

A Way To Holiness
In The Church



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Preface

Many Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny have had a heartfelt wish for several years: that there would be a life of their foundress, Anne Marie Javouhey, which would make known, not only her spirit and her work, but also the source from which stemmed her “life hidden in God”, the constant dynamism that urged her to take risks in her actions and the consuming fire that led her to go to extremes herself and to the extremities of the earth.

Who better than one of her daughters could dare to penetrate the depths of Anne Marie’s heart, and draw out these secret resources, so that we, in turn, will be stimulated to engage on the road to holiness and happiness?

This dream has now become a reality in this jubilee year 2000 with the appearance of Sister Marie-Suzelle Gerard’s book, *“A Pathway to Holiness in the Church”*. It is the fruit of long maturing in the experiences of a missionary life, rich in fraternal sharing, periods of prolonged prayer, and patient spiritual research.

Sister Marie-Suzelle leads us through these packed pages with assurance and faith, theological soundness, historical facts, enthusiasm and conviction, calling us to undertake an enlightening, interior journey and to penetrate ever more deeply into the very heart of our foundress.

We marvel at the action of the God of Love - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - in an existence completely given over to His good pleasure, with unlimited confidence in the merciful Father, Providence of little ones, a love drawn from the heart of the Divine Spouse, Jesus, and the contemplation of His Passion, and faith in the constant help of the Holy Spirit who never abandons us.

May we, in our turn, at the end of the proposed journey, set out on the way of God's Will, unique for each of us, with the certitude that it leads to the freedom of love, contagious peace and joy that transcends all suffering.

Sister Marie-Suzelle reveals to us the growth of a beautiful rose and each Sister of St. Joseph of Cluny as a special one, blossoming for the glory of God and the joy of our brothers and sisters.

I offer this magnificent bouquet of the 3000 roses that we make up, to Mary, Mother of Fair Love, so that she herself can present it to the Father and give Him joy each day.

*Sister Marie-Noel Lefrancois
Superior General
Mother House, 11 May 2000*

Introduction

The aim of this work is to be an instrument for discovering and delving deeper into Anne Marie's spirituality. Is such a work necessary? The spirituality of this famous native of Burgundy seems so clear, so well known: the Holy Will of God.

In fact, this rule of action is the attainment of a goal; it is the rose of a rose tree. We have to discover the rose tree and its roots.

Indeed, because of the very celebrity of the Foundress, we have, in general, focused our attention on her works, as remarkable as they are inimitable. And we have too often failed to dig deeper to find the spiritual source from which such genius stemmed. Now this source is her *"life hidden in God"* (221-2: 238-1). The expression is her own and characterises well what she lived. Her mysticism has been hidden from our eyes by her modesty and self-effacement. Nevertheless, it is the well from which we must drink in order to live the charism and bear its fruits.

This work attempts to rediscover, through expressions and brief confessions in her letters, the marvellous story of a soul and the way she maps out for those who, like herself, are lovers of God and are seeking holiness in their humble daily missionary life.



Chapter 1

The Call to Holiness

“Let all try to become saints” (126-2; 137-1)

Those whom God calls to live in communion with Him as followers of Anne Marie Javouhey, are also called to holiness and this is not optional. It is not enough for them to admire their foundress, sing her praises and rejoice that she is known, admired and celebrated by others. They have to take the pathway to holiness.

It is willed by God: “The Will of God is our sanctification,” writes St. Paul (1 Th 4:3).

Holiness and Today’s Church

The idea of holiness frightens a lot of Christians. It is all linked up with the thought of visions, niches and pedestals, extraordinary things that are beyond our reach. We read in the lives of some saints that they fasted from birth by refusing to breast feed on Fridays... something we never did! They were mystics even as teenagers...we never were! They performed miracles...that never happened to us!

Vatican Council II - God's great gift to the Church, according to the expression of John Paul II - reminded us that we are all created for holiness. "The Lord Jesus, divine teacher and model of all perfection, preached holiness of life (of which He is the author and maker) to each and everyone of His disciples, without distinction: 'You therefore must be perfect, your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt. 5: 48)..... It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love, and by this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society." (L.G. 40)

In the Old Testament God had affirmed, "Be holy, because I the Lord am holy" (Lv 19: 2).

The road to holiness is therefore the normal route for every baptized person. Of course there are different forms of sanctity, as diverse as people themselves, and in the history of the Church there is room both for a Therese of Lisieux of whom they wondered what could be said about her after her death, as well as for a Francis of Assisi, the stigmatic and wonder-worker who was canonized by public acclaim long before his death. Holiness must be desired; we must want to be saints. It is the greatest joy we can give to God. We must be open to all the graces that He offers because it is He who fashions His children's holiness.

*To strive after sanctity is not pride, it is quite simply doing
God's Will.*

Anne Marie Javouhey's desire for holiness

Sometimes calling it "**holiness**", at other times "**perfection**", or again "**the spirit of our holy state**", Anne Marie always wanted for herself and her daughters the wholeness of being which glorifies God and rejoices His fatherly heart.

It was this desire that gave her the strength to hold on in Sierra Leone where she was alone in charge of a hospital, in unimaginable conditions of deprivation: the sick had neither sheets nor mattresses; yellow fever was rampant. She was then forty-four years of age and she noted; ***“My God, give me faith, it will enlighten me with its divine light and lead me on the paths that you wish me to follow, it will be my strength in life’s tribulations...It is better to suffer in this life than to suffer without merit for eternity; this thought populated the deserts: it has made saints” (*75-1).*** This “thought that made saints” did not leave her and it gave her the strength and courage to hold on for five or six months...until she was stricken with yellow fever and forced to return first to Senegal, and then to France.

Later in May 1831, when she was 51 years of age and in Mana for her first experience of colonization, she wrote from Cayenne to her sister Marie-Joseph in Bailleul, ***“I am returning tomorrow to our beloved solitude (Mana). How I love the atmosphere and the solitude where it will be so easy to work at one’s perfection.” (220: 237-2).***

The years would pass but she would never lose this burning desire to be a saint. It should, according to herself, be a characteristic of a Sister of St. Joseph of Cluny. In fact, on her return to Paris, after the period “Mana 1” (1828-1831), she wrote to her sister Marie Therese on 12 December 1834: ***“I tell you often enough about the virtues needed by a sister of St. Joseph: “an ardent desire for her perfection...” (293-2; 313-2).*** In order to put this letter in its context, it should be known that at that time, postulants and novices went on the missions and completed their formation in distant countries under the supervision of superiors and older sisters. Consequently, it was concerning the formation of these novices and postulants in Martinique that Anne Marie reiterated the criteria for discernment. The first is **the ardent desire** for perfection (meaning holiness) and this characteristic, mentioned in first place, is stated as necessary! We must accept this word in its true meaning. This was Balthazar’s

daughter's conviction and she would keep it all her life.

In February 1836, when she was 56 years of age, she again spoke of sanctity for herself. She was in Mana for her second stay, this time for the liberation of the slaves. Availing of a short visit to Cayenne, she wrote to her sister Marie-Therese who was then Provincial Superior in Martinique. It was a business letter and she ended it thus: *“Good-bye my dear and well-beloved daughter, let us strive to acquire the spirit of our holy state (meaning holiness). Let us try to be saints if we do not wish to be reprovved for all eternity”* (339-7; 363-4).

Not only did Anne Marie desire holiness for herself, but she encouraged her daughters to do the same. On 22 February 1827, she wrote to Sr. Rosalie Michelot, a sister like all the others, someone who could be you or me: *“Come on my dear daughter, be courageous and let all of you strive to be saints”* (126-2; 137-1). She was then 47 years of age and it was the period of the great missionary expansion of the young congregation. But the foundress' wish for her daughters was not primarily the multiplication of activities and works. It was holiness in the first place, because it was the first condition to be an effective missionary. Also the words that she used to encourage her sisters to become saints are never commonplace. In a letter written in 1830 to Sister Marie-Therese in Martinique when speaking of the sisters, she said, *“I exhort them with all the fervour of my heart to work courageously to become perfect religious”* (202-11; 217-8). The vocabulary she uses is not vague. It expresses exactly what she is experiencing: a burning thirst to see her daughters walking on the road to holiness. She was then 50 years of age and her desire was far from weakening. It would remain ardent until her death. In 1834, it is the expression, *“let us work with all our strength”* (to reach perfection) that is used. (258-1; 275-1). Later, when she was 58 years of age, writing to Clotilde Javouhey, her niece, the superior in Limoux, she insisted that her daughters *“be good and holy religious”* (355-2;

381-1). A little later, when she was 64, she wrote to the sisters in the Marquises Islands, *“Avail of every circumstance where you could be of use in order to advance in the way of the saints”*. Here again her ardent desire for holiness is not diminished: you must avail of every circumstance, and not miss even one. In 1845, back in Paris after her second stay in Mana, she wrote to the sisters in Tahiti and the Marquises Islands. She enquired about Sister Josephine who could not stay in Mana because of the extreme poverty there, and added: *“Suffering has to be endured everywhere, it is the lot of the saints”* (513-5; 599-3). Here we have the same expression that she used in Sierra Leone in 1823. Twenty-two years later, she gave the same reason when encouraging her sisters who had been sent to the other end of the earth. In March 1847, writing to Sister Madeleine Collonge in Cayenne, she sent her best wishes to the sisters who were her companions in suffering and trials and reiterated: *“I beg them to be good and holy religious; herein is real happiness, the rest does not matter”* (642-3; 733-3). Anne Marie drew this wisdom from her experience and shared it with her friends. She was then 67 years of age and had recently confessed: *“I am old and cannot write any longer”*, (448; 532-2), but she recognised that her heart had not aged and her longing for sanctity remained the same as in her youth. Because in what concerns holiness, it is not we who do the work, it is God who makes us holy. We have only to welcome His work and have the desire to open our hearts - something Anne Marie never ceased to do for herself and her daughters, and that to the end. In 1848, three years before her death, she continued to insist that her daughters do everything possible to become holy religious and consequently, be happy (756-4; 850-2 and 769-9; 855-6).

But that was not enough. She exhorted the superiors to promote sanctity as she did. Here again, her letters are full of clear directives, showing the preoccupation she had with it all her life. When in 1824, Rosalie Javouhey, her sister, was leaving for Bourbon to resolve the crisis created by Sister Thais, the foundress gave recommenda-

tions concerning the sisters she had in her charge: ***“Make them good and holy religious, nothing else matters”*** (69-3; 80-2). Twenty years later in 1844, she recommended Sister Onesime Lefevre in Martinique: ***“Let us work to make holy religious: help them with your good advice to sanctify themselves in their work place, to do everything to please God, to make saints of their pupils”*** (470-7; 554-5). In April 1846, she went to Brest with the sisters who were leaving for the Antilles, and it was to the same Sister Onesime that she confided this thirst for holiness that she had: ***“We are happy, very happy. Heaven has granted our wishes. We still have a big task to do...you will help me with it, it is to strengthen our dear Congregation in the spirit and love of duty by working with all our strength to become holy religious... If you knew how great a desire I have to become a good religious”*** (588-6; 678-3). Once again we have to note her language. Firstly, she was experiencing some happiness so it was not when she was overcome with anguish that she thought of holiness. Besides, it was typical of this woman of 66 years of age who had already proved that she was a person of action and a daring missionary, to confess her burning desire for holiness. It was a priority for her. And the word she uses is *desire*, for it is not we who bring about our sanctification, it is God. As for us, we must want it ardently, humbly, all our life...and God our Father will give it to us. Evidently the sincere desire for holiness keeps us on the alert, open to certain renouncements, to sacrifice and to be courageous in daily life...this requires a particular formation. On 9 June 1847, she shared her heartfelt aspirations with Sister Rosalie in Bourbon: the Paris Novitiate was full, good mistresses were being prepared there, but the most important factor was that they be ***“holy and courageous sisters of St. Joseph”***, and to give them time to be trained, Anne Marie foresaw the closing of houses, if necessary. (657-3; 748-2).

And when the great missionary liked a place, her most ardent desire was that it would become ***“a nursery of saints”***. This is what she wanted to make of “her dear Mana”! (183-3; 204-3 and 202-9; 217-7).

The sadness of not being saints

Since the Foundress knew sisters who had “settled”, without any spiritual aim, it caused her great sadness when she had to talk about this. In August 1832, she was at the end of her first stay in Mana, and she shared with Sister Madeleine Collogne, her faithful friend, the disappointment she felt because of the lack of generosity in two of the sisters: *“Religious who really strive for perfection are very scarce,”* she observed, *“one in a hundred. This is a sad thought, but it is true”* (243-8; 259-5). A few months before, she confessed to the same suffering: *“Saints are needed,”* she wrote to her sister Marie Joseph residing in Bailleul, *“and they are scarce in this century that we are living in”* (237-4; 253-4). After returning to Mana, her sensitivity to the serious wound caused by tepidity made her write: *“The retreat, the solitude in which I have lived for the last six years have been for myself and the society the source of great benefits from Divine Providence who wants to save us. I have understood the vanity of the things of earth that do not lead us to our heavenly home... the monstrosity of a religious who has only a worldly spirit, who wants to please the world, who does not work at her perfection, who in fact has not the spirit of her state; oh, how she is to be pitied”* (255-3; 272-3). The word she employs and which does not belong to her usual vocabulary, shows how the lack of the desire for holiness appears to her to be a type of ugliness, a deformity, an anomaly. A normal religious desires to be holy and this is seen in her whole life. So Anne Marie felt herself responsible for keeping this flame alight in the whole congregation. But at times, the struggle against mediocrity cost her because she was reproached for being exacting. She who was so affectionate suffered as a result, and she confided this to Sister Raphael Montet, another of her companions from the beginning: *“Oh, my dear daughter, how many abuses we have to correct..... I am terribly afraid that God will reproach me for such weakness: we do not strive enough towards perfection!”* (579-2; 667-2).

Refounding Congregations

For decades the thirst for sanctity had disappeared in the Church. Congregations had set their ideals elsewhere and become stagnant because of this loss. Having been reawakened by the Council, religious life in general is today striving to return to the zeal, fervour and generosity of its origins. The expression “*to refound congregations*” is frequently used nowadays. That means something. There is much confusion though regarding going back to one’s roots, to produce today the fruits of the sanctity of the beginnings. Perhaps it would be more correct to say, “*One must be born again,*” reborn, like Nicodemus (John 3.3)

Today, the Spirit is inviting us again to this outburst of generosity that makes saints. But which sanctity? As already said above, the types of holiness are multiple. We are invited to live the holiness that Anne Marie Javouhey lived, that of her charism. It is this that we must now study in greater depth.

References

1 Anne Marie Javouhey's desire for holiness

* 75-1 220; 237-2 293-2; 313-2 339-7; 363-4.

2 She encourages her daughters

126-2; 137-1 202-11; 217-8 258-1; 275-1 355-2; 381-1

491-2; 576-1 513-5; 599-3 642-3; 733-3 756-4; 850-2

761-9; 855-6.

3 She invites the superiors to promote sanctity

69-3; 80-2 470-7; 554-5 588-6; 678-3 657-3; 784-2.

4 She dreams of making her dear Mana a nursery of saints

188-3; 204-3 202-9; 217-7

5 She suffers because of her daughters' mediocrity

237-4; 253-4 243-8; 259-5 255-3; 272-3 258-5; 275-3

339-7; 363-4; 579-2; 667-2.

6 She is the model

*15-2 506-1 ; 592-1.

PART I

The Mystical Way of Anne Marie Javouhey



Chapter 2

O Father, I am your Child

The hidden but vigorous root of Cluny spirituality

The charism, an original meeting with God

When the Spirit fashions a charism for the Church, through a founder or foundress, he lets him or her taste some particular aspect of God. He opens them up in a special way to the richness of God. Without excluding other divine qualities, it is the former that seduces and to which a response is given. This is the charism. For example the Benedictines, seized by God's majesty, respond by continual praise. St Francis of Assisi, overwhelmed by the stripping of Christ on the Cross, embraced lady Poverty. Mother Teresa, struck by the infinite love of God for each of His creatures, even the most useless, founded "centres for the dying".

The infinity of God cannot be exhausted by any human being, Institute or Congregation. But each is called to witness in a special way to some aspect of God's love, of his holiness, and this will be its form of sanctity.

If we are to enter into Anne Marie Javouhey's way of holiness, we must begin by asking her the question: "*Which mystery of God*

seduced you? Which aspect of the mystery of God touched you?" Then we can let ourselves be touched by this same mystery and engage on the pathway to holiness that God wishes for us.

At a very early age, the foundress was aware that the way of holiness by which God was leading her would be followed by a lot of other people, and that she would be, in some way, at the "head of the line". We have a very interesting text that goes back to April 1807. She was 28 years of age, and at last the long period of searching that she had gone through since her consecration to God in 1798, was at an end. The situation had become progressively clearer and she was now at the point of officially founding the Congregation. It was such an important time that she left Chalon to make a retreat in Dole under the direction of a Jesuit, Fr. d'Aubonne. And here is what she wrote in her retreat notes: ***"God created me...to glorify him by co-operating faithfully with the multiple graces that He had planned to shower on me, and to have Him glorified by a large number of people whom He seemed to have put under my leadership so that I may be an example for them, support them and help them to serve God as faithfully as possible"*** (*15-2). At the time she wrote this, there were only nine members in the Congregation, the four Javouhey sisters and five other young women. The expression used, "a big number of people", does not correspond to the reality of that time. So she must have had an intuition concerning the numerous sisters that God would call to follow her, and for whom she would become an example and support.

Almost forty years later, on 21 January 1845, the foundress who was then 65 years of age and had matured spiritually because of trials and consolations, wrote to Sister Madeleine Collonge in Cayenne: "May my example be the rule of your usual behaviour". Not only to her missionary companions in Guyana, but to each one of us down through the years, Anne Marie has been saying the same thing.

Who is God for Anne Marie?

He is somebody whom she has met. God, for her, is not a distant entity, a metaphysical idea, nor a religious or moral principle. He is a person who is alive, active and so near to her that she meets him daily, constantly. The word 'meets' can have two meanings: the ordinary superficial one that means "to come across" someone, the way we meet someone in the supermarket or the post office! But there is another, deeper meaning that comprises love, mutual respect, pleasant acquaintance. You can know somebody for ten years but never really get to know them until you have the opportunity for deep sharing, at a session perhaps, or a retreat, for example. Anne Marie met God in this second sense in a striking and deep way. We must savour some of the expressions that bear witness to this encounter.

In June 1938, she was in Mana. It was her second stay, and she was occupied with the liberation of the slaves. She had left France at the end of 1835 when the Congregation was going through a difficult time. In fact, Mgr. d'Hericourt had conceived the idea of becoming Superior General, which was contrary to the statutes, and to enforce this, he ordered the chapels in the Cluny, Paris, and Senlis communities to be closed. The Sisters suffered greatly. In French Guyana, the foundress got little news. Mail was slow. But God was her friend and her counsellor: *"How I long to have up-to-date news!" she wrote to her sister, Marie-Joseph Javouhey. "The last I heard was about dear Sister Bathilde's sickness and your fall from the coach! All this causes me suffering, but God consoles me by reminding me that he loves you and he knows well how to support you and give you all the consolation that you will need"* (358-4; 385-2). This last sentence reveals something of the friendship that the missionary in French Guyana had with God. She was not just a sentimental young girl; she was 58 years of age! She was alone and far away from home. Her sister's trial of being deprived of the Eucharist was upsetting her... It was to God that she spoke about her suffering and He

answered her. Her familiarity with this friend showed her how to respond. He inspired her with a thought that enlightened her and brought her peace, strength and courage. God also speaks to us in this way. He gives us an idea which was not in our mind before and which suddenly changes our whole way of thinking, our feelings and our desires. It is God himself who is talking to us. With her spiritual discernment, Anne Marie understood it and continued a little further on in the same letter: “...*I pray daily...* (for the Congregation). *I get a lot of pleasure out of speaking to God about it*” (358-5; 385-3).

Balthazar’s daughter was generally very reluctant to share her spiritual insights. She was very discreet about her mystical life. One really has to grasp at any reflections that she revealed in order to find out anything about her interior life. Indeed, she never theorised on the spiritual life, as did Teresa of Avila. She never told the Story of her Soul, as did Teresa of the Infant Jesus. But what she was living interiorly in the depths of her soul, shone out at the most unexpected times, in the middle of a business letter, a paragraph, a saying. The mistake would be to think of this as just an ordinary word that had no special meaning. Because Anne-Marie was not writing in a literary style, nor using words just to ‘sound nice’, she did not use words to impress. On the contrary, she did her utmost to express in words what she was experiencing. That is why we should be on the look out for these expressions; they are like windows into her “Interior Castle”. When she says, “*I enjoy talking to God about it*”, we must value this as the expression of a human experience, just as when we are in an atmosphere of solitude, we are “pleased” to meet someone with whom we can share.

