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DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

**“Our Lady of Mercy
Leads us to the Heart of Christ.”**

**Letter to the Archbishop of Bourges (France)
on the Spiritual Experience of Estelle Faguette**

22 August 2024

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to write to you about Estelle Faguette and the messages that emerged from her spiritual experience concerning “Our Lady of Mercy,” which took place at the Shrine of Pellevoisin (France).

During a serious and incurable illness, Estelle Faguette experienced at Pellevoisin the presence of the Virgin Mary, who spoke to her on several occasions about the love of Jesus Christ. Estelle’s healing, which surpassed all natural explanations, was confirmed to be miraculous by the Archbishop of Bourges on 8 September 1983, with the consent of the Holy See.

Although it is not the current practice of this Dicastery to express an opinion on the supernatural character or the divine origin of alleged supernatural phenomena and messages, the expressions presented by Estelle as coming from the Virgin Mary have a particular value that allows us to glimpse the action of the Holy Spirit in the midst of this spiritual experience.

Indeed, in various cases, the Supreme Pontiffs have authorized acts of devotion linked to “Our Lady of Mercy” or the “All-Merciful Mother.” I would like to mention just a few examples: Pope Leo XIII granted indulgences to the pilgrims to Pellevoisin in 1892 and recognized the Scapular of the Sacred Heart in 1900. Upon receiving the scapular in 1915, Pope Benedict XV stated, “Pellevoisin has been chosen by the Blessed Virgin as a privileged place where she spreads her graces.” In 1922, a votive Mass to the Virgin was authorized for the parish of Pellevoisin, to be celebrated on 9 September.

There are many beautiful fruits of faith and charity that have occurred around the Shrine.

Estelle’s Accounts

Estelle's accounts are striking for their simplicity, clarity, and humility. She narrates the suffering caused by her illness and does not boast of having a Christian spirit of resignation. On the contrary, she explains her inner resistance to an illness that disrupted her life plan: “For several months in which I was ill, I was suffering a great deal, not only in body but also in spirit. [...] I could not resign myself to dying and leaving behind my parents, whom I support, and my little niece, whom I had brought up” (*App.* 1). “I will only say that she [Mary] gave me grave reproaches that I had deserved. I would have liked to have cried out for forgiveness! However, I could not; my sorrow was too great” (*App.* 2). In fact, referring to her subsequent recovery, Estelle feels compelled to explain: “Let those who read

these lines, if they are worth reading, be convinced of one thing: that it was not for my own merits that the Blessed Virgin obtained my cure from her Son; on the contrary, it was to show many people that, despite our sins, we have a Good Mother who spoils us and intercedes for us” (*App.* 1). In a later message, she again expresses her resistance to the illness and describes having written to the Virgin: “See the pain my parents would feel if they missed me. They are on the verge of begging for bread. Remember, then, what you suffered when Jesus your Son was laid on the Cross” (*App.* 3). This generous dedication to others and life that is used to taking care of others is what touched the Mother’s heart the most: “it is what touched me most” (*ibid.*). The Mother knows how to recognize all the good that is hidden behind our words.

Words of Mercy, Consolation, and Healing

Estelle’s accounts of are brief, and even briefer are Mary’s words to her:

- “Do not be afraid; you know you are my daughter” (*App.* 1).
- “Fear not; you are my daughter” (*App.* 4).
- “If you want to serve me, be simple” (*App.* 5).
- “Calm down, my child, be patient; you will have a hard time, but I am here” (*App.* 6).
- “I wish you were even calmer [...] You need to rest” (*App.* 8).
- “Let them pray and trust in me” (*App.* 11).
- “I choose the small and weak for my glory” (*App.* 13).
- “Have courage” (*App.* 14)
- “I will be near you invisibly [...]. You have nothing to fear” (*App.* 15).

Estelle also avoids anything that might arouse curiosity. She understands that there are very personal details, and her prudence allows her to caution that she should not communicate them to others: “I keep silent about what the Blessed Virgin tells me in particular” (*App.* 2). “She [...] tells me some things [only] for myself” (*App.* 14).

Beyond the details of the words, which are not always precise or exact in the spiritual experience, it is very valuable to note how the merciful Mother treats Estelle. On the one hand, Our Lady gives her gentle exhortations, which Estelle calls “reprimands.” For example, when Estelle says that she would rather die, the Virgin responds with a smile: “O, you of little gratitude! If my Son gives you life, it is because you need it. What has he given to man on earth that is more precious than life?” (*App.* 2). Estelle mentions that there were other reprimands, but they did not sound aggressive or harsh but were made “with such gentleness that I felt reassured” (*App.* 3).

