perfectly willing to spend what I have and to be spent for your sakes.» (15) Jesus Christ said : 'There can be no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.' (16)

8. Charitable Mistresses, listen (17) to what Jesus Christ said about Himself. He is your model. Weigh all His words and act accordingly (18). 'From my youth I have borne your trials.' (19) 'I am a worm and less than human, scorned and despised by the people' (20) 'The Son of Man has no place to rest his head.' (21) 'He was obedient unto death...' (22) 'For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven. He took on flesh and a body like ours : He suffered, was crucified and died.' (23)

9. The Sisters of this Institute ensure their salvation through their mission; one can go so far as to say that if they persevere in it, they will not be lost or damned (24). There are four reasons for this :

- (i) their living knowledge (25) of the holy truths;
- (ii) their regular life spent fulfilling their observances;
- (iii) their constant practice of charity towards their neighbour;
- (iv) their detachment of heart and the abandonment of their will to obedience, possessing nothing on earth and being always ready to go where they are sent.

10. The Charitable Mistresses must always consider themselves as the servants (26) in a house, totally devoted to their master's children, completely forgetful of themselves and given fully to seeing that the children are washed and well dressed. In this way, they will be very pleasing to their Master even though their own appearance may have been neglected (27).

11. When Jesus Christ sees that for love of Him, we are taken up with the service of our neighbour, with his or her good and sanctification, He Himself undertakes to see to our salvation and our spiritual progress (28).

12. It would be an error to think that in working for others, out of love, we should ourselves be lost; or that in enriching others, we ourselves should be impoverished (29).

13. Educating people in the faith and leading them to God is far better than to build churches for Him or decorating altars, because what one is doing is preparing spiritual dwellings and living temples for Him (30).

14. At the creation of the world, God said : "Increase and multiply and fill the earth." (31) But at humanity's re-creation, through the grace of the Gospel, Jesus Christ who is the father of the world to come (32), urging us to work for the salvation of our neighbour, tells those called to this holy task to "increase the number of holy souls and fill heaven." (33)

15. The Charitable Mistresses have several angels ever ready to defend them. They have their own guardian angel, the angel of their profession and in addition the guardian angels of those they instruct and catechise (34).

16. To work effectively for the salvation of your neighbour, you must have a sword in one hand to defend you from the world and the devil; and in the other, a dagger in order to resist your own self; moreover, you must have a two-edged knife in your mouth in order to wipe out vice and destroy all that pertains to sin in souls (35).

17. When instructing (36), you must not merely impart knowledge; the important thing is to inspire piety, devotion (37), fear and love of the Lord and to give children an education that is truly Christian and spiritual.

18. Since little children are ready to absorb divine truths, it is important to provide them with plenty of these from an early age and not to let their minds become preoccupied with the trivialities and whims of a secular society.

Oh! How beneficial the Charitable Schools are for this purpose and how holy is their mission and how sanctifying for the mistresses!

19. In order to win souls, you must treat them with great gentleness, never talking down to them but always acting with great humility and modesty (38).

20. Having reached out to others with gentleness and humility, you must follow this through with a warmth and enthusiasm inspired by love. People are more readily drawn to God by this kind of sensitivity than by the authority and rigour of laws. Besides, this is how the Holy Spirit acts in our hearts.

21. The Charitable Mistresses will be effective if they pay attention to the following :

(i) discernment of spirits in regard to the children and the other persons they instruct so that each be brought up in accordance with his or her own innate ability.

(ii) a deep love for souls, but a supernatural, God-given love for the persons for whom they are responsible, behaving and acting like mothers; who, forgetful of themselves, endure everything for their children and who omit nothing that is for their good (39).

(iii) an inner attitude of pleading with God (40) in order to obtain the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit necessary for themselves and for those they seek to win over and sanctify. As St. Paul said : 'We pray continually that God may be pleased to fill you with His spirit of holiness.' (41)

22. They must be deeply convinced of the need to work to the point of death, so that God, the soul and love may always be one, seeking to remove all obstacles to this great good both in their neighbour and in themselves (42).

23. When they find themselves being successful in their charitable mission, they must be particularly careful to curb and stamp out from their hearts any traces of satisfaction arising from self-love. Hence, let them imagine that they can hear Jesus saying continually to them in the depths of their souls : all is going well except what is in your heart. And so, placing themselves humbly before the God of love, they seek to work harder at the transformation of their own hearts so that Jesus may be happy everywhere.