Another text reveals for us the secret of this enriching, sanctifying relationship. It comes later in a letter dated September 1848. The foundress would soon be 69 years of age. She sent a hasty note to Sister Clotilde Javouhey, her niece, who was superior in Limoux. She

announced her forthcoming visit and ended by saying goodbye. But just as she was about to sign it, the marvellous experience she was having with God came to her mind and she added two lines that are precious for us because they reveal something of how she was living with the Other: ***“I am happy, I love God with my whole heart; he has given me so many proofs of his love!”*** (618-2; 858-1) - a confidence that must be cherished and analysed word by word. In 1848, Mgr. d’Hericourt’s persecution had not ended, even if things were made easier by the death, at the barricades, of Mgr. Affre, Mgr. d’Hericourt’s best friend and the executor of his sanctions on Paris. On the other hand, the February revolution threw the Congregation into a series of uncertainties. They wanted to take the French colonies back from us and wished us to leave Martinique. The foundress confessed: ***“The colonies are in a sad state”*** (761-1; 855-1). Anne Marie’s happiness, as expressed in the cited paragraph, was not due to any human success. It was a spiritual happiness and she herself clarified it: ***“I love God with my whole heart”***. “Heart” here has the biblical meaning of the word that we find in the “Schema Israel”: “Hear, O Israel... you must love the Lord your God with all your heart”. It is from the deep centre of the heart that feelings, wishes, and consent emerge. It characterises the person herself. But in this outreach of the whole person towards him who never leaves us, we never take the first step. It is only a response to the divine initiative, and she very rightly was aware of this: ***“He has given me so many proofs of his love”***. God’s love is never collective, it is personal and personalising, and she experienced being touched by this love of predilection. St. Paul also experienced this personal love of Jesus and he confessed: “He loved me and gave Himself up for me”. Each one of us is invited, as followers of Anne Marie and according to the great tradition of the Church, to feel ourselves personally loved by God, to discover this love in the concrete details of life, and to be happy and joyful because of this.

A God who is continually present

If prayer is the source of our meeting with God, then we can meet God all the time and everywhere, and the foundress continually experienced this. God was for her, as he is for us, “Emmanuel”, that is, “God with us”.

This great adventure of a life inhabited by God began during her adolescence. We know about her life in Chamblanc during the Revolution. The parish priest, Fr Rapin, had fled in March 1791. Nanette, who had reached the age of 11 the previous November, had just made her First Holy Communion. When the priest left, there was no longer any Mass, catechesis or confession in the parish. The spiritual vacuum was replaced by the faith of her parents who prayed the rosary and read the Word of God and the Imitation of Christ in their farm home.

Nanette reached adolescence with all the ardour of her temperament. Here is what is recorded in the Annals: “She was carried away by amusements, by the pleasure of dancing; she loved clothes, a taste that her father’s relative comfort and indulgence allowed her to enjoy. She never missed a village festival or family reunion, because, in spite of the misfortunes of the time, every short peaceful break was availed of for recreation and enjoyment”, and besides, “Anne was much sought after because of her joyful spirit, her vivacity, attractiveness, talkativeness, and out-going character.”

1794 marked the moment of complete change. Fr Ballanche, a missionary from Doubs, arrived secretly in the district to carry out a ministry by night that was as much needed as it was dangerous. He was 24 years of age. He had recently offered himself to God, with a group of colleagues, for a mission that could at any moment lead to martyrdom. Anne was 14. She discovered and was won over by the heroic witness to the faith of a person who loved God. She would

learn to pray in his school so that she also could meet this God who transforms.

She did indeed meet him, and in such an effective, ever-deepening way that as her hours of prayer became more prolonged, Mr Javouhey got more angry: "Lazy girl, you prefer prayer to work!" As for Nanette, she changed radically. She went less frequently to worldly festivals, and dedicated herself more and more to working with the outlawed priests and to teaching catechism. People in the village were very surprised: "That won't last," they said, but it did, and until her death. She, whom the Church calls Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey, was born! These blessed years, 1796-1798, is the first period of Anne's mystical life. There would be two more: the two "Manas".

Captivated by God's presence in prayer, she continued to be so at every moment and everywhere, because she gradually learned to pray continually. Besides, it was one of the rules of the spiritual life that she would hand on to her daughters. Now she met God in every happening, even the most insignificant: a visit that had to be postponed (815-2; 910-2); the mail that got lost or was delayed (218-1; 234-1,2), the lack of news, and contradictions of all kinds (220-1; 237-1); an unexpected Mass at a time when they had few (708-1; 799-1). God was everywhere. He was not a formula. He was a presence. We learn from Anne Marie's spiritual experience that God acts in three ways in our lives.

Sometimes, He takes the initiative and allows something to happen that either protects us or overwhelms us: *"Thank Divine Providence... The Lord Mayor has just given us fifty beds complete with mattresses, a hundred planks for shelves, as many tables and benches as we wanted, etc..."* (12-1; 12-1). This happened in 1806 when the young foundress was setting up her little community in Chalon.

Sometimes, God intervenes to shorten a trial because of our weakness: *“When looking at the sanctions imposed by the Republic, you can easily see that we were not consulted... if the good God had not protected the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, our lot would not have been so good”* (728-1; 821-1). This time it was in 1848. The old missionary was back in Paris, and she saw her work threatened by the attitude of indifference caused by the era of revolution.

Sometimes, he allows the wickedness of humans to prevail in order to purify us: *“Oh, if people returned to God with all their heart, everything would be all right, but pride does not want to humble itself. There is inexplicable anxiety: poverty in the midst of abundance. Total blindness is rampant, many people begin by saying: Only a God can get us out of this. Then they begin to think that...”* (730-1; 823-1).

And His Name is Father

Anne had a tender, special love for her father. To confirm this, you have only to read her letters and reflect for a while on the words and expressions she used when talking about Mr. Javouhey. *“He is the most loving of all fathers,”* she wrote (9-1; 9-1). She was so worried about his health that she would have given her own in exchange for his (15-1; 16-1). With ingenuous confidence she shared all her anxieties with him: worries about money, care of the pony, her wish to have rape seed or wheat grains from Turkey (*32b-1,2; 37-1,2). When writing this, she was 39 years of age, no longer a little girl. But she would always be a little girl at heart as far as her father was concerned since she knew his weakness for her. Had she not got every bit of jewellery and the adornments that she wanted from him when she was a teenager? Later, all during her painful search for God’s Will, and when in the eyes of the public and the down-to-earth villagers she gave the impression of being an unstable, over-excitable

young person, she knew that her father, in spite of the problem he had in understanding her call, and in spite of the shame and sadness he felt, simply could not abandon her as he had threatened to do.

During the special period from 1796-1798, the discovery she made of the Fatherhood of God, confirmed and surpassed in an infinite way that of Mr Javouhey. The God she had met was called “Father” and this discovery would remain with her all her life in its freshness and youthful splendour. Her filial heart was the hidden, vigorous source of all her spirituality. This would last all her life. This God who overwhelms us is *“The Father of everyone”* (715-1; 807-1). *“He will never abandon us for we are his children”* (229-11; 264-7). This is affirmed in a letter dated October 1831, written to Marie-Joseph Javouhey, her sister. Seventeen years later, in August 1848, when she was 68 and had accomplished all the outstanding work of her life, she wrote to Sister Madeleine Collonge, her companion through humiliations and struggles: *“He knows that we are his children”* (749-2; 843-2). This “He” is God, our Father! She drew this certainty from her own personal experience. *“I have seen from our own experience,”* she wrote in 1840, *“that he never abandons anyone in the hour of need”* (397-1; 440-1). This “from our own experience” is very important. Anne-Marie had never studied theology and she was not repeating a lesson learnt somewhere. She was living a deep filial relationship with God and it was from the depths of her experience that she was showing us which way to take.

In keeping with the language of her time, she used the word “Providence” a lot. But “Providence” is not a fourth Divine Person! Jesus Himself, in the Trinity, teaches us this: the Father watches with solicitude over the smallest things that happen to us. “Look at the birds of the air... your heavenly father feeds them! Are you not worth much more than they! If God clothes the grass of the fields, will He not do much more for you, people of little faith?” (Lk 12: 7) It was this existential and convincing discovery of the fatherhood of God

that would make of the foundress of Mana a prophetess of her time. In 1838, there was no lack of philosophers, even theologians, who expounded on the inequality of the races in order to justify slavery. Here is how this great liberator of the Blacks justified the opposite stance that she adopted against the teachings of that time: *"The Blacks are not deaf to the voice of morality, religion, or civilisation"*. The fundamental reason for her proclaiming so calmly an opinion that was so contrary to that of the great thinkers of the time, was as simple as her own spiritual discovery. *"Sons and daughters of a common father," she went on, "they are as we are."* (357-31; 384-15). That is the key! The root of the genius of this pioneer, the foundress of Mana, was her spiritual and mystical life.

When she spoke of God, it was never in the way that philosophers or theologians did, but rather in a biblical manner, that is to say, in colourful, human language. This God our father has arms into which we can throw ourselves. He has hands that lead and protect. In 1828, when she was 48 years of age, after mature reflection and a great deal of prayer, she made the decision to leave for Mana, for the first experience in colonisation. So she wrote to Rosalie Javouhey, her sister, the superior in Bourbon, and told her with childlike enthusiasm that *"she was going to place herself completely in the arms of God"* our father, because she realised that he is *"leading her by the hand"* (154-7; 171-7). The expression *"We are in God's hands and they are good hands"* (574-5; 663-2) occurs more than a dozen times in her letters.

God, our father, also has fingers that point in the direction of the right road to be followed. *"How could we not recognise God's finger in this matter?"* she asked Rosalie in this same letter of May 1828 (154-7; 171-7). All these concrete expressions reveal the concrete experience that she had become aware of in a conglomeration of favourable happenings, and it was the finger of God: to see difficulties being smoothed out, problems being solved, and all from God's kind hands,

in which we place ourselves. For the person who has met God in prayer, nothing ever happens just by chance. He truly presides over our life and holds its helm wisely and tenderly. So we must throw ourselves into his arms with trust and serenity. An important question may come to mind: Is it possible to have this confidence and peace when one has had a negative experience of one's earthly father? Yes, it is possible, because God heals and compensates.

References

1 Anne-Marie encountered God

618-2; 858-1 358-4,5; 385-2,3

2 She meets God in daily events

815-2; 910-2 218-1; 234-1,2 237-1; 799-1

3 She sees him in history

246-1; 262-1 726-1; 819-2 618-2; 858-1
748-2; 843-1,2

4 She meets him in the life of the Congregation

248-4; 264-2 250-1; 266-1

5 Because God is a Father

- filial attitude to Mr. Javouhey

3-2; 3-2 5-2; 5-2 9-1; 9-1
15-1; 16-1 *32b-1,2; 37-1.2

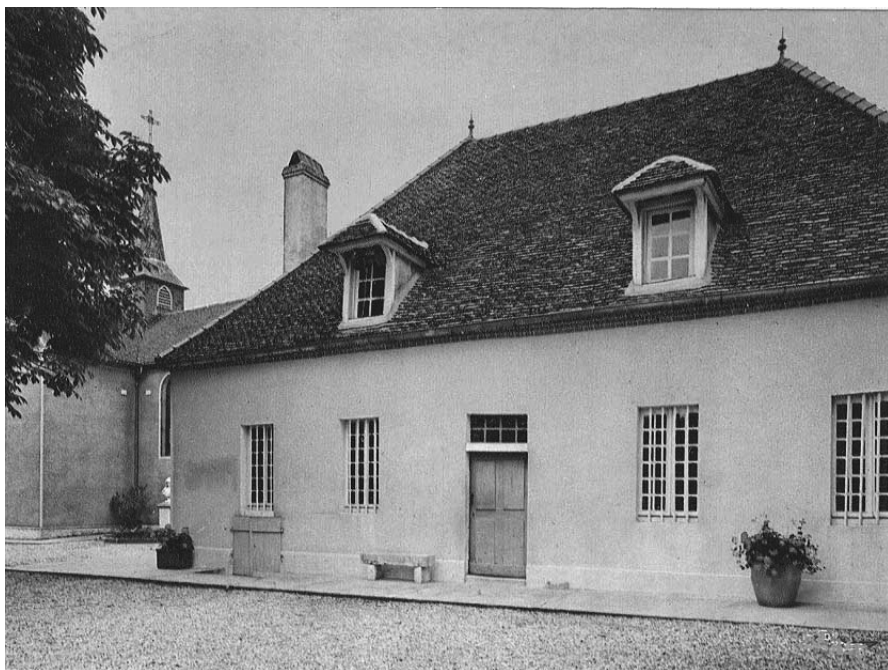
- the Father

715-1; 807-1	229-11; 246-7	397-1; 440-1
154-7; 171-7	574-5; 663-2;	17; 18
74-12; 84-8	204; 219	206-2; 222-2
319-3; 342-2	547; 636	556-4,5; 645-2,3

632-1; 724-1
1013 557; 646
1027-3; 1125-1
824-2,3; 919-2

660-2; 751
233-6; 249-4
860-3; 1083-2

921-3;
660-2; 751



Chapter 3

The Father's Heart

*To savour the Father's Heart in the light of
Anne Marie's life is a joyful experience.*

It is the heart of a friend

The surest friend is the one who knows all our needs and supplies them. At a very early age, Balthazar's daughter discovered this fatherly trait. It was in January 1806, when she was only 26 and in Chalon for the installation of the future community and its pupils. The resources were meagre and the children numerous... the Lord Mayor made a gift of enough beds, mattresses, tables, and benches! The young foundress was astounded: *"Thank Divine Providence who provides for all our needs"* (12-1; 12-1). Her experience of the fatherly presence of God continued in various ways, confirming what she had already discovered in her heart. In 1808, in Autun, she rejoiced: *"Divine Providence (meaning God, our Father), who is pleased to overwhelm us with his graces, has given us a chaplain who has all the qualities we could wish for..."* (22-2; 23-1). There, as elsewhere, although she already had children to care for, she began a foundation that entailed great expenses. This outstanding chaplain came to their help, even financially! The most wonderful experience of God's prodigality was to be in 1826 in Paris when all the new

French foundations were crying out for help and she did not have a cent. Confronted with this emergency, Balthazar's daughter did not know where to turn. Should she borrow? wait longer? She asked her "Friend" to enlighten her. The response came at the most unexpected moment. It came in abundance. Seven times money arrived unexpectedly. First of all, Senegal sent her a "fine packet"; then a "note" arrived from nowhere; then, one after another, Mr. Taboureau, Bourbon, Mr. de Vermont and St Pierre-et-Miquelon came to her aid. She was overwhelmed with gratitude and exclaimed: "**O Divine Providence, how admirable you are!**" Then she added: "**Oh! I forgot Martinique again!**" (117-1,2; 128-1,2) **God, our father had answered her seven times over!** What her friend did for her, he wants to do for each one of us!

God knows not just our needs for today but also those of the future and he responds by showering on us all that we need. He equips us well in advance; he prepares us. The foundress knew this because she had seen it. She had experienced it and she encouraged Sister Scholastica Delorme in Trinidad: "**You are needed for the success and prosperity of this house; God knows it since he has given you all that you require for it**" (*563-1). This letter dated 1844 confirmed 46 years of intimate relationship with God our father - that is, since she was about 17 years of age! This deep spiritual experience taught her ever more about the fidelity of God's heart and the wisdom of his decisions.

Four years later, the health of her beloved niece, Sister Clotilde Javouhey, caused her a lot of anxiety. She wrote to her: "**One worries more when at a distance and exaggerates the danger that dear ones are in**". This "one" is Anne-Marie herself. "**But,**" she continued, "**God, the father of us all, gives each of us what we need**" (715-1; 807-1). In the midst of her worries, Anne-Marie repeated what she already knew from experience: even sickness is a gift from God that we may be in need of. This truth is unceasingly

confirmed and if we have mistrusted such a faithful father, then the day we realise this, we will be broken-hearted. In 1850, in her 70th year, the daughter of the heavenly father revealed her wisdom: ***“Nothing happens without God’s permission and always for our good; we recognise this later, but we are ashamed not to have trusted him, who was doing everything for our greater success. If you only knew how my eyes have been opened to the truth!”*** she wrote to Madeleine Collonge, her companion and confidante during the difficult years in Cayenne. ***“We do not want to see the hand of God that is supporting us, guiding us. We revolt, we accuse creatures, who are only the instruments of God’s kindness to our dear Congregation which is called to do such great work, and we hinder it by our worries and resistance”*** (922-1; 1014-1). The quotation is a bit long, but it illustrates so clearly to what extent the foundress had experienced God’s loving heart!

What is certain is that God, our friend, will never abandon us. He will certainly intervene at the appointed time. We have several texts that highlight this trait of the heart of God. We generally interpret them by emphasising Anne Marie’s faith and her unshaken confidence. But faith and trust cannot exist if they are not rooted in a spiritual discovery. Like St Paul, she could have said: ***“I know in whom I have put my trust! God’s heart is faithful”*** - that was the experience of Balthazar’s daughter all her life. In June 1848, she wrote to Sister Onesime Lefevre in Martinique: ***“I realise that we could be worried.”*** In fact, times were bad, France had just suffered another revolution, and the lack of money was severely felt... but she added immediately: ***“But no, Providence is there”*** (meaning: God our father is there) ***“and we count on it because it has always come to our aid”*** (727-2; 820-1). He always comes to our help - that is the reality.

And here she was now at the end of her life. We are in January 1851, within a few months of her death. She was not well; she scarcely went out. But for God, she remained the little girl, abandoned into

the hands of the father: *"I trust in God, who has never left us in difficulty,"* she wrote to Sister Rosalie in Cluny (997-4; 1091-2). Anne Marie's God is a father who never abandons, who never will abandon. He is our best friend. So *"when we are penniless, we wait without worrying for God to send us some help!"* (499-4; 585-3).

He is also tenderness and mercy

He knows of what we are made. We can hand over to him all our miseries, our poverty, and our incompetence. In April 1850, the foundress was 70 years of age. She was weary and tired, but never complained. Her burden was heavy. She had had financial difficulties all her life and they were still with her. Besides, more and more Sisters were being requested for the colonies. They were leaving in groups of twenty-five to thirty (963-1; 1056-2 and 1002-3; 1096-2), but they had to be chosen, and replaced in France, often by novices and postulants. Those in the colonies did not fully realise the enormity of the task and the difficulties: *"The colonies think it is our fault if we do not give them more help,"* she confessed (921-3; 1013-2). It was a dark time. However, God, our father, understands that! We have simply to hand over to him our 'poor dark' times. ***"I place all my difficulties in God's hands and beg Him to have mercy on me!"*** Anne-Marie's God and father is full of compassion. He has compassion for us too, in our 'hard' times when we are crushed by life's burdens and trials. She had also experienced this and she knew that the all-merciful father is full of sweetness and tenderness. He becomes a mother, as Isaiah affirms: "Can a mother forget her baby? Even if she should forget, I will never forget you" (Is. 49, 15-16). He carries us until we are grey-haired and never wearies of us. (Is. 46,3) It was in Mana in 1838, that God became 'mother' for the former Nanette. Five hundred blacks, embittered and rebellious, had come from Cayenne to be trained in the ways of freedom. It was a danger-

ous mission that nobody wanted to be responsible for. Anne-Marie gave herself body and soul to these wounded children, but she was far from getting the support or even a neutral attitude from the local powers in French Guiana, who, nevertheless, trembled in the presence of this crowd of men who were capable of anything. The authorities (except the Governor) and the slave owners were the first to try to trap her and create obstacles. And God became ‘mother’: *“Oh God, how often I called on your help, when the perspiration was running down my forehead and my mind was tortured by anguish, and you lifted up my broken spirit. It is You, my God, who opened the ears of the powerful and the just to the voice of a humble girl who left her father’s cottage in clogs to fulfil the mission that you confided to her”* (357-25, 384-13). God does not expect us to be ‘Cornelian heroes’ or giants, in times of difficulties or trials. Not even sin blocks God’s tenderness. He does not despise us. He does not reject us. In July 1825, the foundress was 45 years of age. She had to lift the Bourbon Sisters’ morale that was low because of hatred and quarantine, since Sister Thais was being supported both by the Government and the clergy. This situation was at an end, but there remained bitterness, hurts, and probably bad feelings that one could not be proud of. And here is how Anne-Marie encouraged her daughters: *“Yes, my dear daughters, let us trust in God in spite of our sins. This confidence is based on our misery, our needs, and on the merits of our Saviour whose mercy is infinite”* (98-7; 107-7). One needs to have a deep knowledge of the merciful heart of God to be able to speak such language! To affirm that our trust is in proportion to our misery is daring. Our entitlements are precisely our sins!... with the merits of Jesus! The situation is completely reversed. When you have fallen, when you have sinned, you have a greater right and an extra reason to throw yourself into the Father’s arms!

