

## *“Hail, Little Annoyances!”*

Dear Friend,

Tomorrow is Saturday! A day Mathilda has been waiting for with anticipation. Mathilda’s mother recently bought candy molds for her and, since the beginning of the week, it was understood that one of Mathilda’s school friends would come to her place. Together, they would make hard candy which her grandmother had taught her to make. With her new molds in the shape of hearts or flowers, the two friends would make a few batches of them and hand them out at school along with some homemade cookies.

However, when Mathilda came home from school that day, she was heavy-hearted. Her friend had cancelled out for tomorrow’s activity. More than that, Mathilda suspected that she had suddenly changed her mind in order to go with another girl friend, something that deeply hurt her. That evening, in order to boost her morale, her parents suggested she call Sophie. Maybe she would accept to come and spend the day with Mathilda and the two could make hard candy? Her parents were even prepared to go and pick Sophie up at home. So Mathilda tried her luck, but when she came back to the living room, her look of disappointment said it all. Really, none of her plans were working out! Sophie already had a commitment for Saturday, since she was to babysit a neighbor’s young children all day.

Like Mathilda, all of us can be deeply annoyed and frustrated in our projects and desires at one point or another. Nothing we had planned works out and we are disappointed and bitter, even though there is nothing we can do to change events. In such circumstances, what interior attitude ought to be adopted?

Marie-Paule had a wisdom that enabled her to live through one annoying or vexing situation after another, while sanctifying herself and letting herself be guided by Providence at the same time. Her teaching? "We must accustom ourselves very early in life to accept things as they come," she would say, encouraging us to say to God every morning, "Everything you want, Lord, I want." That is because we will run into annoyances all our life. So, we may as well learn to live them in a positive manner.

You know that accepting joys, pleasant surprises, good times with friends does not require any effort. But when a difficulty arises, something hurtful, a heartbreak, an annoyance, it is as though the sky suddenly became dark and feelings of sadness, disappointment and sorrow then weigh heavily upon us. And yet, it is in such situations that God can purify us more, fortify our soul, bringing it closer to Him. At the time, this is painful, of course, but through the events which do not always seem to be in our favor, God is forming us, guiding us and can even protect us sometimes.

What are the first efforts often required of us in such circumstances? First of all, not let sadness get the better of us and make others bear the weight of our disappointment, but instead keep smiling, for this annoyance can make us grow spiritually. Accepting it in this way as something coming to us from Providence is to draw from it all possible benefits. Marie-Paule wrote: "The self-abandonment of a receptive heart that says, 'Everything you want, Lord, I want!' is the best way to always retain one's joy." (Letter from Mother Paul-Marie to a Daughter of Mary)

When the Community of the Daughters of Mary was founded, Sister Jeanne d'Arc Demers, Marie-Paule's bosom friend, taught a short prayer to the young Sisters to help them guide their thoughts whenever there was something annoying or vexing. Mathilda also learned it from Sister Lucette and she wrote it out so that

she could put it up in a visible spot in her room. So, despite the few tears of disappointment she shed before going to bed that night, she managed to say, with a heavy heart but with a soul that was able to look up to God: "Hail, little annoyances, full of grace. I love you and I accept you. Accomplish in me all the good God intended by sending you."

The next morning, Mathilda complained a little to her mother that she had nothing to do, that it was "boring" and that it would be a long day. And indeed, she was about to ruin her day with such an unpleasant mood! However, she once again recited her little prayer to herself, even trying to put a smile on her face. A little later, she had the strength to rebound. Then, she went into the kitchen and made three batches of cookies! And, in the afternoon, her mother helped her make some hard candy.

On Monday, Mathilda will be able to make her classmates happy by handing out her cookies and sweets. And there will certainly be some too for the friend who cancelled out on their get-together!

The Daughters of Mary