24. Above all, they must ask God for His protection and His grace so that they may act wisely and with His mind when dealing with parish priests and other members of the clergy in whatever concerns their apostolate (43).

(i) They must show complete trust and undertake nothing except with the consent of the parish priest.

(ii) They must, as far as is reasonable, go along with their temperament and way of thinking, so as to encourage them to lend their support to God's work.

(iii) They must be distrustful of self and ever aware of the abuses which can arise in these relationships. On the one hand they must know how to handle these gentlemen and on the other they must be wary of themselves. They must know how to deal with them and win them round and yet remain free. They need to have them on their side for the advancement of God's glory and yet not be possessed by them.

(iv) In order to avoid scandal and abuses, they must never allow bonds or attachments to form. This means

eliminating all unnecessary encounters with religious, clergy or any other persons.

25. Let them take the greatest care to avoid these abuses, which always have disastrous consequences. Woe to any young woman who doesn't take all these precautions. Woe to any Charitable Mistress who is not strong in mind and grace and who is not resolute in her fidelity.

26. Frequent conversations lead to attachments being formed and no matter how noble the pretext irregularities can occur. The soul becomes a prisoner of its emotions and the slave of a mere creature and can resort to scheming in order to consolidate and maintain its position. In such a state the freedom of the children of God is lost (44); a spirit of false freedom (45) begins to creep in, replacing the sacred and gentle yoke of the Lord (46). In other words, it is on the brink of a precipice.

27. The Mistress of the Charitable Schools should be holy, learned, zealous, exemplary, persecuted (47).

(i) Holy, or at least desirous of becoming so : for without that they will not have the zeal necessary to work for the sanctification of their neighbour.

(ii) Learned, in the truths of the Christian faith so as to be able to offer guidance and assistance to those subjected to the wiles and attacks of the evil one.

(iii) Zealous in seeking out those who have strayed and in bringing them back to the right path, sparing no efforts in order to save them.

(iv) Exemplary, so as to edify one and all by their modesty, lack of concern for reward, mortification, disregard for the world etc., without which their words will have little effect; they would be destroying rather than building up the Kingdom of Jesus.

(v) Persecuted, ill-treated, accursed like Jesus Christ, who was cursed for our sake (48). Thus they will obtain great graces for themselves and for their neighbour and give glory to God.

28. To be a good Charitable Mistress, a woman must not be of an arrogant, anxious or superficial disposition.

(i) She must have generosity of spirit and openness of heart, always ready to give rather than waiting to receive (49); but she must beware lest all this spring from natural pride, which spoils everything.

(ii) She must be serious-minded without being sad or elated, avoiding both extremes; for the one who is never sad risks being superficial and the one who is always well-behaved is often proud and haughty.

29. A Charitable Mistress will exercise patience as follows

(i) In regard to herself : seeing her own slow growth in virtue, she must work at it with all her might, even though she sees little progress; she must be satisfied to see others advance and help them to do so.

(ii) in regard to her neighbour : she must never grow weary or discouraged, whatever the hardness, resistance or stubbornness she encounters in another.

30. The following can lead a Charitable Mistress to become impatient :

(i) Her human nature, which is discouraged when it does not succeed.

(ii) Her reasoning, which leads her to deem such and such a person unworthy of the efforts being wasted on her behalf.

(iii) Concern for God's interests may serve as a pretext. She reasons as follows : I will leave this ungrateful person, who shows little response to God's graces, and turn to another for whom I can work with greater success. Then she becomes angry and, as it seems to her, moved by just indignation and impatient zeal, she wants to abandon her efforts.

However, if she allows herself to be led by God's Spirit, surrendering to Him the areas mentioned above, she will receive the grace either to help the difficult person or to win over another. God will then give her complete success and full satisfaction as a reward for her previous labours.

31. Many people want to serve God, but most of them are not willing to be unconditionally at his service. Yet this should be the proper disposition of every faithful soul, particularly of the Charitable Mistress. She should place herself in the hands of God like a brush in the hand of a painter; like a quill in the hand of a writer. And note that a quill, if it is to write well, must often be cut, trimmed and shaped (50).

32. Martha and Mary are figures of the active and contemplative life. St. Teresa says that the latter is the more beautiful, but the former is the richer (51). The contemplative is like Rachel, beautiful but sterile. Leah, who was plain but fertile, is the true symbol of the active life (52). St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, says that to achieve perfection, the two must become one (53). That is what you must do, Charitable Mistresses, if you possess the spirit of your Institute to any extent.