He corrects us

God’s tenderness is not weakness. He does not let us wander or do

whatever we like. If he is the Father full of mercy, he is also the father-vinedresser, who trims the vine so that it may bear more fruit. He trims it as a connoisseur, stripping off exactly and precisely what is impairing it. Anne Marie experienced all this. She had her share of difficulties and the Holy Spirit taught her that this is how God's children grow for their greater good. So she does not fail to show us this aspect of God's face, insisting wisely that we should let him do the same for us.

When a new stage began or a new work was opened, the foundress expected that there would be difficulties. In 1834, she returned from her first stay in Mana. She found the Congregation in a satisfactory state. Now she had to go ahead with her plans to set up a house in Paris and a Training College for the young religious to be educated as teachers. On the other hand, she planned to set up a single novitiate in Senlis the advantage of which would be its proximity to Paris. But she already knew that God would not spare her the difficulties that would help her to grow and this is how she spoke about it to Fr Gondin, the parish priest of Chabeuil: *"If it is God's Will, everything will go fine, not without problems and contradictions, but provided we are responding to God's designs, the difficulties are nothing"* (282-2; 300-2).

Sometimes, the difficulties are not foreseen. They come to us at the most unexpected times. We must accept them in faith and see the powerful hand of God, who is correcting His children for their greater good. This is what the foundress did concerning the famous signature of 1835. At the end of the Chapter that allowed for the election of Councillors, Mgr. d'Hericourt, without any previous warning, made her sign a series of articles that conferred on him the role of Superior General of the Congregation. It was the beginning of twenty years of persecution. In 1839, Anne Marie, in Mana, blamed herself *"for having shown such weakness by signing what has caused so many problems; but God allowed it for the expiation of my*

sins and to give me the humility that I need so badly” (379-2; 413-2).

All is love and the eldest of the Javouhey daughters saw this so clearly that she wanted to love God “without measure”. She had been convinced of this at her profession retreat in April 1807, when she wrote in her notebook: *“After that, how could I put limits to my love? No, the measure of our love of God is to love him without measure” (*15-14). She abandoned herself to him in loving confidence (234-4; 250-2).*

References

1 He is our best friend

715-1; 807-1	22-2; 23-1	12-2; 12-1
117-1,2; 128-1,2	563?-1	499-4; 585-3
997-4; 1091-2	727-2; 820-1,4	723-2; 815-2
208-1; 221-1	227-3; 244-1	

2 He is tenderness and mercy

927-3; 1013-3	98-7; 107-7	315-1; 337-1
357-25; 384-13		

3 He corrects

282-2; 300-2;	379-2; 413-2
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4 The response is to love without measure

*15-14	5-1; 5-1
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5 Abandonment

234-5; 250-2



Chapter 4
All Powerful Father &
Master of All

To know the Father

There is a theory that every Sister of St Joseph of Cluny should make her own:

*"The more one knows God, the more one loves him;
The more one loves him, the less difficulty one has in
doing his Will".*

And the corollary of that is:

*"The less we know God, the less we love him;
The less we love him, the more difficult it is to do his Will".*

St Paul realised this when writing to the Corinthians: "None of the rulers of this world recognised it (the Wisdom of God); for if they had recognised it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." (1 Cor 2: 8).

This theory was evident in the life of the foundress. The 15-year old

Nannette, overwhelmed by the tenderness of God, still had a great deal to discover about this beloved Father. To the extent that her discoveries became more profound, it became more intolerable for her not to confide completely in him as she sought to accomplish his Will. This gradual growth in fervent love is seen in the vocabulary she used. In 1832, she declared that it would be **ingratitude** not to abandon oneself to God (234-5; 250-2). The word used in 1838 is stronger: *“we would be guilty if we did not have complete trust”* (358-7; 385-4). In 1842, this became an insult to God to derogate in the least from what appears to be His Will (422-6; 486-3). Then in 1850, it was a **crime** to doubt! (937-2; 1030-2). We too are invited to grow in the discovery of God’s beauty, his love and his power, so that it becomes impossible for us not to accomplish his Will perfectly, even when it surpasses our weak capacities.

The Master of the Impossible

Anne-Marie experienced the power of God and marvelled unceasingly at it: nothing was impossible to him!

First of all, he has an unfathomable imagination. He is a marvellous father, never short of ideas. In a complicated, senseless situation, he uses the most unexpected means to complete a project. The young foundress became aware of this very early. At the beginning of 1804, she was just 24 years of age and in Choisey, because God’s Will, through the intermediary of Dom de Lestrang, had sent her there. But she had a heavy heart because of the rejection and suffering she was causing her father, who did not understand. Then, when she least expected it, her brother Peter appeared. He was deputising for Mr. Javouhey, who could not bear turning his back on his daughter... And Anne Marie jumped for joy. God our Father had brought about what she never expected. *“I marvelled at Divine Providence when I saw how it settles things contrary to all hope,”* she wrote to her

father, and she added jokingly: *“I think you would do the same!”* (9-2; 9-2). Later, with regard to the Bourbon affair, she wrote to her sister Rosalie: *“You know as well as I do that **everything is good in God’s hands for the carrying out of His adorable designs**”* (74-13; 84-8). Everything is good in God’s hands: that is the satisfactory conclusion that she drew from her missionary experience!

Thanks to a letter written in 1848 to Rosalie Javouhey, then in Cluny, we get a concrete example of how God let her discover who He is and how He works: *“The last two words of my sister Marie-Therese’s letter made me think that God often uses things that to us appear indifferent and annoying, to lead us according to his plan. I feel very eager to pursue your idea, which seems to me to come from God”* (684-1; 775-1).

She discovered God’s fertile imagination in her life, in her experiences, and as a result her convictions were stronger and more lasting. These two words of a letter opened her eyes. On 9 September 1850, Mother Javouhey would be 71 years of age. She was at the end of a very full, successful life, but her child-like soul that marvelled before the splendour of our heavenly father had not changed. She asserted jubilantly: *“I am delighted with the visit of the General and the Prefect: all is being used by Providence to carry out his designs!”* (955-3; 1047-2). Her admiration for God our Father is strikingly evident again, when a little later, the doings of Mgr. d’Hericourt, who had as his goal the destruction of the Congregation, actually helped to consolidate it and have it officially recognised by the Paris Institute. *“All our friends admire God’s goodness for having fixed up everything; He used our enemies to let us do his Will!”* (1003-1; 1097-1).

He draws good from evil

Being practical and down to earth, Balthazar’s daughter followed up

attentively everything that happened. All was seen and recognised as “traits of genius” of the beloved Father. *“But if God is for us, who can be against us,” she wrote to Mother Rosalie Javouhey in January 1846. “He has sent us his angel, (Fr Chatenay). He will guide us along this difficult road. This is a trait of Providence that dazzles them”* (563-1; 650-1). She spontaneously changed the expression “traits of genius” to “traits of Providence”, and that said a lot about her sentiments of admiration and gratitude for “Him who never abandons anyone”. The genius of the beloved Father is evident again in the way that the manipulations of those who wanted to suppress recruitment into the Congregation were foiled. Mgr. d’Hericourt, making use of Fr Cucherat, tried to empty the novitiate... It ended in the novitiate being withdrawn from Cluny... The help of the Bishop of Beauvais and of the Apostolic Delegate was enlisted. The persecuted foundress wrote to a Sister on December 30th 1845: *“...God laughs at men’s plans. How well he knows how to upset them so that his Will may be accomplished and his work done.”* (557; 646). A short time before, when the situation seemed to be at an impasse, she wrote to Fr. Oudry, as she knew the tenderness and power of her heavenly Father: *“He uses the cane that our enemies meant for us, to pour balm on our bleeding wounds and restore the calm they had sworn to take from us.”* (522-1; 609-1). In the midst of this torment, the mature, responsible woman of 65 years was still a child. She knew her Father and what to expect from him. Much later, less than a year before her death, she spoke again of the all-powerful Father: *“The bishop of Autun uses all the dignitaries to achieve his goal, but all the powers of the earth can do nothing against God... We see a series of circumstances that we do not understand and God allows this for the accomplishment of His work”* (971-2; 1064-2).

The Father draws good from evil and the temporary failures in life prepare for ultimate success. Even sin loses its complete negativity to become an opportunity for grace and humility. In 1826, Sister Bathilde Laparre, a young, very intelligent and well educated Sister,

was sent home from Bourbon because she had become unbearable. The foundress received her very kindly and wrote to Sister Rosalie: *“I think God has allowed (Sister Bathilde’s sins) for a greater good. I told you not to make too much of her because she was not grounded in humility, and besides, she is so young. It is due to our fallen nature. She weeps because of the pain she has caused you and I think she will repent of this for a long time, but I repeat, it is God who wanted it thus; be assured that it will have only good results!”* (112-1; 122-1)

Nothing can stop Him

When God undertakes something, he does marvels and nothing can stop him. Anne-Marie knew that now. In the darkest hours, she repeated it to the others to give them courage: *When the hour of Providence strikes, everything will proceed effortlessly in spite of our enemies’ bad will... God’s work will continue towards its goal without ever regressing”* (435-10; 502-6). These encouraging words were addressed to Sister Marie-Joseph who had the whole burden of the houses in France, whilst the liberator of the slaves was working in Mana. We are in June 1842 and Mgr d’Hericourt’s persecution of the Congregation was in full force.

A few years afterwards, the same attribute of God was highlighted, and this time it was not to encourage when all was going wrong, but to emphasize what he was doing. *“I admire the designs of Divine Providence; how it makes fun of men’s plans! Its hour comes, it goes forward; nothing stands in its way”* (667-5; 752-3). Throughout her life the country girl from Chamblanc remained a fervent admirer of her Father and of the way he acted. She knew from experience that God has his hour. This means that there can be entire periods of chaos when nothing goes right, where no progress is made, where everything seems to be stagnant, even failing. And then God’s

hour strikes, everything gets moving, and this time obstacles just disappear one by one; this wisdom should enlighten our lives too!

Neither do our limitations and our feeble means stop God. *“He helps us,”* affirmed Anne Marie, *“and our weak efforts bring about great results”* (422-6; 486-3). The impossible becomes a reality: *“We are installed in our big provincial house, to the great astonishment of all who know how simple and how persecuted we are. It is a real miracle to have the approbation from the Archbishop of Paris when it was refused for twenty years in order to please Autun. All that was according to God’s designs, we must adore them.”* (872-2; 966-1)

In admiration and wonder, and filled with gratitude as the daughter of a well-loved Father, she often repeated: *“His arm is not shortened”* (234-5; 250-2). This expression comes from the Bible where it occurs three times: Is 50: 2b; Nb 11: 23; Is. 59:1. Each time it underlines the unexpected intervention of God, to whom nothing is impossible.

The Great Artist

Let us now consider another trait of the Father’s face which the valiant missionary admired. He is a great artist, full of imagination, as depicted in French Guiana’s abundant natural vegetation. The country girl from Burgundy could not be insensitive to the beauty of nature: *“How I admire the beautiful works of Providence! If you could only see the quantity of banana trees, how lovely they are with their bunches of fruit weighing up to 50 lbs. One stalk yields three, sometimes five crops a year, and we have more than four thousand trees giving us fruit. It is the manna of the desert, the fruit of the earthly paradise. It is here that Providence displays her riches and her gifts to her children.”* (246-5). This letter, written from Mana

on 30 October 1831 to Sister Marie-Joseph, reminded them both of the happy time when, armed with a small basket of provisions, they would set off across the fields to teach catechism to the children in Seurre, Jallanges, and the surrounding villages. Anne Javouhey was an enthusiast, from the Greek ‘enthousiasmos’ - full of God, passionate for God, overwhelmed with admiration for Him!

To do His Work

So she was happy to have been called by the father to work in his vineyard, to build his house. But he, not she, was the master of the work. ***“He has chosen us ... He preferred us to a countless number of great and powerful people to accomplish His designs,”*** she wrote to her father in January 1808 (20; 21-2). She was 28 years of age and already the concept of **God’s work** and the role she had to play was maturing in her. This concept would continue to become clearer, deeper and more developed. Almost 40 years later, in June 1847, she wrote to her sister in Madagascar: ***“Just think!, He has chosen us, poor country girls, for such a beautiful mission! It is his work and he will give us the grace to succeed”*** (655-1; 746-1). All her life, the Burgundian girl felt herself pursued by God to do “his work”. How many times did she write: “It is God’s work, it is not my work!” She knew the freedom and joy that we experience when we work at something that is beyond us, which will surely succeed and for which we do not have the final responsibility.

She was not working FOR God, she was doing GOD’S WORK. He is the instigator, the Master of the work. It is he who intervenes at the right moment when things are at a standstill, and it is He who brings the project to a successful issue. In August 1835, when leaving Paris to go back to Mana for the difficult task of the liberation of the slaves, she wrote to Marie-Therese, her sister, then in Martinique: ***“I am only an instrument that God in his kindness has deigned to use”*** (322-

8; 344-8). The word “instrument” denotes that everything came from above - the project, the global vision, the energy. She was only the instrument that a hand as powerful as it was skillful was using. But she was also aware that the “**instrument**” is intelligent and free, capable of accepting with docility to be used, or of refusing and becoming sterile. In order that God can act freely and give “without measure” what is measureless, we must be open and submissive.

But this does not take away our responsibilities. With great sensitivity and tenderness, God gives us the space to use the talents that we have received from him: “*I count on the one who is using me to support me*”, she wrote in 1845, and a little later, in 1847, to a Sister: “*It is his work, he will give us the grace to succeed. Let us be humble and modest, always united with God; let us not do anything without him. May he be always present to our thoughts*” (655-1; 746-1). It is very clear in this passage that it is God who is in control of the work. It is his work; he will make it succeed. And at the same time, there are implications concerning the instruments that we are: to remain humble and modest, always united to him, and not do anything without him.

When you analyse, one after another, the texts that Anne-Marie wrote about God’s work, you discover a very rich and exceedingly useful doctrine. **God for his part** is the real founder of the work. He upholds it, he defends it, he gives it all that is necessary, and he perfects it himself. He blesses it. He has no need of us to make it succeed. **On our part**, it is an honour and a joy to be used for it. We have to put our whole heart into it to bring it to perfection. The well-beloved father will give us the grace to succeed... and when our involvement in it is too heavy for our shoulders, “*he does the work in our place*” (1005-3; 1100-2). But this requires that we sacrifice our self-love, and above all, not claim the glory of its success. On the other hand, our sins are obstacles to the carrying out of God’s work and our anxiety and our resistance hinder its progress. God’s affirma-

tion is the unexpected success in spite of all the difficulties and the poverty of the agents chosen.

Three important texts, among many others that cannot be quoted here, show how important this aspect of “God’s work” is in Anne-Marie Javouhey’s spirituality. It was 1837, during her second stay in Mana, and all Cayenne was against her. She wrote to Baron Roger, a lawyer who was governor in Senegal from 1822-1826, and who had become her friend and counsellor: ***“Can you not see the hand of God in the business that is worrying me just now? It looks as if everything is geared to make it fail... I am at peace about the outcome of this important work; it will not progress any the less towards its goal, without help, without soldiers, and I hope that in four or five months, we will be self-sufficient...”*** (357-1,2; 376-1). In 1845, it was to Sister Rosalie in Cluny that she was writing. This time it was about the Congregation, its statutes, its survival, because the bishop of Autun was particularly bent on becoming the Superior General at any cost... including its destruction. ***“The Congregation will come shining out of this confrontation,”*** affirmed the foundress. ***“You cannot but see that it is God’s work because they recognise that the instrument he used is one of the most miserable and guilty that could be found on earth. On the other hand, the Bishop and the Prefect have confessed that all they had contributed was persecution in order to hinder and destroy it, and had attained nothing... except to see this astonishing work progress”*** (*620-1). On 25 November 1850, a few months before her death, she wrote to Madeleine Collonge, her faithful companion in all the struggles and humiliations: ***“You will be delighted to hear that heaven is overwhelming us with its blessings. The Cluny Novitiate is going to be transferred to Paris and Cluny will continue to house the postulancy and a boarding school. Great God, what a change! He alone could work this miracle. Men agitated in vain. God alone carries out his work. He uses the instrument that he wants; all is good in his hands. Who could ever doubt again that it is God’s***

work?” (977-1; 1070-1,2). Now, the dispute with Mgr. d’Hericourt was precisely about keeping the one novitiate in Cluny! The foundress’ exclamation “Great God, what a change!” can be understood.

And if we ask: “*What finally was God’s work?*”, we come back to what God asked her to do: to catechise children, the mission in general, a Cluny presence in Africa, the different missions and foundations, the Congregation itself. In other words, all that God asked her to do from the most trivial to the most important. For us also, our different obediences are likewise “God’s work” to which Anne-Marie’s entire doctrine can be applied.

References

1 Nothing is impossible to him

a) He has a limitless imagination

9-2; 9-2	684-1; 775-1	74-13; 84-8
103-2; 1097-1	563-1; 650-1	557; 646
522-1; 609-1	971-2; 1064-2	

b) He works wonders

435-10; 502-6	667-5; 752-3	872-2; 966-1
570-3; 659-2	234-5; 250-2	

2 Anne-Marie's admiration

106-2; 116-2	278-4; 296-2	229-7; 246-5
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3 A Father who is always at work

a) God's plan

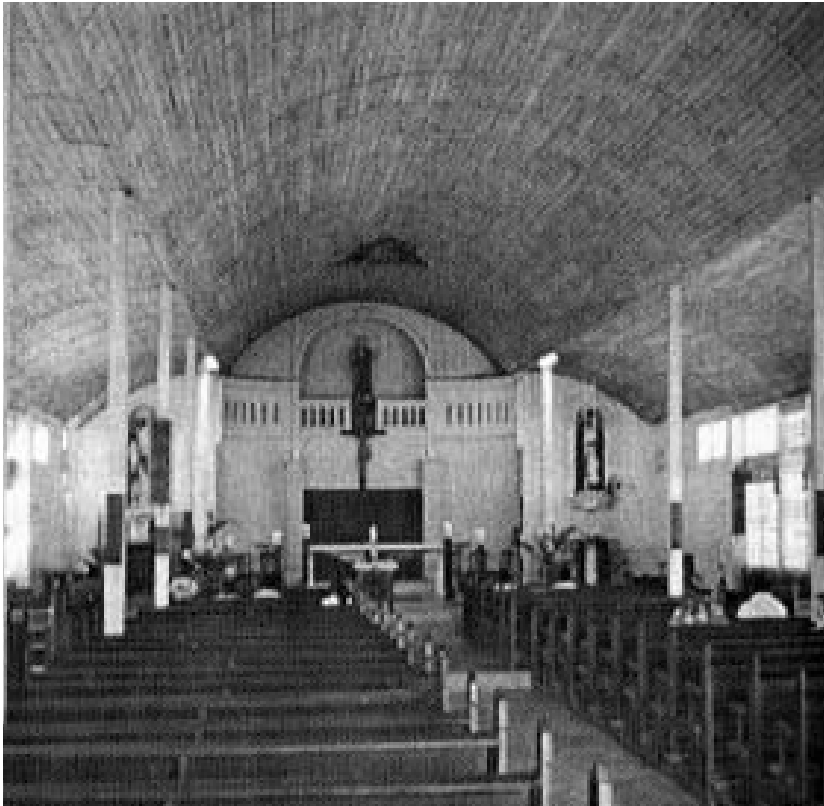
20; 21-2	655-1; 746-1	107-5; 117-3
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b) God's work

322-8; 344-8	522-1; 609-1	655-1; 746-1
1005-2; 1100-2	89-1; 98-1	87-10; 96-8
234-5; 250-2	320-6; 343-4	313-7; 335-4
384-1; 423-1	489-1; 574-1	522-1; 609-1
*620-1,2	535-4; 623-3	629-1; 721-1
653-1; 744-1	655-1; 746-1	657-2; 748-1
837-2; 932-1	922-1; 1014-1	937-2; 1031-2
973-3; 1066-2		

c) It is a success

977-1; 1070-1,2	*620-1.
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Chapter 5

Here I Am,

I Come to do Your Will

The budding rose that does not pass unnoticed

To do God's Will is the motto that "identifies" Anne-Marie Javouhey. But before going deeper into what that means in her spirituality, let us begin by asking the question: "Is it her motto or is it that of the Trappists?" We know for a fact that Dom de Lestrangle also had this motto. His monastery was called: "The Monastery of the Holy Will of God" and when the young foundress organised community life in Souvans, her spiritual director gave her the "Office of the Holy Will of God" for daily recital. All this is so striking that it is sometimes denied that Anne-Marie spontaneously discovered this motto. It could have come to her from outside, from her spiritual director. However, the anxiety to do God's Holy Will, the desire to do it, the devotion she had for it, appeared in a significant way **in her letters** before her meeting with Dom de Lestrangle. In a letter from Chamblanc, dated 1799, when Anne was 20 years of age, she wrote

to her father: *“All my desires are to do your will, but you are too religious to want it to be anything contrary to God’s Will”* and in the same letter, a little further on: *“A spouse of Jesus Christ should be occupied only with pleasing him, she should have no other desire or thought but to do his Holy Will”* (2-1; 2-1,2). Anne-Marie had just made her act of consecration to God at this time. Mr. Javouhey had assisted at the consecration in a state of great emotion, but, for him, it was something of the nature of a First Holy Communion or a Confirmation, so that, after the celebration, life would go on as before. That was why he decided to send his daughter to the farm in Pluvot to take charge of the work being done by a squad of workmen. As for Anne, her consecration had changed her life. She was no longer mistress of it. It was then that the expression “the Holy Will of God” appeared. And it was not just an ordinary word since it clashed with Mr Javouhey’s wishes and changed her daily schedule.

