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**Endnote**

This maiden issue of “Remembering Mother Mary Michael” aims at drawing up sketches about the life, spirituality and legacy of our beloved Co-foundress, whose beatification we look forward to with eager faith. The more we get to know her, the more we will appreciate her person and her teachings. Grace will have us be surprised at the exceptional blessing we have in our noble and praiseworthy Co-foundress and first Superior General, Mother Mary Michael.

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2 ibid. p. 170
3 Burning Lamps p. 106
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**A Heart totally for God**

M. M. Michael lived in an atmosphere of faith, in a world of supernatural values. God was the sun of her life and it was around him
that her thoughts and love revolved.\(^1\) Her practice of walking in the presence of God deepened this union and she frequently recommended this exercise to the Sisters, together with the sanctifying practice of ejaculatory prayer.\(^2\) Whenever she walked through the cloister corridors or in the garden she usually had a rosary in her hand; she was either saying the beads or ejaculations. She belonged to those graced, fervent souls who encircle the world with the mighty arms of prayer.\(^3\)

**The making of a Saint**

Heroism in the practice of Christian virtues is the touchstone of holiness. M. M. Michael strove for perfection in religious life; her practice of virtue was utmost,\(^4\) hence, she never ceased emphasizing the importance of this constant striving for holiness: “...of course we can never hope to be holy like God but we can strive for it -- not for the holiness of a saint but for the holiness of God himself.”\(^5\) In one of her exhortations she pointed out the attitude of the Founder, who, in the course of time, acquired the reputation of being a mild, kind, just and genial father: “by consciously striving and working on his character he brought it to a really heroic and serene state so that he accepted all with mildness and geniality and treated requests with fairness.”\(^6\)

As a mentor and guide of souls, M. M. Michael herself knew that striving for holiness was no easy path. “The passions can be very troublesome, but wherever there is true humility and sincere striving for virtue, there the Holy Spirit and his love reigns.”\(^7\) To this striving for holiness also belonged renunciation and spiritual battle.\(^8\) “We must put up with all kinds of individuals. We should even seek out those who are least appealing to us. We may not like this about one Sister and that about another. God created everybody and arranged all things so we might have an opportunity to practice self-control.”\(^9\) Finally, it also involved sacrifice, even joyful sacrifice.\(^10\) “Sisters who have to struggle with faults of character can become the best Sisters, provided they make no truce with their faults and earnestly try to get rid of them.”\(^11\)

We can perceive how much she herself had to struggle in this exercise of heroic love from a letter to Arnold Janssen (undated ca. Oct/Nov 1893). Here she writes about the Sister in charge: “Dear Fr. Superior, No wonder I lack natural respect, love, and trust. But Your Reverence should try to put himself in my place. I just force myself and battle against my feelings because I should not and will not offend God.” On the other hand, she wrote in a report (22 January 1893): “Sister in charge is remarkable for hard work, goodness, friendliness and wisdom.”\(^12\) On a slip of paper we find these jottings in M. M. Michael’s handwriting: “O God whenever my heart grows restless or anxiety oppresses my soul, let me not cease to say, ‘Jesus meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine! Veni, Sancte Spiritus! Lift up your eyes to the mountains, whence help shall come to you!'”\(^13\) The Sisters wrote of her thus: “As far as striving for virtue was concerned, she was our best model. All the Sisters agree that we had a saintly Reverend Mother.”\(^14\)

**Gratitude, the Hallmark of her faith**

Gratitude was one of M. M. Michael’s outstanding virtues, something very dear to her heart. Just as she never forgot the least good deed that others did for her, so likewise she was ever grateful to her divine Benefactor. “Oh how grateful we must be...” were words frequently found on her lips. One morning at breakfast, she reminded the Sisters of the many gifts God gives them daily and of their duty to be grateful. Mentioning that part of the blessing at meals, “We thank you, almighty God, for all your benefits,” she told them always to say it with devout attention. After breakfast, when she led the prayers and came to these words, she was so touched that she could scarcely continue.\(^15\)

In her memoirs, a Sister wrote: “Whenever M. M. Michael received anything for the convent she thanked the benefactor profusely and then asked us to thank God.

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\(^{5}\) cf. Contemplation and Mission, Karl Müller, SVD, 1998, p. 172
\(^{6}\) ibid, p. 170
\(^{7}\) Burning Lamps, p. 129
\(^{8}\) cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2015
\(^{9}\) Contemplation and Mission, Karl Müller, 1998, p. 170
\(^{10}\) cf. ibid, p. 172
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