33. Experience has shown that many mistresses receive more grace during class-time than during prayer-time. During prayer they quite often experience dryness or little dew from heaven. On the other hand, during the exercise of their mission, they often experience the presence of God and interior consolation. It is here that He visits them and enriches them with His divine favours; so as to show them that this above all is where He wants them to be. Had they experienced the presence of God and interior consolation during the time of prayer, they would never want to leave it and would be anxious to give up the active apostolate of charitable instruction in order to pursue the sweetness they have tasted in solitude and contemplation.

34. If God favours you with His presence during class-time, accept humbly and thank Him for His visit, telling Him that for the moment you have to devote yourself to His business. Ask Him to postpone His favours until prayer-time. Whatever happens, do not be distracted from the instruction of the children and your neighbour. By doing this you will lose nothing and you will avoid the deceits and delusions of the devil.

35. Until the end of the world the words : Christ, our Pasch has been sacrificed (54) will be repeated. This is to forewarn Christians that they too must be sacrificed so that the members may be united to their head (55). This admirable union particularly concerns those called to the active apostolate. Charitable Mistresses, let your hearts be opened with a holy joy (56) as you contemplate your happiness and the excellence of your vocation.

36. Jesus Christ, as He died on the cross, brought to completion the work of our redemption. A Charitable Mistress dying amidst the weariness and exertions of her mission, perfects the unique and noble task of her eternal salvation. And since she has lived out what is still to be completed of the Passion of Jesus Christ (57) by instructing others and applying to them His infinite merits, she enters into the joy of her Lord (58), to enjoy the abundant fruit of having used well the talents He has entrusted to her (59).

NOTES

1. A religious house refers to an enclosed order where solemn vows are made. It was not permitted to go out from such a house to do charitable works. This was the only form of religious life for women which was recognised by the Church at the time. Unfortunately, in some places, much corruption had begun to find its way into this form of life.

2. More evangelical in the sense of Mt. 9 : 35 which describes the life of Jesus and His apostles.

3. The schools' masters and mistresses were not held in good repute at the time. They were even despised.

4. Gen. 29 : 31

5. Col. 1 : 28-29; Col. 2 : 1; Eph. 6 : 10-17; AD 9.

6. A place where material security is offered.

7. This type of image would be very familiar at a time when many wars took place.

8. M.I.S. 1; perfection = sanctification

9. Dt. 7 : 6-7; Jn. 15 : 16

10. There are three biblical images here : the Servant, the Potter, the Labourer

11. 1 Cor. 15 : 49

12. Col. 1 : 15-22; Gal. 4 : 19

13. Gen. 1 : 26

14. Lev. 11 : 44.' N. Barré was convinced that God alone is holy and can make us holy, and that we must not wait to attain holiness ourselves before leading others along that path.' 'Better than light' Pg. 87

15. 2 Cor. 12 : 15

16. Jn. 15 : 13

17. Dt. 6 : 4; Mt 17 : 5

18. Rom. 8 : 3

19. Ps. 88 : 15

20. Ps. 22 : 6; 1 Cor. 4 : 13

21. Mt. 8 : 20

22. Phil. 2 : 8

23. Rom. 8 : 3; Creed

24. Due to the influence of Jansenism, people lived in great fear of eternal damnation. Hence people tended to focus a lot on personal sanctification. Father Barré reacted strongly against this self-centred spirituality. He sought to remove all apprehension from the Sisters and encouraged them to concentrate on the salvation of others. This would have been contrary to the general thinking of the time.

25. Jn. 6 : 63

26. 1 Cor. 4 : 162

27. This is a call to the Sisters to be more preoccupied about others than about their own perfection.

28. Rom. 15 : 15-16

29. Mt. 10 : 39; Lk. 17 : 33; Mk 8 : 35; Lk. 9 : 29

30. 1Pet. 2 : 5; Rom. 12 : 1

31. Gen. 1 : 28

32. Is. 9 : 5

33. This Maxim is a résumé of the history of salvation from Genesis to the Book of Revelation with Jesus Christ at the centre, who came to restore creation. c.f. Rev. 21 : 1-5

34. In the biblical tradition, an angel was any medium of communication of a message from God - whether a person or an event