In 1800, we see her in Besançon for a first trial in the religious life with Jeanne-Antide Thouret. In a letter written to her father, the expression “The Holy Will of God” appears twice, and full of deep significance: *“We must put all our happiness into getting to know God’s Will”*, and in this atmosphere of prayer and silence in which she finds herself, she believes she knows it better than ever (4-1; 4-1.2). So it was not a stereotyped formula, written in a mechanical way. Then, in a letter to her father, dated 14 February 1802, Anne uses the expression four times. As yet, she had not met Dom de Lestrang, so this expression highlighted a special attraction that she had very much at heart. (5-1; 5-1,2).

The meeting with Dom de Lestrang, who had the same motto, only provided the confirmation and approval that she needed. We can say that the expression “The Holy Will of God” was her own spiritual discovery.

To Respond to Love

It is because Anne Marie had met God our Father and was living in intimacy with him that she adopted this motto as her principle of activity. We must link together two passages which appear in letters written 42 years apart! The first to her father in 1802: *“Why would you want me to put limits to my love, when He puts none to his graces?”* (5-1; 5-1). Thus spoke the young girl of twenty-two. Later, the mature woman of 64 years would write: *“Let us put no limit to our submission (to God’s Will) (470-7; 554-5).* It was because she experienced and remembered the inexhaustible graces of God that she wanted to respond by submitting to his Holy Will, and the very thought of displeasing him caused her pain.

In 1837, the foundress was in Mana for her second stay. Marie-Therese, her sister, then superior in Martinique, came to join her. She was writing to Rosalie in Bourbon and she dreamed that their young sister could also come to complete their meeting: *“My dear Mother from Martinique is with us for the past month. What a consolation it would be if it were possible to see you here one day. Let us get rid of this too flattering thought, it might not be pleasing to God, who has separated us on earth in order to unite us forever with him in Heaven”* (349-2; 374-2).

This heartfelt sentiment is a recurring theme in the life of Fr. Ballanche’s fervent disciple. When you examine the mystical life of other saints, you often find various spiritual themes. In Therese of Lisieux, for example, the theme at the beginning of her life was: “The Infant Jesus”. Later, it was “The Holy Face”, and this was so deep that she asked to have it included in her name. In Grignon de Montfort, the spiritual themes that caused him to act were more numerous still... It was not so with Anne-Marie. She had only one source of inspiration. The theme of God’s Will was born of the mystical experience she had between 1796 and 1798, at Chamblanc. It appeared

very strikingly in 1799 and lasted until her death. It was this ardent desire to do God's Will that gave meaning to her whole life: her enthusiasm, the sacrifices she willingly accepted, her daring undertakings and periods of waiting, her tenacity, and her very life-breath. This was also the powerful impetus for her mission. Let us take note that this clinging to God's Will is the same as that of Jesus. He lived "turned towards the father" (Jn 1.1) and was nourished by his father's Will to carry out his work (Jn 4.34).

A Short Exegesis

When you examine the religious vocabulary used by Balthazar's daughter, the most frequent word is "God". This word generally designates God our Father, because it is his attributes that are mentioned: Providence, Lord of history and of plans... Four times the word "God" designates the Real Presence. This confirms for us a trait of her spirituality: to be with Jesus, turned towards the Father, ever present to him, is everything. We have to determine her communion with Jesus first of all from theology and from Jesus' own words: "No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt 11: 27b). Then, we have about ten expressions such as "spouse of Jesus Christ" which she used at important stages in her life and which denote a deep intimate relationship with Jesus. Indeed there is a book "that she cherished", the book of the Passion (646-2; 737-1). But we will come back to that later.

God's Will, the greatest good

Strengthened by her experience of God, the foundress speaks often about his Will. The expression occurs 339 times in her letters! An analysis of the texts gives us a real theology of God's Will. It is

essentially the most precious good. In fact, God is at the same time the one who loves us and the one who is never deceived. He knows us better than we do ourselves. He knows “yesterday, today and tomorrow”, that means our past, much of which we have forgotten, the present that we analyse badly, and the future that we know nothing about. It is therefore true wisdom to trust in him, and to enter into his Will is a very precious grace.

To do God’s Will is always a grace, an opportunity, and not a misfortune. Popular spirituality has often interpreted God’s “Will” as “misfortune”. In everyday conversation, we associate this expression of faith with calamities that befall us. If there is a devastating cyclone - It is God’s Will! A disaster that ruins families - It is God’s Will!... and so on. This creates a very negative attitude among Christians with regard to God’s Will; we are afraid of it; we are tempted to reject it. There is no such thing with Anne-Marie. God’s Will? It is the opportunity of our life to be grasped with our last ounce of energy. In 1845, when she was in Alençon, she wrote to her secretary in Paris: *“Things are going according to God’s Will (that means well!). To do God’s Will is the most ardent wish of my heart; in my daily prayer, I ask for no other grace”* (515-1; 602-1). In April 1831, she was 51 years of age, and in Cayenne. It was her first stay in Guyana. In a letter to her sister, Marie-Joseph, she wrote: *“Everything is going well here. I hope that Heaven will carry out its work and give us the grace to do God’s Holy Will”* (218; 234-2).

This grace is to be desired for everyone, especially for the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny. In 1835, between her two stays in Mana, she wrote from Paris to the superior in Cluny: *“Very kindest regards to dear Mother Nonin, to all the ladies in the hospital, all our dear novices, and all our dear daughters. I wish them all to be profoundly humble and have the grace to do in all things God’s Will”* (335-6; 359-3). She wishes the grace of “God’s Holy Will” as much to dear Mother Nonin as to the ladies, the novices and the sisters!

For from this fundamental grace flow numerous other graces. First of all, there is the joy of being able to do much good because God Himself will accomplish his work, of which we are only the instruments. And Anne-Marie realised that it was really so: ***“How happy we are to be able to do so much good”***, she wrote from Sierra Leone to the Sisters in Senegal. ***“How I love my state; I thank God for having called me...(63-4; 72-4)***. Each one of us can humbly say the same. God’s Will has enabled us to do things we never imagined we could do. It has made us give service we never thought we were capable of giving!

Then, it was the success of the missionary enterprise. The Burgundian girl, who had no formation in theology, could never equate God’s Will with failure. Since it was God’s Will, it would succeed! That was her very positive concept, always proved right by experience. And it was with this assurance that she wrote to Fr. Gondin on 5 October 1834: ***“If it is God’s Will, all will go well...”*** (282-2; 300-2). And here she was referring to the very complicated plan for the purchase of the Senlis house and the transfer of the Cluny and Bailleul novitiates, where the lease had been terminated. The conviction that God’s Will and success are the same thing was so deep that the opposite was also true. When there was success, it could be said in all truth: “It was God’s Will”. In 1839, during her second stay in Mana she wrote to Sister Rosalie in Bourbon: ***“The establishment is improving every day; the blacks are getting used to work, to religion and good morals, to such an extent that we are hoping for complete success... I am very happy; I think I am sure of doing God’s Holy Will”*** (372-3; 402-2,3).

Difficulties were certainly not lacking, but they would not cause the project to fail. In 1835, right in the middle of preparations for the project “Mana II”, she wrote to her sister Rosalie in Bourbon: ***“I have plans that appear to come from God, since He is making a success of them, in spite of all opposition, contradictions, and against all***

hope...(328-1; 351-1). In fact, to go the way of God's Will is to be sure to hold the best cards, the trumps, and to win! And you also win happiness! ***"I am at peace and happy because I know that I am doing God's Holy Will,"*** (234-5; 250-2), she wrote to Sister Clotilde Javouhey. Finding happiness in doing God's Will is fundamental for the one whom God our Father has allowed to savour His tenderness. She often repeated, ***"I am happy, I am doing God's Will"***, or again, ***"You are never unhappy when you do God's Holy Will"*** (350-6; 375-3), she wrote to Marie-Therese Javouhey from Cayenne in July 1835. She was 57 years of age and was speaking from experience. Her conviction is so strong that here also she declares with certainty the connection between the two; happiness and consolation are signs that you are doing God's Will. In 1832, Sister Marie-Joseph, anxious to get her elder sister back to Paris, proposed that Sister Marie-Therese Javouhey should replace her in Mana. The reply was unexpected: ***"Leave my dear Mother in Martinique; do you not see that Providence has placed her there for your and my consolation; she is doing God's Will"*** (237-3; 253-3).

Finally, seeking God's Will clarifies one's judgment. The person who is not seeking self-satisfaction but what God wants, judges reality differently. ***"Those who seek only God's Will do not see things in the same light as those who want help from creatures and human satisfaction"*** (244-3; 260-3).

References

1. Anne-Marie's response

5-1; 5-1 470-7; 554-5

2. God's Will, our most precious good

a) an opportunity

515-1; 602-1 218; 234-2 335-3; 359-3

b) Other graces that ensue

63-4; 72-4	54-1; 62-1	372; 402-2,3
169-1; 185-1	328-1; 351-1	321-3,4; 345-2
282-2; 300-2	341-1,2; 365-1	234-4,5; 250-2
235-1; 251-1	237-3; 253-3	879-2; 972-1
686; 777-1	244-3; 260-3	



Chapter 6

To Know God's Will

Since doing God's Will is the most precious grace in the spiritual and missionary life, it is important to know it, and God our Father always makes it known to us. The whole Bible is sure of this. God says: *"I have not spoken in secret, in a dark corner of the earth. I did not say to the offspring of Jacob: Seek me in chaos!"* (Is. 45:19). Anne-Marie is sure of this too. On 9 September 1835, when the crisis in Autun was beginning and she was about to embark for Guyana, she wrote to Fr Gondin, parish priest of Chabeuil, and a friend of long standing: *"I will be away for eighteen months; nothing can be changed during this time. I am leaving everything in good order; God will make his Holy Will known concerning his work"* (325-4; 348-2). She was then 56 and had experienced the ways of God in her life. She knew that we are never abandoned or left in darkness! God always pointed out the way to be followed. At about the same time, in December 1835, it is Sister Clotilde that she addressed. This much-loved, timid niece felt lost when she saw the foundress leaving France again, just as the storm was about to break in the diocese of Autun. *"My dear Mother from Martinique will be arriving soon to help us to get out of the mess that the abuse of power in the last Council got us into," she wrote. "Be assured that*

God will make his Will known and will uphold his work” (334-2; 358-2). God speaks. God speaks to us. We must be attentive. That is the message from the one who had struggled so much that God’s Will might be done. This certainty would be with her all her life. In February 1850, a year and a half before she returned to the Father, she encouraged Sister Mathilde Perrier by saying to her: ***“Come on, do not lose courage. God will enlighten us and we will do his Will”*** (879-2; 972-1). You must be sure that God will speak. This opens our eyes and our ears to see the signs that he will give us and to hear his calls. For the Foundress it was a question of ***“seeing the finger of God and letting oneself be led by his hand”***.

The question then arises: How do you find out God’s Will? How do you discern it? Before answering this question, we have to clarify a few points. In a general sense, God’s Will is found in Scripture: ***“God wishes all to be saved”*** (1 Tim. 4.4). So everything that restores the dignity of human beings, their spiritual, physical, and moral integrity, is God’s Will. Jesus, as the Gospel teaches us, dedicated Himself to this restoring, even to the giving of his life. But this general Will is ratified by individual wills. How do I collaborate in this total restoring of the human person? It is a question of discernment.

Anne Marie’s letters give us a set of means to attain it; she used them herself and recommended that we do likewise. These means are, in one sense, to be taken together as a whole, and not isolated one from the other, and yet, we have to deal with them individually, keeping constantly in mind that they are an entity and not to be put into watertight compartments.

God’s Will and Events

We would say that, in general, God’s Will is manifested first of all in events, and the foundress, good, common-sense woman that she was,

affirmed this: *“We must try to submit to compelling circumstances which show us God’s Will”* (65-1; 74-1). When she speaks of *“compelling circumstances”* we must understand all that happens to us without our having provoked or planned it. *“His Will is manifested by the circumstances we find ourselves in, without having sought them”* (220-1; 237-1). She constantly referred to this line of thought. In 1831, when she was 52 and in Mana, events in France were worrying poor Sister Marie-Joseph, who found the time very long and begged her older sister to return. And here is Anne Marie’s reply: *“Each day we say ‘Lord, what do you want me to do?’ His Will is shown in the circumstances we find ourselves in, without having sought them”* (220-1; 237-1). At the time she wrote this, she had to set up the colonists who had come to help her in Mana and hand over to them what was their due. She just could not leave! On many other occasions in her life, she used this same principle to determine what was God’s Will for her.

God’s Will and Human Intelligence

The role of human intelligence would be subtler. She received clear indications from God but there was need to reflect and to weigh the pros and cons. *“Do all that you believe to be wise and suitable for the sake of peace”*, she wrote to Sister Madeleine Collonge in Senegal in 1829. *“If you have to make some changes, make them, but think hard before acting; be fearful of doing anything contrary to God’s Divine Will”* (191-2; 207-2). The foundress was now in her fifties, and her ability to discern was already mature. She was so convinced of the importance of the part that intelligence plays in this search that she invented a new expression which belongs only to her and to Psalm 118 vs 7 and 71: *“Let us study the designs of God and seek only to follow them”* (236-5; 252-3), she wrote to Sister Marie-Joseph in Bailleuil, when she herself was in Mana for an experiment in colonisation. This expression “to study God’s Will” was often used by

her to emphasise the effort needed for human intelligence to discern God's plan. Several years later, she would write to Sister Rosalie: *"Study God's designs for his work and seek only to respond to his designs without advancing too hastily"* (390-4; 430-2). This 'study' was to be done on every possible subject to be discerned: admissions to the novitiate (555-6; 644-3); obediences to be given (646-1; 737-1); revising of the statutes (895-2; 987-2)...etc.

This work of the intelligence requires certain criteria, and in the course of her letters, Anne-Marie outlined those that she used.

Her first criterion, the one she clung to more than to life itself, was **the Rule**: a rule already approved and one that even a bishop could not destroy: *"We have a rule that our Institute is founded on; we cannot diverge from it one iota without being guilty"* (422-6; 486-3). This letter was written in March 1842, in Cayenne, at a crucial moment, when the Bishop of Autun was persecuting her. The foundress was 62 years of age, but for a long time she was convinced that this first criterion was essential for knowing God's Will, both inside the Congregation and outside of it. *"The rule comes from God and it leads to God... You will find this truth on the first page. This thought comes from God; it is too sublime for me to be the author of it"* (98-6; 107-5). This letter of 1825 makes reference to her profession retreat made in Dôle from 13-23 April 1907. She was 28 years of age and God was fashioning her: *"I have considered that the rule comes from God and leads to God"*, she wrote in her notes (*15.5). She wished that the criterion be a priority for all the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, and she experienced hurt, even annoyance, when it was not so! *"You know how fearful Sister Marie-Joseph is; she is never at rest unless she is doing what everyone wants, even contrary to the rule; but I find peace only in acting in accordance with the rule. It is my compass, my safeguard. It should be that of all the Sisters of St. Joseph"* (88-2; 97-2). In matters of discernment, the first question we should ask ourselves is: Is it in keeping with the rule or not?

The second criterion that the zealous missionary suggested was **the welfare and the prosperity of the work confided by God**. It was this criterion that coloured her discernment regarding her return to France, that was so desired by her sisters. In 1839, the work for the liberation of the blacks was in progress, and returning to Paris could have seriously compromised the success of this undertaking. So she wrote to Sister Marie-Therese: *“Do not force me too much to leave; as soon as I can leave without endangering the work that has been confided to me, rest assured that I will leave at once”* (380-3; 414-2). And on the same subject, she is also insistent when writing to her sister, Rosalie: *“No, I do not think the time has come (to leave for France). The work that heaven has entrusted to me cannot remain unfinished; it has to be done without any fear that my absence will cause harm. God is in every country and to do a good work he will not destroy another”* (360-2; 387-2). Much later, in 1850, she wanted to meet the superior from Trinidad to have a discussion with her and here is what she said: *“Tell me then when you will come; I want to see you urgently. However, make sure that the work continues; wait if you think that your absence might upset things too much”* (957-3; 1049-2).

A third criterion for discerning God’s Will, especially in what concerns the extension of the works, changes and new foundations, **is the good to be done to our neighbour** either spiritually or materially. This criterion also holds for the choice of persons or times. In 1828, when leaving for Guyana for the realisation of the project “Mana I”, besides the experiment of colonisation with the group of whites who accompanied her, she already saw how useful she could be to the blacks that she had met in Africa, and she was thinking especially of those she had seen in Sierra Leone embarking on the slave ships. It was then she explained her option: *“All this will be for our dear Africans, who will find freedom in the throes of slavery... I could not hesitate before so many advantages which seem to me to come from God”* (154-7; 171-7).

Finally, there is a fourth criterion that was very important for those whom God instructs in prayer: **intuition**. Anne-Marie experienced this interior sign, which made her realise that the action to be taken was “God’s Will”. All the rational criteria can render the undertaking done holy, but if this little touch is missing, it may not necessarily be God’s Will for us. “... *I will not take one step to make any undertaking a success, no matter how holy it may be, if it is contrary to God’s Will*” (439-2; 507-1). On the other hand, once this interior light had flashed, the foundation progressed with astonishing certainty. “*We are very busy with a good work that Heaven has entrusted us with: it is a foundation for the lepers that the Government has confided to us*” (248-3; 264-2). In this discernment of God’s Will, the other criteria are present already: it is in accordance with the rule, and there is good to be done to the unfortunate. But there is also a ‘feeling’ that made her say: “*Heaven has entrusted this to us*”! In her search for God’s Will the foundress takes ‘inspiration’ very seriously. She wrote to Sister Rosalie: “*If I go to France, it is so that we can meet in order to find out what God is asking from us... if he is inspiring us to continue his work as he began it or if he has changed his plans. His Will is to be our law, nothing else*” (442-1; 512-1). That was in 1842, during the time of “Mana II”, when, once again, her sisters were urging her to return to France. In order to help her decide to come back, Sister Rosalie offered to replace her in Mana. But Anne-Marie did not accept; they would have to experience God’s inspiration together.

God’s Will and the search for it in community

She whom God had not called alone but with her three sisters saw that it is almost always necessary for a community to search for God’s Will together. She needed others so as to have all the necessary enlightenment in the “study” of the Divine Will in every domain. From 1824 onwards, this is her unswerving principle: “***The Sisters***

who come back will enlighten us by their experiences,” she wrote to Sister Rosalie in Bourbon, “and anything useful will be welcomed gratefully, no matter where it comes from” (74-12; 84-8). This last part of the sentence is very important and should be remembered, especially in all that concerns community meetings, chapters, and at other times when, together, we have to do God’s Will. Twenty-four years later, after the quoted text was written, another passage from a letter shows how much importance Anne Marie attached to this community aspect of discernment: *“It is by talking that we will see and understand what we have to do for the glory of God and the salvation of those who are confided to us” (762-2; 856-1).* In those days the word ‘dialogue’ was not an everyday word. But the foundress knew the reality of it and often invited people to ‘chat’ - to chat with her, and to chat among themselves. It is a question of exchanging ideas in order to grasp the reality better, and discern what God is expecting from us. This community searching has many forms.

She **asked advice** from competent persons. *“We need 28 religious in a month), What is to be done? Give me your advice, ask the Lord to let us know his Will” (964-2; 1057-2).*

She **moved around** to meet those who could help in enlightening her: *“You will be surprised to receive this letter from Rouen,” she wrote to Rosalie in Cluny. “You will think that I am travelling for my own pleasure. That is not the case at all; it is to get some information. Time is precious; we must uphold Providence which is guiding our friends; we have some sincere ones in Rouen. They deserve our trust; they are closely allied to the Council, the good M. Chatenay. It is the clergy who will help us to know and accomplish God’s designs for the Congregation” (615; 708-1).*

She **invited people to come** and see her, to talk with her in order to clarify a situation: *“Let us pray, pray a lot that God’s Spirit may inspire us, and direct us according to his Holy Will... How I would*

love to see you, to chat with you about so many important things for the good of the Society” (470-7; 554-5). And again to Sister Mathilde Perrier: “I would very much like to see you, we could talk about many important things that are troubling me. What can I do? You do not want to come alone. Is it better that I go to see you?” (879-1; 972-1).