At the same time, the Virgin assured her that she did not ignore Estelle’s good intentions: “I will keep you accountable for the efforts you have made to be calm” (*App.* 11). In addition, the Virgin seeks to heal Estelle’s low self-esteem: “She showed me some good deeds I had done. They were nothing compared to my faults” (*App.* 3). At that moment, Estelle adds, “The Blessed Virgin saw my sorrow clearly.” And the good Mother said to her: “These few good deeds and fervent prayers you have addressed to me have touched my mother’s heart” (*App.* 3).

Silences and Gazes

However, even more striking than the few words that Mary speaks is her silent presence, those long silences where the Mother’s gaze heals the soul:

- “My God, how beautiful she was! She remained motionless for a long time without saying anything. [...] After this silence, she looked at me; I do not know what I felt. How happy I was! (*App.* 5).
- “She was then as she was always: with arms outstretched, rain falling from her hands. She remained silent for a long time” (*App.* 11).
- “She said nothing to me. Then she cast her eyes on me and looked at me with great kindness and left” (*App.* 12).
- “When she arrived, as always, she remained for a good while without saying anything” (*App.* 14).

“Little by little she disappeared, leaving only the mist (a soft brightness) around her” (*App.* 5).
 “She stayed a good while longer, and then slowly she pulled away” (*App.* 7).

In the descriptions, the kindness, gentleness, and gentle smile of the Virgin appear frequently: “she turned to me and said gently...” (*App.* 1), “she looked at me, always smiling” (*App.* 2), “she was smiling” (*App.* 5), “what beauty and gentleness!” (*App.* 6), “what kindness in her eyes, and what mercy!” (*App.* 13).

With that same presence and serene gaze, the Mother says she would like to bring peace back to the Church because “in the Church, there is not that calm I desire” (*App.* 11).

Towards the Heart of Christ

The experience of Pellevoisin is Marian, but it is also very Christological. In fact, the Virgin’s great request to Estelle is that she spread the scapular with the image of the Heart of Christ, and Mary’s great message is the invitation to turn to that loving Heart of the Lord. Showing Estelle the Scapular of the Sacred Heart of Christ, Mary says: “The treasures of my Son have been open for a long time [...] I love this devotion” (*App.* 9).

Estelle accepts this request to spread the devotion to the Heart of the Lord, which gives “the consolation of drawing from this unalterable source that springs from his Divine Heart.” And she responds to Mary: “This devotion that you love, I will speak of it, my good Mother, as much as I am able” (*App.* 11).

The Heart of Christ is never indifferent. It allows itself to be touched by our sincere and loving supplication, especially when it is the Mother who touches his Heart: “Have courage and be patient; my Son will allow himself to be touched” (*App.* 1).

In this spiritual experience, we do not find (as in some others) frequent reproaches to Bishops and laments over the Church. However, Mary does lament the lack of love for Christ reflected in those who receive the Eucharist coldly or distractedly: “the lack of respect that one has for my Son in Holy Communion, and the attitude of prayer that one takes, when the mind is occupied with other things” (*App.* 5). This is not a call from Our Lady to simple people who are barely trained or to those who are far from the Church, but “to those who claim to be pious” (*ibid.*).

In these messages, everything is attributed to Christ. Even Estelle’s healing is not directly attributed to Mary, but to Christ who heard his Mother’s intercession: “the Blessed Virgin obtained my healing from *her Son*” (*App.* 1). If Christ transforms hardened hearts by listening to Mary’s intercession, it is only he who intimately touches people: “Through me, he will touch the most hardened hearts” (*App.* 7).

The moment in which Mary avoids specifying that the graces poured out are her own is of particular importance and beauty. Estelle says, “the Blessed Virgin stretched out her hands and an abundant rain fell from them. In each of these drops, I seemed to see graces written, such as piety, salvation, trust, conversion, and health.” However, the Virgin then added, “These graces are *from my Son*” (*App.* 15).

Your Excellency, not only can I say that there are no doctrinal, moral, or other objections to this spiritual event and that the faithful “are authorized to give to it their adherence in a prudent manner” (*Norms*, Art. 22 § 1), but, in this case, the devotion—which is already thriving—is also recommended especially for those who freely wish to adhere to it. They will find in it a path of spiritual simplicity of trust and love, which is likely to do much good. Therefore, it is now possible to issue the relevant decree of *nihil obstat* that you have proposed. It will undoubtedly be of benefit to the whole Church.

Grateful for your invaluable collaboration, I would like to take this occasion to offer you my sincere

greetings in Christ.

Víctor Manuel Card. FERNÁNDEZ
Prefect

EX AUDIENTIA DIEI 22.08.2024
Franciscus