35. In the Bible the image of the sword or two-edged knife refers to the Word of God, Eph. 6 : 10-17; Heb. 4 : 12; Wis. 18 : 15; Is. 49 : 2

36. Spiritual talks aimed at awakening and deepening the faith so that it could become more part of one's experience of life.
37. Devotion : a trusting relationship of the whole person with God.
38. Mt. 11 : 28-30 39. Gal. 4 : 19; Is. 49 : 15
40. Rom. 8 : 23-26
41. 2 Thess. 1 : 11; 2 Cor. 13 : 9; Col. 1 : 9
42. They must be convinced that God loves us and wants us to be happy; happiness comes as a result of welcoming God's love in our lives. Removing the obstacles means turning away from self and turning towards God.
43. In the implementation of the Council of Trent, more emphasis was given to the parish and as a result the parish priests tended to suspect groups such as confraternities and religious. The role of the parish priest was still evolving. There was a tendency to question the apostolic value of work done by women, c. f. M. L. 7. N. Barré is recommending the Sisters to be sensitive to the feelings of the clergy while pursuing their innovative work.
44. Gal. 5 : 1-13; Gal. 2 : 4 45. M.A.P. 27 46. Mt. 11 : 28-30
47. N. Barré outlines a programme for the spiritual life :
- holy in order to make holy Jn. 17 : 17-19
 - learned in Christian truths in order to be able to offer clarification, 1 Cor. 12 : 7
 - zealous in order to lead to salvation, Jn. 10; Lk 15 : 3
 - exemplary in order to give good example 2 Cor. 13 : 10
 - persecuted like Jesus, Jn 15 : 21
48. Gal. 3 : 13; 2 Cor. 5 : 21
49. Developing an attitude of giving all is encouraged - any desire to calculate what one could receive for oneself should be cast aside. Lk 14 : 13-14
50. M.A.P. 141
51. The seventh room of the «†Interior Castle†», chapter 4
52. P.M. 2; L. 27
53. The Summa of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part 2, 182 art. 1-2
54. 1 Cor. 5 : 7
55. Rom. 6 : 1-11; Rom. 8 : 1-12; Col. 2 : 19; Eph. 4 : 16
56. Jn. 17 : 13; 1 Jn 1 : 4
57. Col. 1 : 24
58. Mt. 25 : 21

Memoirs and Instructions for the Sanctification of the Sisters. (MIS)

Introduction

In the original edition of 1694, this text made up the second part of the Particular Maxims. As the title explains, it is composed of memories written by a direct eyewitness, who passes on to us some aspects of Fr. Barre's thought. The recommendations or "instructions" are presented to us as coming from him e.g. "Fr. Barre used to say.."

This text was published very soon after the Institute began, leaving no doubt about its authenticity. There were still people around who would have witnessed what Fr. Barre had said regarding a way of life which was still new and which he had suggested for the Institute. They would have considered it worthwhile recalling the emphasis he gave to some aspects of this way of life.

The way to holiness is presented as indissolubly linked with the apostolic life:

. the Sisters must resist the temptation to "a quiet life" in a monastery;

- . their formation will take place through their apostolic service;
- . the carrying out of community responsibilities can be a means of sanctification;
- . abandonment, availability and disinterestedness are essential attitudes for all the Sisters right up to the end of their days.

1. In October, 1676, the daughter of a medical doctor, Mr Hayer, was received into the community of Charitable Schools, in the town of Rouen. She was Sr. Marie Hayer (a) who was well known in the town of Bernay (diocese of Lisieux) for her virtue and her capabilities.

This young woman was sent with several others by Mademoiselle deGuise (b) to teach in her territory of Guise, Hirson, Our Lady of Liesse,. Later she was recalled to be the Superior of the community in Paris, which was first set up in the parish of St. Jean en Greve. There were already thirty Sisters working successfully in the parishes of St. Jean, St. Eustache, St. Roch, St. Laurent, St. Louis l'Isle Notre Dame and others. At the request of her father, she used to go and stay in Bernay during the holidays. While she was there she felt called to become a religious in the monastery of that town.

She consulted Fr. Barre about it and he advised her to postpone the decision as he felt strongly that it was more likely to be a temptation and an illusion. This young woman could do infinitely more good if committed to the work of charitable instruction in the world than if she were to enter cloistered religious life. She would be leaving an active life which would be of great value to the Church, for a quieter and more leisurely one, even though good in itself (c).