When she asked for a meeting “to study God’s Will”, **she knew how to give time to it.** *“It is important just now that you come to Paris for a few weeks; we have to reach an understanding on God’s Will for us” (938-2; 1031-2).*

But she could also envisage that it would take a month or two: *“I would like to see you for a month or two to confer together about what would be the most useful thing for the Congregation to do in order to respond to God’s designs for us” (289-1; 309-1).*

Anne-Marie is convinced that sharing is part of the search and it guarantees the authenticity of the discovery of God’s Will: ***“It is by talking that we will be able to see and understand what we will have to do for God’s glory and the salvation of those confided to us” (762-3; 856-1).*** Without “talking” (dialoguing), the truth can be missed.

She was also happy at the thought that they were meeting her and working with her: *“I am happy to think that you are coming soon; we will work at the task that the Lord has entrusted to us; we will review what has been done in our name and without us; we will pray that God may enlighten and inspire us in order that we may give light to our children, who have confidence in us” (895-3; 987-2).*

Sometimes, this light came to her **suddenly** and she had to be ready to receive it without delay: *“The more I think about it, the more I want you to come to Paris on Saturday instead of going to Beauvais;*

come during the day, not at night. Once you are here, we will consult God together in order to find out what he is asking of you and me” (269-1; 287-1).

Sometimes the meeting is scheduled **months in advance**: *“We are expecting my sister Rosalie, who is coming to us for a few months to work on our holy rule and prepare to have our Order approved definitively in Rome. Let us pray much that God will enlighten us and make his Will known to us” (896-4; 988-3).*

To believe in the search together as a community for God’s Holy Will, to want it, to organise it, to give it the necessary time, to love these special occasions when the intelligence is disposed to listen humbly to others: that is what Anne-Marie tells us in our century when too many dialogues bear no fruit because there is no humble listening to each other or not enough time is given to it. Our present Constitutions, in the chapter on Obedience, have insisted on this community search for God’s Will through dialogue and discernment.

God’s Will and Patience

A great deal of patience is needed on this pathway to God’s Will: *“Experience has taught me that God’s work is done slowly, and nothing is gained by forestalling its moments” (424-2; 489-2,4).* During her slow and persevering climb upwards in doing the Divine Will, Anne-Marie discovered that you have to learn to wait.

To wait until God takes the initiative to unveil his designs: *“All this news (from the colonies) and not a brass farthing! (It was the colonies especially which came to the aid of the formation houses in France). It does not matter, I have courage, but I cannot travel. God has His designs that He will make known. I am waiting” (895-5; 987-3).*

Sometimes the waiting will be active: in prayer and in preparation: *“...wait, wait for the hour of Providence. I will soon be with you. Meanwhile, do not go so quickly; study the Good Lord’s designs for his work and seek to co-operate with them without acting too hastily”* (390-4; 430-2).

God Himself must show us the modalities of our commitment: *“I will wait until I get some light on what means I should take for the success of the undertaking and then see how much depends on me if God wishes to use me in a direct or indirect manner. I am in his hands, ready to do his Will as soon as it is made known”* (51-8; 59-5).

God has his hour and it will strike. Jesus also was on the alert for God’s “hour”, “the favourable time”, and He reproached His disciples because they were acting hastily, and the time had not yet come! “My time has not yet come, but any time is the right time for you!” (Jn 7,6)

There was a saying that the wise, country-born woman, who knew the importance of time and seasons, reiterated:

*“Providence has its moments,
happy are those who know how to recognise them,
and not to resist its inspirations”
(493-1; 578-1).*

God’s Will and Inspiration

Regarding the knowledge of God’s Will, she whom God possessed totally from the time she was a child was very aware of the role

played by intuition. This aspect has already been referred to when reflecting on the part played by intelligence because the importance of discursive reasoning has to be coloured by the “breath of the Spirit”. But this topic of inspiration had such significance for Anne-Marie that we have to look at it further and in greater depth. In certain aspects of her sensitivity to the Spirit, she was “charismatic” in the present-day meaning of the word: she “felt” what had to be done, what God was asking from her.

It was a **movement** that came from the depths of her heart, from her soul, and it contained a little grain of ‘madness’: ***“Do not be so humanly prudent”*** was what the audacious Foundress recommended to her youngest sister (99-2; 108-2). She was then 45 years of age. Much later, she made Sister Emilienne Botton reflect on the folly of God’s choices: ***“God was free to choose kings, bishops, and priests in the setting up, the government, and the direction of this Congregation: He wanted only poor ignorant young girls to inspire them with his Holy Will”*** (335-5; 359-2).

Inspiration always leads to **success**: ***“I thank Providence for having inspired me with the will to come to this colony”***, she wrote to her father in 1822. She was then in Senegal, and was 42 years of age. Fifteen years later, it was the same concept of Divine inspiration which made her write from Mana: ***“I have no regrets whatsoever for following divine inspiration; everything tells me that we will succeed in training these poor blacks in virtue and in work”*** (349-1; 374-1). And if it is asked: How does divine inspiration function? The Cluny reply is: On the level of our concept of it: ***“You must have already got our report on our big project. I am dying to know how it was received... But nevertheless I have full confidence in God, who suggested it to me, and since it was according to his inspiration that I conceived it, I hope he will let everything work out in such a way that his name will be glorified as much as possible.”*** (413-2; 467-1). Anne-Marie distinguished clearly between two stages: the

inspiration stage that has to be welcomed, and the stage for realisation and collaboration with others. At this second stage, the plans can either develop or be destroyed. *"I am longing to know how it has been received, if it has been received favourably or if it has been rejected from the start"* (413-2; 467-1).

In these two passages from the letter, the matter being discussed was the huge educational project for three thousand black children being brought to Mana or to the surrounding villages. The difficulty of training adults had made her draw up this generous plan to begin this "civilisation of freedom" with the children! But the French government did not co-operate!

This movement could be sudden, upsetting former plans: *"Stay at your post"*, she wrote to Mother Rosalie. *"It is a divine inspiration, I will go to see you..."* (930-1; 1022-1). It could be an interior urging: *"But since it is God who inspires us to do this* (a plan to begin two educational establishments for black children in Senegal) *with such force and persistence, we have to do our best to carry it out and leave to Providence the care of the rest"* (59-4; 67-3). Here again, she who had consecrated her whole life to doing God's Will made a careful distinction between the acceptance of the divine inspiration and doing everything possible to carry it out... At any rate, there is, in each of these passages, the humble recognition of divine intervention, of God's love and his freedom.

The foundress also believed that what God was doing for her, he was also doing for others just as lovingly, and she was eager to learn what inspired them. *"Tell me about your inspiration,"* she says to Mother Rosalie (883-2; 976-2). The inspiration could be at community level and Anne-Marie relied on it. *"If I go to France, it is so that we can get together and find out what God wants from us... if he is inspiring us to continue his work as he began it."* (442-1; 512-1).

And since inspiration is a gift from God, it must be asked for in prayer: *“Let us pray, Oh, let us pray much that God’s Spirit may inspire and direct us, according to his Holy Will”* (4708-; 554-5).

To conclude, the beatitude promised to each Sister of St Joseph of Cluny is allied to how the inspiration is accepted as much as to the patient waiting and the discernment of God’s hour:

*Providence has its moments,
HAPPY are those who can recognise them
and not resist its inspirations.
(493-1; 578-1).*

God’s Will and Prayer

In the discernment of the divine will, the first person to be consulted is God Himself, and if this is being dealt with only at the end of this chapter, it does not mean that it is any the less significant. On the contrary, it is so important that it touches on all the other aspects and is their “nerve cell”. So it is almost a conclusion.

Yes, the search for God’s Will, that precious grace, takes into account our personal and community capacities, but it is prayer that refines our hearts, our souls, our intelligence, and our sensitivity. It opens us to God so that the communication of his Will may take place without error or misunderstanding, because “we must fear taking a purely human point of view”, writes Anne-Marie (505-1; 591-1). That is why she sees prayer as the oil that keeps all the wheels turning smoothly.

Because of this conviction, she who had such a passion for God’s Will asked that prayers be offered in order to know it in every sphere: the revision of the Statutes, new foundations, change of personnel: “(We

need 28 religious in a month)... ***“What to do? Pray that the Lord will let us know his Holy Will!”*** (964-2; 1057-2).

Prayer should enlighten our mind and our heart: ***“...Pray and offer prayers for me: ask the Lord for enlightenment so that I may do only his Holy Will”*** (117-8; 128-6), and again, ***“...my greatest fear is to take a step against God’s Will. Pray for me... when I do not see clearly, I cannot make progress”*** (539-2; 628-2). For Anne Marie, prayer does not replace reflection, but the latter is not a substitute for prayer either!

Sometimes, prayer does not ask for enlightenment: it is inspiration that is awaited, especially when there is a question of innovations, finding solutions, new ways of acting, or sufficient means: ***“How much we have to do to reform the abuses that we have amongst us! ... Above all, we must establish (the rule and constitutions), get them recognised and approved. Let us pray. Oh! Let us pray a great deal so that the Spirit of God may inspire us, and direct us according to his Holy Will*** (470-7; 554-5).

Prayer also helps in the choice of suitable persons for a particular obedience or ministry. It is so easy to make a mistake and put people in places where they should never be. So the foundress very humbly recommended that all should be referred to him, who is the master of all projects: ***“We ask you to send us three Sisters who have the spirit of our holy state... ask God to let you know who they are”*** (*485-6).

It is a question of turning in every case to the Father and His Spirit. She had discovered the heart of the Father and she saw this step as a simple relationship of encounter, of friendship and of listening. She spoke about “consulting” God, meaning, speaking to him, telling him about the problem and all it entailed, laying our ideas before him and listening to him so that he can inspire us with the best possible

choices. Here again, Anne Marie appears to be a “charismatic” in the best sense of the word.

This marvellous encounter with God, living our mission and our situation with him is what Anne-Marie proposed to her Sisters... and beyond her contemporaries to each of us! Sometimes she wishes to “consult” God in community: *“I really want you to come to Paris on Saturday... we will consult God together in order to find out what he is asking from you and me”* (269-1; 287-1).

Sometimes, she invited her Sisters not to overlook this essential element of consultation with God: *“I was thinking that (Sister Mathilde) would be very suitable as superior in Pondicherry, but I leave you free to do what is best, after mature deliberation and having consulted God about the choice”* (132-1; 143-1). It is interesting to note the method she gives for this personal “consultation” with God: *“Recollect yourself and say to God, “Show me the way that I must follow...”* (808-1; 903-1). The recollection cuts out the external world and enables you to meet him who dwells in the depths of your heart, and then to speak to him simply as friends talk to each other. Isolating oneself from the external world is essential to make us available and attentive for this encounter. There is no formula for this “consultation with God”.

Asking to know God’s Will is a very important part of prayer, but it is not the only one. In prayer, we must also ask that God’s Will may be done, because between the knowledge and the carrying out of God’s Will, there can be a divide that may never be closed. God’s Will must be written into events, into history so that the world may change and the Kingdom of God may come: *“Pray for us as is your custom and do not weary of praying, of always asking for the accomplishment of God’s Holy Will”* (244-5; 260-5).

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Through prayer we enter, by our submission, into the doing of God's Will: ***"Ask the Lord to make us submissive to his Will, whatever happens"*** (975-1; 1068-1). And everything should culminate in the glory of the Father and the fruitfulness of the mission: ***"Pray and get others to pray so that all (she was speaking of the plans for the St. Joseph priests) may be for his Glory and the salvation of souls"***. (322-7; 344-6).

References

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325-4; 348-2 334-2; 358-2 879; 972-1
2. To find God's Will
 - a) compelling events
65-1; 74-1 220-1; 237-1 218; 234-2
 - b) the work of intelligence: "studying"
191-2; 207-2 236-5; 252-3 220-287-1;
390-4; 430-2 555-6; 644-3 646-1; 737-1
895-2; 987-2
 - c) the criteria
the rule:
422-6; 486-3 98-6; 107-5 *15-5;

88-2; 97-2

78-6; 89-5;

the works:

380-3; 414-2

309-2,3 ;330-1

360-2; 387-2

383-1; 421-1

629-1; 721-1

957-3; 1049-2

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our neighbour:

610; 701-2

intuition:

439-2; 507-1

248-3; 264-2

231-5; 247-3

442-1; 512-1

d) community searching

762-2; 856-1

964-2; 1057-2

615-2; 708-1

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879-1; 972-1

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289-1; 309-1

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269-1; 287-1

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e) patience

424-2; 489-2,4

895-5; 987-3

390-4; 430-2

51-8; 59-5

493-1; 578-1

f) inspiration

335-5; 359-2

51-1; 59-1

349-1; 374-1

413-2; 467-1

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59-4; 67-3

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470-8; 554-5

g) prayer

505-1; 591-1

964-2; 1057-2;

424; 489-4

849-2; 944-2

873; 967-1,2

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*485-6;

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244-5; 260-5

975-3; 1068-1

771-9; 866-4

318-3; 341-3

322-6; 344-6

808; 903-1



Chapter 7

A Cluny Heart

The certainty that comes from the heart

When one has taken every means to find out what God's Will is, in order to accomplish it, and done so with a detached and loving heart as well as letting 'a prayer encounter 'with God, be part of it, then there is the certainty of doing His Will. Anne Marie proclaimed this loud and clear.

She was convinced of this in an extraordinary way on one occasion during her life-time, although we are not in a position to know exactly what happened that day: *"Nine years ago the Lord made known to me in an extraordinary but sure manner, that he was calling me to the state that I have embraced, in order that I would educate the poor and care for orphans...I was only 17 or 18 years of age. Nevertheless, The Lord made his Will known to me in such a clear way that when I had consulted the most knowledgeable people in the country, they commissioned me to get to work in spite of the difficulties that I might encounter"* (19-5; 20-3). And the consulting of "the most enlightened people in the country" served to confirm the message received directly from the Lord.

The certitude is usually acquired elsewhere. It often comes from criteria that leave no doubt whatsoever. *“You should know me well enough to know that it is not fear that hinders me from leaving, no, it is only the desire to do God’s Will, that has been made clear to me up to the present”* (221-2; 238-1). We are now in 1831, in the throes of yet another revolution. Anne Marie was in Mana, and her younger sister Marie-Joseph kept insisting that she should return to France. The foundress would not do so, as she was sure that she was doing God’s Will by continuing her work. The criteria were evident, but the certainty could end “today “, because God can give other signs later that call us to other things.

A little later, she wrote again: *“It seems that you are annoyed that I am not coming to France. But do you not know that I am dedicated to doing God’s Will, no matter what it costs me? I cannot abandon his work without his showing me who is to replace me. Up to now, it has been impossible, but as soon as I can get away, I will do so”* (229-2; 246-1). The criterion for “the good of the work” has been taken into account, and in her heart, she is sure of doing God's Will.

Very often, the certitude comes from peace of heart that excludes doubt: *“I have not the slightest doubt that it is God’s Will that is bringing back (Mother Marie-Therese) to replace me in France. I hope that you will be at peace and happy whilst awaiting my return”* (383-1; 421-1).

The certitude can also come from a deep peaceful conviction that is linked to previous discernments. *“Our houses in Africa deserve all our concern; this is the portion of the field that the Father of the family gives us to clear. The more bushes and thorns there are, the more we must hope that the good grain will yield a hundred-fold “* (62-10; 71-9). It is to be noted that the last sentence in the passage refers to the Gospel: Mark 4.3-9. But Jesus did not say a hundred fold. He said “a hundred out of one”. Jesus is a better farmer

than Anne Marie! In fact, grain that yields a hundredfold yields nothing. Balthazar's daughter's statement is more a financial one than a farmer's.

The Cluny heart is happy because it is sure of doing God's Will. ***“Do not worry or fret about me. I am happy because I am convinced that I am doing God's Holy Will*** (426-10; 492-7). The foundress was then in Mana, April 1842. Due to the abuse of power she was deprived of the sacraments. But her heart was happy to obey the Father's heart and make him happy.

A heart refined by love

Like every gift that God gives us, knowing his Holy Will and doing it makes some demands. Anne Marie was very anxious about this because her heart understood the sensitivities of love. Firstly, the Divine Will was to be accomplished with all the perfection that we are capable of. ***“Remember that the work that heaven has confided to me cannot be left imperfect...(360-3; 387-2).*** The doing of God's will cannot abide mediocrity. We must give of our best, so that the work will be well done. The above lines refer to Mana in 1838. Later, it was a question not just of Mana but of the whole Congregation. She would confide to her sister Rosalie the interior message that she had heard. ***“(Jesus) said to me in my heart: Have confidence, confidence, do not fear men, they are powerless, work to perfect the task I entrusted to you when you were a child!”*** (657-2; 748-1). This letter dated 1847, during the height of the persecution by Mgr. d'Hericourt, showed Anne Marie's heartfelt concern to do God's Will to perfection.

A patient heart

The doing of God's Will is usually accompanied by trials and contra-

dictions that have to be faced up to. These trials and contradictions sometimes come from human beings because of their jealousy and sinfulness. This is what happened in Guyana. The French colonial milieu did not like the foundress of the school for freedom that Mana had become, because of the work and its success! *"The work that we are doing annoys the inhabitants; consequently, they do not like me," she concluded. "Their hatred increases with our success. That will not surprise you but I am not upset. On the contrary, I am convinced that I am doing God's Will. I am happy, very happy. I wish for nothing but the fulfilment of God's Will* (378-3; 412-2).

At other times, historical events threatened God's work. This was the case, for example when the blacks revolted in Martinique; *"The work could suffer a lot because of this,"* she wrote, *"but God's Will is in it all"* (218-1; 234-1). *And the trial itself was seen as part God's plan. Difficulties can also be quite simply dangers encountered on the journey, as St. Paul experienced: "I tremble to think that they may be shipwrecked."* (This referred to the sisters from Senegal who had boarded ship on November 1st and it was now January 2nd!) *"I am resigned to everything. This will not prevent us from fulfilling our vocation courageously in Africa"* (39-5; 45-3).

Unexpected circumstances often try those who are doing God's Will. *"I am very sorry to leave without seeing you,"* she wrote to Pierre Javouhey, *"but Providence wants me to make a sacrifice to begin the work that I am undertaking (in Senegal) and which will be for the glory of God, I hope"* (45-1; 53-1). *Sometimes, God's Will runs contrary to one's tastes and aspirations. "This journey is very hard for me,"* she confessed, referring to her return to France. *"I would much prefer to await death in the solitude of Mana, but I only want to do God's Will"* (248-4; 264-3).

There is a price to pay in patience all along the magnificent way that welcomes and lives by God's Will.

A Cluny heart fashioned by adhering to God's Will

This asceticism of God's Will fashions the human heart and gives it some special qualities. Firstly, it is rooted in the gift of one's own will. In fact, in each charism, there is the gift made to God of a particular human faculty so that he can possess it. For example, with the Dominicans, it is the intelligence that is offered to God, for him to use it as he wills. From the beginning, Anne Marie recognised that the gift of our will was the priority for us. When she made her retreat in Dole, in April 1807, she noted all the generous sacrifices that both she and ourselves would have to make: leave father, mother, relatives, friends and possessions of every kind, and she added: ***"But all these sacrifices are nothing and of no use, if we do not join to them our own will and this is the most difficult. It has to be renewed daily and at every moment"*** (*15-3). She was referring then to the special grace of the charism that God had given to her, and to a "great number of persons whom he would place under her leadership, so that she would be an example and support for them" (cf. *15-2). For us today, to contemplate this model and let ourselves be formed in the same way, means co-operating with our own particular grace, the starting point of our way to holiness.

A heart turned towards God's Will

Anne Marie's heart was constantly turned towards God's Will. We say "constantly" because in her case **"the habit was formed"** of seeking, finding and doing God's Will. It was a habit that became second nature to her, and as she grew spiritually, her heart became less and less capable of attaching itself to anything else, even when it was a question of values that were dear to her. In May 1842, she was in Mana and taking further steps to have priests who would be real ministers of the Lord. To bring about this plan, she used all her gifts of intellect and imagination, especially since, at that time, the Bishop

of Autun was creating more “troubles and annoyances”. But she added to her request to Sister Clotilde who was the superior in Limoux; *“At any rate, I only want God’s Will and I want it sincerely”* (432-2; 499-2). From 1832, the mature religious of 52 years of age had vowed to have no will but God’s: *“Yes, my dear daughter,”* she wrote to Sister Marie Joseph, *“let us never wish for anything except God’s holy Will. I have made a vow to have none other.”* (210-3; 225-3)

To sum up, the only desire that a Cluny Sister should have is to do God’s Will. *“I am always setting out to fulfil the mission that Heaven seems to entrust to me,”* she wrote in 1835, just when she was leaving for Mana with Mgr d’Hericourt’s thunderbolt hanging over her. *“I want to do God’s Will”* (330-1; 354-1)

A heart that is courageous in obeying

When one’s will is completely grounded in God’s Will it is possible to submit courageously to God’s designs. Still on the subject of Mana, the jewel of her missionary life, and again regarding the steps to be taken to have suitable priests from among the Africans (see 432-2; 499-2), she described the deepest sentiments of her heart: *“...if God gives success, I will be delighted; if the opposite happens, I will submit courageously since I want only God’s Will”* (435-1; 502-1). And here is the resolution that she shared with Sister Rosalie in June 1848: *“Let us be ready for every sacrifice in order to do his Holy Will”* (731-5; 824-3).

This submission to God’s Will demanded of her the courageous acceptance of political events (including revolts and revolutions), administrative and ecclesiastical annoyances, deaths (even of her most useful and most loved collaborators), and unpleasant journeys. It was a submission that was capable of conquering all difficulties. In

January 1845, she was 65 years of age and had completed “Mana II”. She had resumed her work in the general administration of the Congregation. She had to contend both with the new missionary expansion (see letter 498-1; 584-1) when she was asking the Lord to work a miracle, to multiply, not bread, but workers for the vineyard!) and also with the annoyance caused by the Bishop of Autun whom she had to confront incessantly. She wrote to Sister Rosalie, her right-hand helper during this last period of her life... “Great work lies before us. If it is God who is calling us, then we cannot refuse...I began by saying that we wanted only one thing, to do God’s Will. We will overcome every difficulty to accomplish it” (505-1; 591-1)

At any rate, our heartfelt word of command is “God speaks, we obey”. It was during the foundation in Madagascar that this word of command appeared. “We were to come here 15 years ago but there were obstacles, so we could not do so. I had forgotten all about it, and now here we are. We will not recoil; God has spoken, he will be obeyed” (655-5; 746-5). On another occasion with regard to the founding of the St. Joseph Society of priests, she showed the same radical disposition: “*God must make known his Holy Will, otherwise I do not know what to say...but once God has spoken, there will be nothing more to be said*” (322-6; 344-6). God speaks to the heart and the heart that loves him and acts.

But it is not a forced, constrained action. This obedience to God who speaks, seeks to do everything as well as possible because how could one fail to give one’s all in response to the designs of such a beloved Father. “I am in my 70th year,” she wrote to a sister in Tahiti. “*I am not writing much, just a word to say to you: have courage, let us work to do all in our power to comply with God’s designs for us*” (777-3; 873-2).

A courageous heart and a source of consolation

A heart that clings to the Divine Will no longer has any fear of people or events. A careful distinction has to be made between “not being afraid” and being “foolhardy”. Temerity is based on great self-assurance. It takes a great deal of serious risks, certain that it will manage because it is strong. Anne Marie was not foolhardy. For example, after her religious consecration on November 11th 1798, she refused to risk working alone with a team of young workers on the farm in Pluvot. She acted very prudently. On the other hand, when God’s Will was clear, she would take enormous risks because she relied on God. She set out alone for Sierra Leone with Florence, and this journey took approximately 6 months. She never lost her cool, “her heart was not agitated like the trees in the forest shaken by the wind” (Is.7.2). She did not lose her serenity. ***“I fear nothing, Jesus is with me...”*** (762-1; 856-1). Such was her intrepid heart.

Her only fear was not to do God’s Will. In November 1845, she had just reached 66 years of age and she wrote to Fr. Rogeau, a great friend of the Congregation and support in time of trial. ***“My trust in God is all my strength and hope...all my fear is to take one step contrary to his Will”*** (531-2; 628-2). She recommended to all those around her to be attentive, and not to deviate from God’s ways. ***“Do what you think is wise and suitable for the sake of peace. If changes have to be made, make them, but think well before you act. Fear doing anything contrary to God’s holy Will”*** (191-2; 207-2).

Such a heart is a consolation to God, it makes him happy. ***“I cannot abandon God’s work unless I know that he is happy about it”*** (376-4; 406-3). This heart is also a consolation for others, for the community. ***“I think that God has his designs (for Sisters Theodosie and Batilde). If they are faithful in following the divine Will, they will be your consolation and your strength in all difficulties”*** (236-7; 252-4).

That is what we are promised. We are to be a source of strength and consolation for those around us, on condition that we remain faithful to the heart of our charism, rooted in the Father's Will. This is what leads us to Heaven, to holiness, as Anne Marie said to her daughters and she explained this to the mother of one of the Sisters: *"I have told her about all the graces that Heaven showers on us, and that consequently, we are obliged to do God's Will or to forfeit Heaven.* (*563-3). The passage from this letter is very valuable because it confirms three things that we have already discovered. Firstly, all the graces that Heaven showers on us are truly a divine initiative. Nanette had been overwhelmed by the Father's tenderness when she was still only a child. She felt obliged to do God's Will. This "obligation" is the response of love for love. It is this interior strength that urges one on. It frees one to respond...or else one has to renounce "heaven", said Anne Marie, that is, our original concept of holiness.

A heart open to the future

It could be thought that this spirituality that is so adamant and exacting in what concerns adherence to God's Will would suppress all initiative and even the possibility of drawing up projects. This is not the case. In 1835, she remarked to her sister Rosalie who was complaining about her not writing: *"Look at the difference between the two of us. I have twenty letters to write whilst you have only one, and I have a thousand other commitments that you know nothing about...constant visitation of houses...and then of course the projects..."* (328-1; 351-1). Adherence to God's Will makes one creative and imaginative. But plans always remain submitted to confirmation by God, the sure and faithful friend. It was because of this that she planned to visit the houses in America and to see Mother Marie-Therese who was ill. However, she immediately added: "All this is guided by the profound thought of doing God's Will and responding to his designs". (301-1; 321-1). When God had confirmed

it there was nothing more to say. Still on the subject of the St. Joseph priests, she shared what she was feeling: *"God must make known his holy Will, otherwise I can only say, I foresee all the good that such a Society could do...once God has spoken, there is nothing more to add."* (322-6; 344-6).

With this creative attitude towards the future, Anne Marie was not restricted by her own projects. Her heart was constantly open to what was to come, because God our Father makes all things new. She recommended the same openness to her sisters. She wrote to Sister Madeleine Collonge who was returning to France from Senegal: *"And then we are going to continue our honourable mission wherever God calls us"* (86-7; 95-5). *To set out again, to be renewed and to be rejuvenated in new beginnings, such is the Cluny heart. The future must be planned and organized but there must also be readiness to change. "I plan not to leave for Martinique until October 1839, and depart from there in April or May. This is my plan if God does not want it otherwise"* (362-3; 389-2). This was not just a mechanical or literary way of speaking for her. It concerned someone with whom she was constantly in contact, and who would give her the green light or withhold it. As a result Anne Marie's plans seemed numerous, flexible, resolutely carried out, and ready for new beginnings.

References

1. Certitude of heart

19-5; 20-3	221-2; 238-1	229-2; 246-1
383-1; 421-1	314-1; 336-1	329-3; 352-3
203-1; 218-1	62-10; 71-9	
426-10; 492-7		

2. A heart refined by love

360-3; 387-2 657-2; 748-1

3. A patient heart

378-3; 412-2 218-1; 234-1 39-5; 45-3
45-1; 53-1 248-4; 264-3

4. A Cluny heart fashioned by God's Will

a) turned towards God's Will.

432-2; 499-2 210-3; 225-3 220-1; 237-1
470-; 554-5 330-1; 354-1 2-2; 2-2
174-1; 190-1 2484; 264-3
*468 790; 884-3

b) courageous in obeying

432-2; 502-1 731-5; 824-3 218; 234-1
233; 249-1 246-1; 262-1 4; 4
505-1; 591-1 903-5; 995-4 655-5; 746-5
158-2; 175-3 816-1; 911-1 322-6; 344-6
777-3; 873-2

c) intrepid and a source of consolation

537-2; 628-2 267-1; 285-1 191-2; 207-2
376-5; 406-3 236-7; 252-4 *563-3

d) open to the future

328-1; 351-1 301-1; 321-1 362-3; 389-2
322-6; 344-6 86-7; 95-5



Chapter 8

Praise

I will meditate on your marvels

(Ps.118, 27)

Balthazar Javouhey's daughter was a soul of thanksgiving and praise. We find exclamations of admiration of God and expressions of gratitude repeatedly in her letters. To discover the face of the Father is to admire and love him. Anne Marie lived this to the full and shared it generously in her correspondence. Just to quote some of her expressions: "*O Divine Providence, how admirable you are!*" - 25 November 1826 (117-2; 128-2). "*Let us give all the glory to God*" - 28 May 1828 (154-1; 171-1). "*I am in admiration of the graces that the Lord gives to this poor little colony (Mana)*" - 23 October 1838 (362-5; 389-3). "*I admire the designs of Divine Providence*" - 23 July 1847 (661-5; 752-3). "*O Providence, how admirable you are for the Sisters of St. Joseph!*" - 30 January 1851 (1000-4; 1094-3). Her life from beginning to end was interspersed with these heartfelt ejaculations that we have gleaned haphazardly from her correspondence. Much more could be written on this subject, but it would be impossible to cover it all. It was this unceasing praise in the foundress' life that gave her the astounding perseverance that was founded on faith, built

on hope and nourished by love. What is the explanation of this attitude of praise that characterized her whole life? We have already seen how Anne Marie's spiritual reactions are so like that of the great believers in the Bible and we must return once more to the latter to understand this properly.

The pedagogical and spiritual importance of “remembering”

In the Bible, knowledge and praise of God are nourished by “remembering”. If God through the Torah asks His people to remember, to recall the marvels of the past, to repeatedly mull over the great deeds of his tenderness and his fidelity, then this is what fashions the heart to respond in love and obedience. It is very interesting to note how this began in the Bible story. In Exodus 14: 13, Moses does not ask for faith from the people, but only that they note what is going to happen, that is, the destruction of the Egyptians who are overwhelming them. Then in v.31, the people's faith is evident: they saw and believed. From then onwards, they will remember and celebrate the great deeds of the Lord. The “remembering” occurs constantly in Deuteronomy: “You saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his child, all along the road that you travelled on your way to this place” (Dt.1: 31); “You will remember the entire road by which the Lord led you during the forty years in the desert...and you learn from this that the Lord was educating you as a man does with his child.” (Dt 8: 2a-5).

The country girl from Burgundy practised the biblical “remembering” and encouraged her daughters to do the same. *“How I would like to have a two-hour chat with you,”* she wrote to Sister Bathilde Laparre in Bourbon, *“to admire God's designs and His kindness to us.”* (106-2; 116-2). The people in the Bible were real people who met God in their life, by rereading their history. Anne Marie also met God in

her life and she easily adopted the biblical teaching. She looked back over her life and she praised God. From the beginning of her religious life she was already writing to her parents: ***“I beg you to make some return to God for all the graces we are unceasingly receiving...”*** (20-6; 21-4). And so the remembrance of God’s great deeds strengthens our conviction of his all-powerful and vigilant tenderness. He watches over us and his Will leads us to good pastures.

To seek and find meaning

The Gospel says of Mary after the shepherds’ visit: ***“As for Mary, she treasured these things and pondered them in her heart in order to understand the meaning.”*** (Lk 2:19). To make sense of life and its happenings according to God’s designs is to learn from past experiences and better understand the divine method of teaching in order to adhere to it. Anne Marie was used to re-reading not only the “great deeds of God”, but also the annoying, insignificant events. They all became opportunities of showing God’s power. She analysed the fact that her sister Rosalie Javouhey had been obliged to leave Bourbon and return to France because of difficulties created by the Apostolic Prefect, made sense of it, and praised God. ***“Her return to France in the present circumstances is nothing less than a miracle. How admirable Providence is! I see it and I admire it. It is my entire consolation on this earth in the midst of the most peculiar contradictions”*** (391-1; 433-1). In fact Sister Rosalie arrived in France just at the right moment to be a strong support for her sisters Marie Therese and Marie Joseph who had to face another confrontation with Mgr. d’Hericourt. As each one of us reviews her life, we can see the same fatherly presence of God protecting us through all events. However, the re-reading of our life story is probably too infrequent to cause a faith reaction. Sometimes, the events recalled by the foundress were insignificant, but they nevertheless had a great effect on the work and provoked

spontaneous acts of thanksgiving: *“I thank God for having kept me here; I would not have had enough courage to stand up to the storm (the Bishop of Autun’s attempts to take charge of the Congregation), I would have missed my mission. I would have obeyed human wills and perhaps abandoned God’s Will. Here, I have time to think about their insidious demands and the traps that they have set for us. I am less distracted and consequently, always ready to respond”* (424-5; 489-3).

The Variety of Divine Intervention

When Anne Marie reviewed her life, she was led to discover and to praise God’s multiple manifestations of generosity. He intervenes in every domain of our existence and overlooks nothing that could be for our good.

The first obvious reason for abundant praise was the divine solicitude for the Congregation. The proofs of God’s concern for the Congregation are highlighted in this chapter. First of all, there was the visible protection from those who could destroy it, in particular, the Bishop of Autun and his friends. *“We are in admiration of God’s providence for the poor Sisters of St. Joseph. His armies fight for us, so what is there to fear? He uses means that we would never have thought of to undo all the projects of our enemies...”* (519-1; 606-1). And the communicative Anne Marie shared her wonder: *“How I would love to see you all assembled, to tell you about all the marvels that the All-powerful is doing for our dear Congregation”* (526-5; 612-3). This happened in 1845! But God went further than that. He won the good graces of the civil authorities for us and greatly advanced the mission that he has confided to us: *“..all the authorities are so much in our favour that I cannot but marvel at Divine Providence which overwhelms us with benefits”* (162-1; 178-1). This was in 1828, she was 48 years of age, and was in Mana.

A little later, the same cry came from her heart; *“If you knew all that goes on in my heart when I see all that God really wants to do for our dear society. I am dumbfounded. Thank, therefore, this Divine providence for so many benefits”* (170-1; 186-1). He whom she called *“the Father of the Congregation”, God Himself, is also anxious to develop it.* Towards the end of her life in 1849, she would write; *“(God) has done so much for our dear Congregation. He has made out of nothing a work that is doing so much good in the four corners of the world...”* (802-7; 897-5). And in May 1850, she admired and gave praise for the same reason: *“I admire all that God is doing for our dear Congregation: it is growing and becoming more perfect everyday...”*(*1024-4). He foresees the danger in order to save His work. It was 1845, and Anne Marie was aware that traps had been set for her. She shared her gratitude with Sister Onesime Lefevre: *“Yes, the Lord has saved us from great danger, by letting us see the precipice that was being dug under our feet and hidden in the shade... O my God, how could we have braved the storm, if the Lord had not let it be known that it was his work by protecting it!”* (516-1; 603-1). The foundress’ thanksgiving also rose up to God when He made use of crises to allow considerable progress on a judicial level. *“The ground we covered in six months would have taken years, were it not for all the upsets. Let us thank God”* (90-3; 99-3). This was in 1825!

The great foresight of this prayerful woman who was Balthazar’s daughter, recognised, not only the divine blessings bestowed on her order, but also the spiritual graces which lead to growth in holiness, and for these too she sang her gratitude to the Lord: *“I am going to share with you a very touching sign of the kindness of Divine Providence for us. When annoyances and anxieties were beginning to threaten us from all sides, a holy bishop came to stay with us in Paris. He has all the qualities and inspiration imaginable and he has been guiding and enlightening us for the past five months”* (90-12; 99-11). Besides giving thanks for the external protection of the

Congregation, the foundress also expressed her gratitude for the gift of persons who were able to lead us on the road to holiness without being put off by problems. And she observed: *“Our happy Congregation has made good headway”* (90-14; 99-13). In the same perspective the gift of a skilled spiritual father made her sing her thanks to God: *“Fr. Gondin is going to be one of the superiors of the Holy Ghost missionaries. Admire the hand of God...”* (104-5; 113-5).

Sometimes the graces do not extend to the spiritual and material life of the whole Congregation; they protect a group of sisters or people. *“Let us give a thousand thanks to the Lord! Not one misfortune has befallen us, our district is perfectly peaceful due to a great heavenly favour”* (734-1; 828-1). Paris was in the throes of the 1848 revolution, and Anne Marie, then 68 years of age, was giving heartfelt thanks to the Lord with youthful ardour. All the expressions that we have quoted are not just those of a “good sister”, they are the utterances of a young and grateful heart.

But the list of multiple types of benefits from God is not ended, we still have to talk about material needs, such as money and food. In 1836, writing to Admiral Rosmel to whom she had to send a report on “The Mana School of Freedom”, she said, *“I bless God, Sir, that this first installation has been able to take place without the deprivation and sicknesses which so often accompany attempts at colonization.”* (344-2; 369-2) The following year, still concerning the work in Mana, she wrote: *“God’s wonderful Providence watched over us in the midst of a devastating famine...O Infinite Goodness, how does one acknowledge such a benefit?”* (347-3; 373-2).

She who desired such a degree of holiness for herself and her daughters was also very grateful for the graces of personal conversion, and here again, she praised the Lord: *“...the month of Mary has just ended... What graces God has granted us! They are far greater than what we had asked for... Nevertheless, I feel the effects and I*

hope to put into practice the holy resolutions that I made” (434-2; 501-2). Sometimes, she specified the type of conversion in order to thank God all the better. *“I have never understood our weakness better. My dear daughter, I, for my part, am happy with the lights that God gives me concerning my limited capacity for such a great and holy work! If God left me alone for one minute, I would do such foolish things. I thank him for enlightening me, for without that I would stumble at each step”.* (590-2; 680) It is April 1846, the foundress is 66 years of age and she praises the Lord for recognizing better than ever her radical incompetence. Even our weaknesses and our sins can become a reason for praise.

If thanksgiving and praise are nurtured by the contemplation of God’s love in our life, they become, as they did for Anne Marie, a reason for greater apostolic zeal. *“We have to thank Divine Providence for all it has done for us. As for me, it seems that since I experience these benefits so keenly I am ready to do anything to prove my gratitude”* (250-1; 266-1). This was in August 1833 and she was 53 years of age. Seventeen years later in August 1850, it is humility that has to be cultivated in order to thank God: *“God performs astounding miracles for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Clunylet humility be our favourite virtue”* (948-2; 1040-2).

What the foundress lived is exemplary in the sense that she is the model that we must follow, the road that we must take. What she said both for herself and for the Congregation of her era holds good for us today and for the Congregation that we are shaping at the dawn of this third millennium. Today as in former times, God loves the “Sisters of St. Joseph”; he defends them, sanctifies them, invites them to trust. Now as before, he is the Father of this Congregation which is his work.

We must also emphasize that there is a very strong link between “the reviewing of our lives and thanksgiving”, between “zeal for the doing

of God's Will" and "the charism of the Congregation". Like Mary, we must discover the marvels of God in our life in order to celebrate them in a continuous Magnificat. Like her and with her, we must give our lives to the end. This is what Anne Marie did.

References

1. Remembering

106-2; 116-2 20-6; 21-4

2. The significance of events

391-1; 433-1 424-5; 489-3 684-1; 775-1

3. The riches of divine interventions

a) the Congregation

519-1; 606-1	526-5; 612-3	170-1; 186-1
162-1; 178-1	*1024	4; 4
802-7; 897-5	516-1; 603-1	90-3; 99-3
90-12,14; 99-11,13	104-5; 113-5	94-8; 103-5
104-1; 113-1	734-1; 828-1	1000-4; 1094-3

b) material needs supplied.

117-2; 128-1,2

c) individual graces

434-2; 501-2	590-2; 680-2	655-1; 746-1
250-1; 266-1	948-2; 1040-2	

Chapter 9

Prayer

On you I muse through the night

(Ps.62, 7b)

Do not grow weary of praying

(244-5; 260-5)

We are now reaching a vital point in the deepening of our spirituality. Prayer is the “sine qua non” condition for the success of the charism.

It is in prayer that the Cluny charism can grow, blossom and develop its dynamism. It is here that everything happens: getting to know God, praising him, discovering his ways, receiving the necessary lights... **We must give time to God.** It is he who brings about our sanctification. It was in the deep experience of intense, overpowering prayer that the charism was born. We mentioned further back how Nanette, from 1794, experienced God and how the special years of 1796-1798 saw the birth of a real mystic who was devoured by zeal for her “Father’s house”. All her life she felt a need and had a taste

for prayer. A visible sign of this need and omnipresent sense of prayer is seen in the constant use of this word which occurs more than 102 times in her letters. It could be thought that it was just a simple reflection of “a good sister”. It is not that at all. There are letters when she makes no mention whatsoever of prayer, quite simply because it does not come to her mind at that time. All the letters we have from 1818 no longer bear the heading “The Holy Will of God”. Anne Marie was not pious, she was authentic, and we can rely on her use of words to discover what was going on in her soul. Now, the frequent use of the word prayer was often qualified and emphasized by adverbs or other phrases: “*Let us pray, Let us pray*” (629-1; 721-1); “*Let us pray much*” (695-3; 786-2); “*Let us pray, Let us pray much*” (470-7; 554-5); “*Let us pray, let us pray, God grants all to humble prayer*” (745-1; 839-1); “*Let us pray and redouble our fervour*” (665-2; 756-2); “*Let us pray always*” (556-4; 645-2); “*Let us not cease to pray*” (623-1; 715-1); “*Let us pray, ah yes, let us pray*” (746-1; 840-1); “*Let us continue to pray, pray without ceasing*” (782-1; 875-1); “*Let us redouble our prayer and thanksgiving*” (775-5; 871-2); “*Let us do a holy violence to the God of kindness by our prayer and mortification...*” (773-2; 868-1); At other times, the order is given to pray: “*Pray well*” (539-2; 628-2); “*Pray, yes, pray*” (285-4; 305-4); “*Pray much*” (872-2; 966-2); “*Pray unceasingly*” (728-1; 821-1); “*Pray and get prayers said*” (411-5; 461-3). This simple overall glance allows us to verify the importance of prayer in Anne Marie’s spirituality.