2. Fr. Barre used to say that young women who were given experience in the active apostolate made more progress than those who were in training for a long time before being sent to take class or to teach. He used to say that having to do something broadens the mind and stimulates one to do even more. In this way a teacher learns very quickly. It is through the experience of difficulties that understanding grows (d). In other words, the best way to learn is to teach (e).

3. Fr. Barre used to say also that to train a young woman well, she should be appointed as a Superior, even if she could not fulfil the role well. He said it was a good practice to name as many as possible as Superior for a year at a time, as it would be a means of helping them to advance in virtue, provided they had the necessary dispositions (f).

4. Fr. Barre said that the older Sisters should practice five points (g) to help them grow in holiness, and the Superiors (h) would be responsible for seeing to this.

- i) They were to acknowledge publicly before the Community, Directors and Superiors that they were dependent on the House, no longer being in a position to contribute actively or to be of service to the Sisters and others.
- ii) They were to consider themselves as needy people (i), who were dependent on charity for food and other necessities (j).
- iii) They would be careful to refrain from reprimanding, blaming or criticising the way the young Sisters worked in the apostolate, whether it be in the house or in the schools, thinking that they did things better in their day or for

any other reason. This would simply be meddling in what no longer concerned them, while neglecting what now touched their own lives. This is a problem which often arises in communities and can do much harm.

iv) They should devote themselves to contemplation and continual communion with God, so that through their prayers, those actively involved in teaching, either inside or outside the House, could receive the graces they need.

v) If the Superior asks them to do something, be it some act of service to their neighbour or to one of the Sisters, or whatever it may be, they should be perfectly willing to do it, readily and without question.

vi) If, as in the previous article, they are asked to do something which they find is beyond their strength, they will simply and humbly express this to the Superior, explaining the difficulties they see and the possible consequences. If she insists, they will obey generously, without being preoccupied about the effect on their health. Obedience often makes the seemingly impossible feasible and God sometimes works miracles in such circumstances. If the worst comes to the worst, it will be a last sacrifice to be offered to God, which will bear excellent fruit for eternity.

vii) They are to be regarded as the least in the house. They will have their meals after the others, being content even with what is left over. They are not to sit down to table; they will remain standing, leaning against the wall, sitting on a low stool, a piece of wood or on the ground (k).

Notes

a) Marie Hayer was to be the first superior general of the Institute.

b) Lady deGuise was Marie de Lorraine, who was directed by Fr. Barre in Paris and supported him in the setting up of the Institute.

c) PM 1, 2, 3, 4.

d) Is 28: 19.

e) The necessity of formation and of competence in one's mission is emphasised in other texts e.g. PM 27; SR 1: 6.

The emphasis here is on the importance of linking theoretical training with practical experience i.e. the formative value of experience.

f) SR 9: 1; TS 16.

g) There are actually seven points listed here. The original text may have had only five, to which two were added before the 1694 edition. Perhaps i) and ii) could have been linked together and maybe v) and vi).

h) Directors and Superiors, cf. FM 5, 6, 7; SR 14; SA 8.

i) The French expression did not have a pejorative meaning at the time.

j) See "L'Enchiridion de la Vie Spirituelle" by Landsperg (1489 - 1539). This was a manual of spirituality which put great emphasis on self-denial, abnegation and humility, encouraging people to find joy in humiliations and in being despised. This type of language and the images used were quite common at the time. Landsperg was a Rhine-Flemish Trappist monk.

k) This seventh point is not to be taken as a binding text. Fr. Barre, on the contrary, insists that the elderly Sisters and the sick be treated with kindness, cf. SR 7: 1, 2, 5. These ideas were probably expressed in the early days when the Sisters were still young. Since it was common to enter religious life in order to be assured of one's livelihood and a comfortable old age, it is easy to understand why Fr. Barre uses strong language to illustrate his point. He did not want anyone to enter his Institute with such an attitude; he wanted those who entered to base their lives on complete detachment, disinterestedness and abandonment to Divine Providence, cf. FS; ML 9; PM 36. Perhaps it was necessary to speak in such a hard way in order to make himself understood in a situation where the Institute was going completely against the current customs of the time. Some of the expressions used were not in fact as shocking as they appear to be e.g. to eat standing up, to lean against the wall, to eat after the others... They were common practices among the ordinary women of the time. We must look behind the language for the spirit of the text. The Sisters are being invited to practise whatever will help them complete the work of their sanctification in apostolic availability, communion with God and humility.