Are there prayers that are specific to Saint Joseph of Cluny?

What prayers should be said?

The Foundress herself gave the reply to this question: “*We are not religious according to the Council of Trent. We are religious according to our own zeal for religion and according to the Church*

of our day; we do not seek a type of perfection that would be contrary to the spirit of our state. We only want to live an ordinary life so we do not need anything extraordinary" (101;110-2). It can be concluded from this that for St. Joseph of Cluny, prayer is vital, simple, making use of all the Church's prayers in communion with God's people. In fact, we find in Anne Marie's prayer all the prayers of Christian devotion.

She gave top priority to the Eucharist, Christ's own prayer. To emphasize its importance she used the strongest terms: *"You will go to Holy Mass, never miss it without a serious reason..."* (271-2; 289-1). She spoke to Sister Madeleine Collogne about this with the utmost clarity. The latter was the Superior in Senegal at that time, and the only priest in the colony was behaving strangely, even dangerously. Sister Madeleine had suggested that they no longer go to Mass in order to avoid problems. The reply was very clear: *"You will go to Mass."* Nothing can replace the prayer of Christ on the Cross and the offering of his life for the salvation of the world. It is THE prayer. Unfortunately, we cannot always have the Mass since it does not depend on us, but on the presence of a priest. The foundress had this experience when the ecclesiastical authorities deprived her of it, and for her this was martyrdom; *"They let me leave Cayenne with the burden of spiritual disgrace; but yesterday, the second day of the retreat, I had the unbelievable happiness of receiving my God after two years of the most cruel deprivation"* (450-1; 534-1). The letter was addressed to her well-beloved niece, Sister Clotilde, with whom she shared her intimate spiritual life and the sentiments of her heart. It is dated 1843, when Anne Marie was 63 years of age. But when she had two Masses daily, it was heaven on earth: *"The house in Paris is Heaven on earth; we have two Masses every day..."* (716-5; 808-4). Nanette's love for the Eucharist, the summit and centre of our life, (cf. Vatican 11) was the same for the foundress matured by human persecutions and divine consolations, as it was when she hid outlawed priests so that they could celebrate Mass.

After the Mass, it was **meditation**, a method of prayer that was particularly dear to Fr. Ballanche's former disciple. It was he who had initiated her into heart-to-heart dialogue with God. It was the prayer that had formed, trained and introduced her to filial intimacy with the Father. She never missed it and recommended her daughters to do likewise: *"Do not miss your meditation, meditate at the foot of the Cross and there, you will get the lights you need to do your duty well,"* she wrote to the Superior of Mayotte (577-2; 666-2). This letter was dated 1846, when the Foundress was 66 years of age, and she had experienced in a powerful way how prayer helps us to grow in the love of God, and the strength, courage and lights it gives to help us to make progress. Two years later, she wrote again to the same person about the capital importance of meditation and she outlined a method that she used herself, that of St. Ignatius. *"We have the most flourishing novitiates...we are increasing like flies. Let us try to advance daily in virtue, especially in the spirit of prayer. It is in prayer that God speaks to the heart. It is there he instructs us and consoles us. My dear daughters, love meditation, apply yourself to it. I am sending you a little book of St. Ignatius' maxims. It is the best way to pray. If you knew how much good this little book has done for me! We are following this method of prayer in several of our houses"* (696-6; 787-4). Anne Marie as always, did not speak about the books she had read or the instructions she had heard, but from her own experience. Her book was her life and this is what she has communicated to us! In December 1850, a few months before her death, she spoke again about prayer, but this time it was in a letter to her sister and collaborator, Rosalie Javouhey. She linked it closely to God's Will. *"Let us pray, pray a lot; we will find our strength in our prayer, in our union with God; everything else is only vanity. Let us seek only to do God's Divine Will"* (986-2; 1079-2). Meditation is the essential spiritual means of succeeding in the religious life of St. Joseph of Cluny. We could be deprived of the Eucharist because of circumstances, distance, sickness...never of meditation.

The eight days of retreat with the celebration of the Eucharist, meditation, silence and instructions always aroused Anne Marie's enthusiasm: *"Retreats have done marvels, I feel I have got so much out of them for myself in my great need"* (453-9; 537-5). Not only did she make her retreat, but she accompanied others on retreat trying at the same time to follow it herself: "You know I was in Rouen for the retreat, also in Cluny and Paris; each time I became converted as best I could" (764-3; 859-2). And when she could not be at the retreat, she wrote: *"I am longing to know all about the fervour of the retreat. How happy you will be when you are perfect"* (263-5; 281-3). *"We have just fixed the Paris retreat for September 12th, following that of Rouen which will close on the 8th... I hope to avail of it to accomplish God's Will for me and for His work"* (750-1; 844-1). She experienced the benefits of retreats so much that she wished to make *"a few months of retreat"*. *"We are going to have a few months of retreat in Bievres, directed by a good Jesuit. If Fr. Bertrand is in Paris, he will be the director"* (778-6; 870-5). A retreat is never a penance for her who had been trained by Fr. Ballanche. It was rather a time of abundant graces to be welcomed with joy: *"I would have so liked to have been at the retreat! I will do my best to arrive on the 25th, so that I will be at the clothing and the final blessing, in order to receive the abundant blessings of the retreat"* (521-1; 608-1). Retreats are mentioned several times by her. They are never done in a routine manner, through obligation, or as a duty of office (when she had to preside at them!). Each time it was a heartfelt undertaking. The child drew closer to her Father by conversion, and received enthusiastically an abundant shower of graces and blessings from him. This is the Cluny way of looking at, and making the annual retreat!

Balthazar Javouhey's daughter joyfully added the simple popular vocal prayers that she had known in her youth on the farm, to the prayers and times of prayer of rule. *"When you get this letter," she wrote to the Superior in Cluny in December 1835, "I will be on my*

way to where the Lord is calling me for His glory, and the salvation of so many unfortunates. Say the Memorare and the invocation O Mary, conceived without sin, everyday in community" (335-5; 359-3). She was 56 years of age and had attained great spiritual maturity but yet, she did not underrate these traditional forms of piety, of community fervour and intercession. Besides, this letter was written at a dramatic moment; she was leaving for her experience of "Mana I" on the orders of the Bishop Minister for Worship and against the wishes of Mgr. d'Hericourt! Intercession was offered through **novenas** in the communities because these vocal prayers flow in rhythms approved by the Church, rhythms that contribute to prayer, perseverance and fervour. *"I beg you to recommend me to the prayers of our dear daughters in St Yon. I am requesting them to make a novena to Mary conceived without sin, to ask that God's Will may be done in this important business"* (429-5; 495-2). This request for the novena dates from 1842, the time when the pioneer of freedom from slavery was the target of multiple persecutions, but also the recipient of countless consolations "in the virgin forests of Mana"! The great mystic as she was then, did not disdain traditional community prayer. On the contrary, she enjoyed and delighted in certain forms of this piety: *"We are celebrating the beautiful month of Mary,"* she wrote to Sister Madeleine Collonge from Paris in 1848, when Paris was in full revolution. The month of Mary often appeared in her letters. She was happy to begin it, and at the end, she marvelled at the graces received. It must be said that she had a deep Marian devotion. But we will return to this subject later.

Why is it necessary to pray?

When Anne Marie was asked why was it necessary to pray, her first unequivocal answer was linked to the Divine Will. To begin with, it is a question of knowing God's Will. Our daily life is so busy, so full of joys and sorrows, that is not always clear what it is that God

expects from us. Prayer creates the conditions for listening. So, the foundress often reiterated that we should pray to get the light we need from him: *"Pray and get prayers offered for me, ask the Lord to enlighten me so that I may do only his Will"* (117-8; 128-6). She herself did the same for others: *"I ask the Lord to enlighten you and to be your consolation"* (383-7; 421-3). The need to listen to God and to understand what he wanted increased with the realization that she was to be the spiritual guide of so many people who trusted her, and who were relying on her. She was tracing out a way so it had to be the right one: *"Ask the Lord to enlighten me with his divine lights so that I may not stray from the path by which he leads me, that he may forgive my sins and give us all his holy blessing"* (294-3; 314-2). What she said about herself is true of every sister of St. Joseph of Cluny who has to follow an original route on a common adventure. It is particularly true of superiors, who have the duty to be *"signposts", to lead the way: "The poor superiors have a hard task, they have to keep it constantly in mind and especially bring it to God in prayer"* (259-2; 276-2).

This prayer becomes all the more fervent when trials strike, especially when they come from ecclesiastical and religious authorities. The supplication prevents suffering from becoming a cause of revolt, and it sharpens the desire that God's Will may be made known, the only path to him. It becomes a fire that purifies and increases our love of God and our capacity to welcome his joy. At the climax of the "d'Hericourt" drama, this was the road that Anne Marie took: *"Let us pray, pray much, so that God's Spirit will inspire us and direct us according to his holy Will. Let us put no limits to our submission, let us say in all sincerity: May your holy Will be done in me and by me..."* (470-7; 554-5). And again, *"Pray a lot for me...when I do not see clearly, I cannot advance"* (539-2; 628-2).

There is another very painful time which calls for intense prayer in great humility: when others have to be told what God expected of

them. Anne Marie's prayer at such times was one of complete self-offering to the Lord. "But who is there to replace her?" she wrote concerning a sister. *"God will provide, I cannot see anyone...let us pray, let us ask God who grants everything to humble prayer"* (745-1; 839-1). She wrote again: *"I am in a great predicament, I have to find teachers... I will be forced to close some houses to keep others going...pray for me, I have great need of it"* (827-3; 922-2).

We must **also pray that God's Will may be done**. It is not enough to know it. It is prayer again, humble prayer, that allows the divine strength to show itself. God Himself will carry out his Will in us, through us and around us, and this will cause his work to succeed. So what Jesus Himself taught us has to be constantly asked for: "Your Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven!" Anne Marie wrote this in her own way: *"Pray for us as you always do and do not tire of praying; keep asking that God's holy Will be done"* (244-5; 260-5).

She who had made her profession retreat with the Jesuit, Fr. Aubonne, knew that the carrying out of God's Will was linked to his glory. To do God's Will is to glorify him. It is to show him our gratitude and our love. It is, in fact, to offer God our Father who loves us passionately what can give him the greatest pleasure: *"Pray, my dear daughters, that God's Will may be done in us, let us do all for his glory. He will be our reward"* (285-4; 305-4).

The accomplishment of God's Will is less evident when our sins are an obstacle to him. Here again, prayer breaks down the barriers of selfishness, laziness, pride or self-sufficiency which risk making God's work sterile. *"My very dear daughters, pray to him that my sins may not be an obstacle to his merciful designs for these unfortunate people"*, she wrote regarding Mana in March 1836 (341-2; 365-1). Trusting, fervent, ardent prayer also prevents God's work from being hindered by sin. During the persecution led by Mgr. d'Hericourt, the foundress wrote: *"Let us pray a lot so that the Lord*

will direct his work according to his holy Will” (430-3; 497-2).

Of course, prayer does not dispense with the commitment to let God’s Will be done, neither does it do away with the need to use every human means at our disposal, and to choose the best. It supports all human efforts and increases their efficacy by influencing hearts and opening them. Finally, it works little miracles: *“I have just got the report on the children confided to us,” wrote Anne Marie.... “we will use every means that wisdom dictates to bring them up well. Help us with your prayers and then prepare some good subjects for us”* (341-3; 365-2). We are in March 1836, and she was in Mana where she began her project for educating for freedom, a project that she based firmly on **unceasing prayer**, but it was evident that she also used **“all the means that wisdom dictated”**.

It is obvious that the foundress recommended very highly the prayer of praise and thanksgiving. This had a significant place in her spiritual life and it should also have in ours. Praise opens our eyes to all that God is already doing, to the marvels that he accomplishes. It keeps our hearts joyful and makes us ready for further progress in faith as we seek to know and do God’s Will.

She whom God gives us as our model was constantly living this... *“How things have changed,”* she remarked when Mgr. d’Hericourt’s persecution began to lose ground. *“They are not shouting so loudly, they are speaking kindly...let us not cease praying in order to express our deep gratitude for so many benefits”* (623-1; 715-1). This letter was dated 1846, the Foundress was 67 years of age, and she had lived a long religious and missionary life. However, she was not blasé and she had retained her joyful and grateful spontaneity. The expression, “let us not give up praying” has to be emphasized because it had two meanings for Anne Marie: firstly, we must not cease praying when the request has been obtained, we must continue to give thanks, and secondly, prayer ought to become unceasing.

Prayer in Balthazar's daughter's spirituality also had a deep missionary slant. It was a missionary activity on the same level as education, catechesis, care of the sick, etc... Just as Anne Marie's activity was situated in the history of her time by responding to emergencies, such as the liberation of the slaves, in the same way, her prayer was a missionary response to the appeals of history. Political events urged her to beg her sisters to pray and to pray herself: *"Let us pray and redouble our fervour and our submission so as to obtain grace and mercy for sinners"* (665-2; 756-2). It was the month of July 1847, and France was in a sad state, just a few months away from a new revolution. When the situation got more serious still: *"I am sad, very sad, that they do not wish to recognize the hand of God, they do not pray so as to appease his anger...the wicked are exasperated, nothing will bring them back. Pray, my dear daughter for all who do not do so and need it so much"* (736-1; 829-1). Then when some glimmers of hope appeared and things seemed to be improving, the foundress again spoke about prayer. *"They say that religion has made great conquests, that the clergy are very fervent and devoted. Our Assembly is not very Catholic, yet we have hope. Our holy bishops are doing a lot of good. They encourage and support worthwhile causes. Let us pray, oh, let us pray, God lets himself be touched."* (746-1; 840-1).

At the heart of this missionary prayer, there was prayer for the Church itself and for the Pope. It was no longer a mission "ad gentes", but mission "ad intra". And she wrote: *"Our Holy Father, the Pope, has been forced to leave Rome. We had hoped that he would come to France, but he decided that he should stay as near as possible to Rome. Let us pray much for the needs of the Church"* (771-8; 866-6). Anne Marie was then experiencing great difficulties with the diocese of Autun, and the political state of France was also causing much anxiety. It was November 1848, the year of the revolution in Paris, and there was much unrest. But she was a daughter of the Church and though persecuted by it, she had it at heart to pray for it.

Missionary prayer also means that those in need are remembered: *“The defrocked priests have left for India with a Protestant minister. Let us pray for their conversion, their salvation is in danger”* (492-1; 577-1).

Prayer is also a testimony of affection. It is a bond of friendship and communion, a mutual support for families, and a life-giving sign of unity and cohesion. Anne Marie often invited prayers for loved ones simply because we love them. She ended innumerable letters by this expression of affectionate prayer: “Good-bye my very dear daughter, pray for me who am all yours” (300-8; 319-5). This ending was not just a stereotyped formula for her, since she did not always use the same expression. Sometimes, she did not speak at all about prayer. At other times, she explained why it was necessary to pray for her: *“Pray for me, I need it badly. I am not unhappy; I am calm and enjoy peace of soul. I pardon my persecutors and God will administer justice”* (420-5; 482-2).

What she wished for on the other hand, was that we would pray for each other in St. Joseph’s family. Affectionate family prayer of intercession pleases God: *“I am longing to see this poor Cluny, where there are so many of our good daughters that I would like to make happy! But what can I do, poor as I am...Meanwhile, let us pray for each other, God will hear our prayer...”* (746-6; 840-3).

The prayer of affection is not limited to the sisters of the Congregation. She, who had always worked with lay people of every description, extended it to collaborators and benefactors: *“Javouhey is giving us a lot of satisfaction, he is acting in an admirable manner. Pray for him, he is getting married soon”* (345-9; 370-5). This Javouhey was a cousin, the son of her uncle Jean-Baptiste, but he was also a precious collaborator. In a later letter, we read again: *“the Blacks (in Cayenne) were better than those in the Antilles. The Governor did a great service to the colony by his prudence. Let us*

pray for him and his family...' (783-1; 877-1).

Finally, in fidelity to the Gospel, Anne Marie recommended that this prayer of affection should be extended to everyone including those who were proving themselves to be enemies: *"Be careful not to blame anyone,"* she wrote to the sisters in Bourbon, *"let us pray for everybody; never rejoice over the sorrows of your enemies.."* (98-3; 107-3).

The former disciple of Fr. Ballanche gives the conclusion to this list of reasons for praying herself: *"Pray, pray. God wishes us to pray"* (905-4; 997-2). She is in keeping with the best of Catholic theology when she makes this affirmation. In fact, God has no need for us to pray to him to let him know what we require or to add to his glory. But he wants us to pray to him because we are really his children, living in communion with him.

When should we pray?

For Anne Marie the answer is clear: we must pray always. She had the experience of being filled with prayer, that is, of being in a continual state of prayer that pervaded her day and her activities. She drew so many blessings from it, both for her life and for her mission, that she recommended it to all her daughters: *"Yes, my dear beloved daughters, be always in spirit in his presence by continual prayer"* (928-2; 1020-1). This letter was written in 1850 to Sister Claire Boyer in St. Mary's in Madagascar. The foundress was at the very end of her life and the advice that she gave confirms emphatically the experience she wrote about to Sister Rosalie Javouhey 25 years earlier: *"Teach (your sisters) to keep the interior spirit in the midst of the distracting occupations of their state, and above all, to always live in God's presence...if I could only make you understand how I experience this myself..."* (98-2; 107-2). This was written in July 1825!

The fruits she drew from it were numerous and essential. Firstly, she received the strength to do God's Will unceasingly: ***"Let us pray, pray a lot. We will find our strength in prayer, in union with God; let us seek only to do his divine Will"*** (986-2; 1079-2). She was aware that habitual prayer nourishes the charism and that growth in sanctity and missionary fruitfulness are linked to it: ***"With the interior spirit, we lack nothing; we profit from the good and the bad that God sends us, everything is for our good..."*** (98-3; 107-3). This missionary prayer allows one to be daring in missionary undertakings: ***"We need to acquire the interior spirit and prayer. With this twofold spirit, there is no danger anywhere"*** (258-1; 275-1). Another fruit of this interior spirit is the influence it has on community. "Charity pardons all and humility arranges everything. I feel keenly the need of these beautiful virtues that can only be acquired by a deep interior spirit" (119-5; 130-5).

Continuous prayer, the source of so many benefits, also stems from prayer: ***"Ask God fervently for the interior spirit"*** (925-2; 1017-1).

It is evident that in emergencies, continuous prayer becomes a cry of distress to God. Anne Marie was well acquainted with these during her life: difficult situations in the Congregation and with her sisters, wars and revolutions, and above all, the persecution by Mgr. d'Hericourt that lasted almost 20 years. On every occasion, she had recourse to prayer. Prayer really nourished the whole life of her whom the Church has declared Blessed. Anne Marie was a great 'pray-er' from the time of her adolescence to her death. She loved to pray, she prayed unceasingly, and God our Father made His beloved "blossom" in prayer. In this too, she is a model for her daughters.

References

1. Do not grow weary of praying

244-5; 260-5	629-1; 721-1	695-3; 786-2
470-7; 554-5	745-1; 839-1	665-2; 756-2
556-4; 645-2	623-1; 715-1	746-1; 840-1
782-1; 875-1	783-2; 877-1	773-2; 868-1
539-2; 628-2	285-4; 305-4	872-2; 966-2
728-1; 821-1	411-5; 461-3	

2. Praying according to St. Joseph of Cluny.

101-110-2

a) The Eucharist

289-1;	450-1; 534-1	716-5; 808-4
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b) Meditation

577-2; 666-2	696-6; 787-4	986-2; 1079-2
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c) Retreats

453-9; 537-5	764-3; 859-2	263-5; 281-3
750-1; 844-1	778-6; 870-5	521-1; 608-1

d) Vocal Prayers

335-5; 359-3	429-5; 495-2
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3 Why we need to pray.

a) To know God's Will

117-8; 128-6	383-7; 421-3	294-3; 314-2
259-2; 276-2	470-7; 554-5	539-2; 628-2
629-1; 721-1	728-1; 821-1	745-1; 839-1
827-3; 922-2	979; 1072-1	1029-2; 1127-1
1032-2; 1130-2		

b) That it may be done

244-5; 260-5 285-4; 305-4

341-2; 365-1

430-3; 497-2 341-3; 365-2

c) Thanksgiving

623-1; 715-1

d) Missionary significance

665-2; 756-2 736-1; 829-1

746-1; 840-1

771-8; 866-6 492-1; 577-1

e) Testimony of affection

300-8; 319-5 420-5; 482-2

746-6; 840-3

345-9; 370-5 783-1; 877-1

98-3; 107-3

905-4; 997-2

4 When have we to pray

a) Unceasingly

928-2; 1020-1 98-2; 107-2

260-6; 277-6

986-2; 1079-2 98-3; 107-3

258-1; 275-1

119-5; 130-5 925-2; 1017-1

* 115

b) In cases of emergency

271-2; 289-2 260-3; 277-3

730-1,2; 823-1,2

720-2; 812-2 723-4; 815-2

332-1; 356

353-10; 379-5 537-6; 625-5,6



Chapter 10

The Secret Tabernacle

As we pointed out earlier, the word “God” is much used by Balthazar’s daughter, and the name of Jesus does not appear a lot - only about a dozen times. This is striking because other saints that we know well, for example St. Teresa of Avila and Therese of the Child Jesus, used the name of Jesus constantly. If the name of Jesus is not mentioned frequently in the letters that we are studying, they are nevertheless of the utmost importance and, thanks to them, we are going to discover the depth and the tenderness of the feelings of one whom God had called at 18 years of age and whose heart never grew old. Perhaps an explanation is necessary for the infrequent use that we have pointed out. It is due to her “country upbringing”. It shows a deep sense of modesty in revealing her innermost feelings and the amazing love that dwelt in the secret tabernacle of her heart...and whenever she was carried away by the fire of that love she stopped abruptly as if she had betrayed herself, dumbfounded for having manifested her secrets so openly, and she even apologized profusely: *“I will stop now, so as not to bore you by my repetition!”* (716-4; 808-3). We are now going to analyse these precious passages.

Welcoming his consolations

The first passage we propose to look at in depth is in letter 378-6; 412-3 which concludes: ***“Good bye my very dear and beloved daughters, let us be united often at the feet of our Divine Spouse, there we will find all the consolations we need”***. The pioneer of the emancipation of slaves and victim of a thousand harassments from the colonists, was then in Mana. It was 1839, and she availed of Governor Ducamper’s departure for his appointment in India, to write to her daughters in Pondicherry. What was she to say to them? She did not know the country, the works or the people that she was addressing. Her letter therefore, was primarily a missionary and spiritual sharing, and the final passage was the most revealing. We know, from elsewhere, how dear to her heart was unity in the “Order”, so she invited the sisters to be united at the feet of their Divine Spouse, and as she has experienced the hardships of the mission, she spoke about finding there the consolations that we need. Consolations? Is this sentimentalism? We must reread John 14: 16 where Jesus said: “I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete”. If Jesus speaks of another Paraclete, it is because there is already one and it is he! What does the word Paraclete mean? In ancient Greece, at the time when the independent cities, Sparta, Troy, Athens and Thebes were waging war against one another, those who emerged victorious used to take captive highly intellectual prisoners to make slaves of them and use them as tutors for the king’s sons. These tutors were “paracletes”. They never left their “protégé” day or night, serving him as a master, a protector, a defender and a consoler...Jesus presents himself as our first Paraclete and this confirms something else that He had said: “Come to me, you who labour and I will give you rest” (Mt.11:28). To expect Jesus to provide the consolations we need, is simply to live the Gospel and let Jesus play his part.

To live continually in His Presence

And here is the second important text: ***“Let us stir ourselves up more and more to do our duty, let us never lose sight of the presence of our Divine Spouse who is always close to us to support and console when we call on him for help; but how difficult it is to have him always present in a world where everything is distracting! It is only in solitude that he lets himself be heard and where it is easy to converse with him. Consequently, I have such a strong desire that I am languishing whilst awaiting the desired moment to get away to my dear retreat”*** (212-2; 228-2). Here again we must look very closely at the text. The letter is dated 10 April 1831, when Anne Marie was 51 years of age. She already had to her credit a lot of missionary accomplishments. At this time, she had just finished visiting Martinique and Guadeloupe where her sister Marie-Therese was. The Cayenne colonists availed of her absence to discourage the French who had come to Mana to set up the colony. Ten of them were asking for compensation and the cost of their repatriation. The others were so discouraged that they scarcely worked at all. For the first time, famine was about to ravage Mana! Besides, the 1831 revolution had so changed the great political leaders in Paris that they no longer felt obliged to respect the commitments made by the previous government and the subsidies promised for the first two years were no longer forthcoming. The colony had to survive in unforeseen conditions. But Anne Marie’s strength was Jesus and she wrote from Cayenne, where she had gone on business, to her community in Mana in order to share with them what was sustaining her: ***“Jesus is always close to us, we must never lose sight of this. He supports and consoles us if we call on him for help”***. She realized that the multiple negotiations to be done in Cayenne would not be conducive to her desire to remain united with her divine spouse and she expressed this in strong terms: ***“I languish whilst awaiting the desired moment when I shall get back to my dear retreat”***. It is the language of a young bride. When one is in love, one does not grow old!

Letting Him take over our whole being

The third text is going to help us to enter more deeply into the intimate life of her who consecrated herself to Jesus from her adolescence and who claimed to be his spouse from 1799 (2-2; 2-2). It is taken from letter 716; 808: ***“Oh, if we had a little humility, we would rejoice to suffer something for love of our Divine Spouse. If we did a good quarter of an hour’s meditation every day according to the Exercises of St. Ignatius, we would soon cherish our crosses, instead of fleeing from them. You should familiarise yourself with the life our Saviour lived on this earth; then you would see him in each of your actions and in the difficulties that are inseparable from our life. You would welcome everything because you would attribute all to him. He endured all the sorrows of our life in order to be our model”*** (716-4; 808-3). This letter is addressed to Sister Madeleine Collonge, her friend and companion in trials. It was in 1848, and Anne Marie had been back in Paris for nearly five years. She was 68 years of age, and this passage lets us see the secret of her prayer. The first advice she gave to her friend was ***“to do a good quarter of an hour’s meditation using the method of St. Ignatius”***. The author of these exercises recognised, together with other great spiritual writers, the existence of “interior senses” in us. Just as our body is endowed with sight, hearing, touch etc, our soul also is equipped with spiritual sight, hearing, touch. The Ignatian art of prayer advocates the use of the interior senses. In our morning meditation we relive the Gospel episodes. We see Jesus walking along by the sea of Tiberias and we hear His very resonant voice calling James and John, and then Peter and Andrew. We see him cast his glance of pity on the crowd. We hear him explaining the Beatitudes and we experience his gaze resting on us. This daily encounter with Jesus allows us to get to know him: his tastes, his preferences, and his expectations. ***“You will familiarize yourself with the human life of Our Saviour”***, she, who commented so fervently on the Gospels, wrote, and she added: ***“You will see him in each of your actions”***.

After the meditation, it is he, Jesus who accompanies us in everything that we do. He is with us to teach, to care for the sick, to meet people. He gives a force to our presence and to our words that they do not have. He fills our mind and heart with his humility. He shares the mission with us. ***“He has endured all the difficulties of our life to be our model”***. Anne Marie emphasized this for she had been through it all.

Such familiarity with the Gospel necessarily leads us to the contemplation of the Passion, because in each of the Gospels, the account of Jesus’ last days takes up a considerable part. She whom Mgr. d’Autun persecuted so much had experienced this and she added: ***“You will cherish the crosses”***. It was what she lived.

The fruits of this familiarity

We also see that she had a great love of the Cross, the first fruit of such prayer. She frequently mentioned in her letters the joy and consolation she found in having to carry the Cross with Jesus: ***“I bear courageously, I would say almost with pleasure, all the crosses that God sends me; I find consolation in it”***, she wrote in October 1842, when her work in Mana was ending. At the same time she had to endure calumnies from the people in Cayenne, oppression from the Bishop of Autun and the burden of the difficult work of educating for freedom 500 blacks wounded by slavery. To encourage her daughters in their trials, she often advised them to do what she did herself: to place everything at the foot of the Cross. ***“Put all the crosses that are inseparable from your work at the foot of the Cross”*** (294-2; 314-2), she wrote to Sister Theophile Montet. Our trials and our sufferings which have no value other than that of our poverty and insufficiency, take on the infinite value of the Cross of the Son of God. At the end of her life, the Foundress never gave up her meditation on

the Passion of Jesus. In May 1847, she sent Sister Stanislaus Rivoire, another friend with whom she was able to share the secrets of her heart, a book on the Passion that she cherished, asking her to return it as soon as she had read it. (646-1; 737-1). Sister Rosalie Javouhey, who often shared the spiritual confidences of her elder sister, wrote on 13 November 13 1854: *"My dear Mother Foundress told me several times that it was from meditating on the Passion that she drew her strength and her courage. Following her example, I began to meditate on it, and it has brought me great happiness."*

The constant contact with Jesus in the Gospels produces another fruit, devotion to the Real Presence. This beloved Jesus lives in our tabernacles under the appearance of the host. It is he, really he. And if the Eucharist transfigured the life of the fervent missionary, the Real Presence prolonged her happiness. In December 1845, after that terribly stormy August when Mgr. d'Autun had tried to destroy the novitiate, she wrote to Cluny: *"When nothing comes between you and God, you can bear the greatest cross"* (556-6; 645-3). And a little later when the Blessed Sacrament was restored to the chapel in Paris: *"We have the sweet consolation of having God in our chapel"* (562-3; 649-2). The Real Presence is a treasure that Anne Marie appreciated with her whole being. When in September 1845, Mgr. d'Hericourt forbade them to have a chapel in Paris, her vital need for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament made her rent a flat in rue du Regard in Notre Dame de Champs parish, near to a community which had the Blessed Sacrament.

The third fruit of assiduous meditation on the Gospels is the prophetic strength that it gives. Jesus speaks to the heart of the person who lives in intimacy with him. He inspires intuitions and convictions that promote peace. In the midst of tribulations and threats of every kind, the eldest of the Javouhey sisters received from Jesus lights and convictions about the Congregation that she had been ordered to found with her younger sisters. (1009-1; 1105-1). In September 1845,

at the centre of the torment provoked by Fr. Cucherat's attempts to turn away the novices, she wrote to her sister Rosalie. "I have just come from Mass where I had the happiness of receiving my God in this haven of peace (the flat in rue du Regard) that Heaven has given us during these stormy times; it fills me with consolation and trust! "God's work will not even be interrupted" (529-1; 615-1). Later, on 12 September 1848, in similar circumstances, she wrote: "*I fear nothing, Jesus is with me...*" (762-1; 856-1).

Several times in her writings, Fr. Ballanche's former disciple used the phrase "the Divine Spouse" to express her love, adoration and intimate union with our Lord. Anne Marie is very aware that her relationship with the Lord was an espousal. It is a way of speaking that was dropped at the close of the 20th century as it was considered too affected and sentimental. But we must affirm emphatically that this theme of Spouse is a biblical one. In the Old Testament God is the Spouse of his people. Just to take one example from Isaiah: "You are no longer to be named "Forsaken", nor your land "Abandoned", but you shall be called "My Delight" and your land "the Wedded" for Yahweh takes delight in you and your land will have its wedding" (Is.62: 4). Later, in the preaching of John the Baptist, the Spouse is Jesus: "The bride is only for the bridegroom" (John 3:29). Jesus presents himself as such. "But at midnight, there was a cry, the Bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him", He said in a parable that clearly applied to himself (Mt.25, 6). This theme is both theological and spiritual. Many Doctors of the Church used it, the last to date being Therese of Lisieux, the youngest Doctor of our Church.

What meaning did Anne Marie give to this expression when she used it? Firstly, to espouse Jesus is to love him, to know him ever better, to love him with a tender love and to seek to please him when his wishes are known: "***Let us love our duty and fulfill it always so as to please our Divine Spouse...***" (720-4; 812-3), she wrote on 13 May 1848 to a sister in St. Pierre and Miquelon.

Espousals have a second meaning for Cluny. It is a question of imitation. To espouse Jesus is to espouse his life and his Cross. He is the dazzling Prince of holiness (Psalm 109,3) and we have to follow him on the road to sanctity (Eph. 5:1; Jn.13:15). *“He has endured all the difficulties of our life in order to be our model,”* wrote Anne Marie in the letter already quoted (716-4; 808-3). She wanted to imitate this role model wholeheartedly by the vows she had taken, vows which she lived with the utmost sincerity but also with the originality of her charism. But more of this later.

Finally, espousal means to espouse also the projects, **the mission of Jesus**, to take to heart what his life was for, the salvation of all. The young girl from Chamblanc had espoused Jesus’ plans and accomplished them by catechising the children and orphans. The seventy-year old foundress had never renounced her espousals, and she showed this by sending numerous groups of sisters to the four corners of the world, at the cost of a thousand tribulations. *“Try to form your postulants so that they will be good teachers, but above all, good religious. You know we need sixty religious for the colonies this year, without counting the thirty-one who have just left, and with them the three from Mayotte who are ready”* (691-4; 782-2). *And a short time later: Twelve sisters are requested for Bourbon, and at least six are needed for Pondichery, but where are we to get so many sisters?”* (973-1; 1066-1).

Like Anne Marie, each Sister of Saint Joseph of Cluny is invited to have in the depths of her heart a secret tabernacle where she lives with Jesus, Jesus crucified; where she communes with him, where she receives from **“the Radiant Prince of Holiness”**, consolation, perseverance, peaceful audacity and strength for the mission.

References

1. The secret of Anne Marie's heart:
212-2; 228-2,4 378-6; 412-3

2. In the depths of the tabernacle:

716-4; 808-3 646-1; 737-1

3. The fruits

a) love of the Cross

439-3; 507-2 294-2; 314-2

b) attachment to the Real Presence

556-6; 645-3 562-3; 649-2

c) tender intimacy

229-6; 246-8

d) prophetic strength

529-1; 615-1

762-1; 856-1

1009-1; 1105-1

e) the espousals;

720-4; 812-3

716-4; 808-3

691-4; 782-2

973-1; 1066-1



Chapter 11

Following Jesus

Anne Marie who was consecrated to her Divine Spouse by the three vows had a very keen sense of what this meant. *“We are never dispensed at any time from the observance of our holy rule and above all of our vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. Let us meditate on them unceasingly, practise them, and they will be our glory for eternity”* (480-4; 565-3). A little earlier, in this same letter of May 1844, she had written: “It is not enough to begin well, death should find us still armed.” These are affirmations that emphasized, when the need arose, the radical value that she attached to religious consecration. Curiously enough, when naming the vows, it is obedience that comes first, followed by chastity, then poverty. This is not the usual order accepted in the Church. According to tradition, they are listed as poverty, chastity, obedience. The foundress’ originality is not confined only to the order of the vows. She adds something that is proper to each one of them and places special emphasis on it. Of course the vows remain vows and their content is clearly defined by Canon Law. We are not going to review here the prescriptions of Canon Law, but we will concentrate on highlighting Anne Marie’s sensitivity regarding each of the vows.

Obedience

“My children, whom must you obey? The Rule and nothing but the Rule. In all countries, in all employments, it directs and protects you from all error. Your superiors have to submit to it just as you do. It commands all; in every country it speaks the same language: renunciation, self-abnegation, charity, obedience, humility and poverty. These virtues, my dear daughters are for all climates, for all countries and even for all employments. We have all to gain by obeying, and all to fear by not doing so. Let us obey then and let us do so with the sole aim of pleasing God” (98-10; 107-9). This passage is somewhat long, but it is worth quoting in full, since from the very beginning obedience is seen as all-embracing and it includes everything else: chastity, poverty, asceticism. It coincides with the Rule and is always of value, for everyone and in every clime.

Anne Marie made obedience the rule of her whole life and for her it was pinpointed by certain principles.

First of all, the source from which Cluny obedience stems is God’s Will, and this norm is of primary importance. It requires complete adherence. This principle appeared to be very clear for the young girl of 22, and it continued to guide the foundress when she had matured in years and wisdom. This is what she wrote to her father in February 1802: *“However, you must not think that I can consult you on anything relating to our state of life; in spite of our friendship and the dependence that I have, and must have, on you, I must do what I believe is God’s Will without considering whether it suits everybody. I must not even follow my own inclinations”* (5-1; 5-2). The young Anne makes a distinction in this letter between the natural dependence she should have on her father, and how it is affected by “her state” as a consecrated person. In all that concerns the latter, it is only God’s Will that counts. Forty-six years later, the foundress, now 68 of age, reacted in the same way. *“Be at peace,”* she

advised a sister in France. *"As soon as I am confident that God does not want us there, I will recall you so that you can go and do good elsewhere. So pray fervently that God's Will may be done"* (683-1; 774-1).

This vow of obedience can only work when there is mutual understanding between superiors and sisters. It is wounded by lack of trust, rivalry, and authoritarianism in one or the other party. *"You know my dear daughters, that the head commands, and the members obey,"* she wrote in 1848 to Sister Leonie, the superior in Guadeloupe, *"and there is disorder if the one ignores the other...do not be afraid to open your heart to me, mine is completely yours. We need to have mutual trust; I give you mine and you can rely on it"* (780-1; 874-2).

Cluny obedience is at the service of a mission project and the common good. It is orientated towards the salvation of all. This conviction is strongly confirmed in a letter of 1846: *"I do not doubt the obedience of our dear daughters who will gladly give themselves to the great work of evangelisation that is confided to us..."* (586-4; 676-3).

In fact, this vow is lived according to the Constitutions which are the first expression of God's Will for each Sister and for the Congregation as a whole. This principle is evident in Anne Marie's sharing with her sister Marie-Therese in 1834: *"The Bishop of Beauvais thought that he could give us a secular administrator; we thanked him politely and told him that our statutes did not allow it"* (293-10; 313-7).

In its concrete application, Cluny obedience is distinguished by dialogue: *"Tell me what you think about my proposal, without considering my opinion which is not based on perfect knowledge,"* was the request from the foundress in a letter dated 1832 (242-3; 258-

3). In her vocabulary, the word dialogue is the equivalent of the verb “to chat”. This was pointed out in Chapter VI concerning the seeking of God’s Will and it occurs often in her writings. *“I do not know what to say to you about Guadeloupe...talk it over with our dear Sister Delorme...”* (454-3; 538-2).

Obedience for the eldest of the Javouhey girls was usually practised in an atmosphere of freedom. Proof of this was evident throughout her whole life. In February 1826, the young foundress wrote with reference to Senegal: *“Sister Ursula is still there but she is free to come back whenever she wishes; it is this freedom that has caused her to stay longer”* (110-16; 120-13). Almost ten years later, in 1835, she outlined for Sister Onesime Lefevre the steps to be taken in order to find the small group of sisters who were destined for the foundation in Trinidad. *“You must first of all sound them out to know how they are taking this. If they want to come back to France for a few months, you can let them leave immediately”* (309-2; 330-1). Then, ten years later in November 1847, the uncontested Mother General as she was then, wrote to Sister Marie Joseph, the superior in Alençon: *“I would very much like Sister Daniel to go to the colonies; but that is to be done freely”* (673-1; 764-1). In 1850, in a letter to Sister Theophile Montet in Rouen, she asked, *“Tell me, how is Sister Angela? If she is upset at having to wait for someone to replace her, then let her return. Give her my regards...”* (927-2; 1019-2). So in daily life, the practice of obedience calls for patience and requires us to take into consideration the capacities, wishes, and even the weaknesses of others: *“Sister Eligide writes that she is very unhappy in the south, that she cannot stay there. I am leaving her free and I feel sorry for her...”* (326-4; 349-3). And strengthened by her own experience, Anne Marie recommended: *“Lighten the burden of obedience in every possible way”* (259-2; 276-2).

The practice of obedience also requires prayer and discernment to know the Lord’s ways. We have already considered at length “the

search for God's Will in prayer", and "praying in order to know and do God's Will". It suffices to emphasise here that the close link between the vow of obedience and God's Will is another reason for prayer and discernment: *"Come (to Paris)," Anne Marie wrote to Sister Theodosie, "and when you arrive we will consult God together in order to find out what he is asking of you and me"* (269-1; 287-1).

But when God's Will was clear and the common good was at stake, then there was no possible escape. The normal attitude was firmness. *"Major reasons oblige me to ask our beloved daughter, Sister Marie Therese Javouhey to leave for France so as to replace me for the good and for the consolation of our dear Congregation. I beg you not to say or do anything that would show weakness and make the obedience difficult for her."* This was the letter sent on 29 August 1839 to all the sisters in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Trinidad (370-1; 399-1).

Chastity

For Anne Marie, as for the whole Church, the goal of the vow of chastity is to unite us to Jesus in an absolute, definitive and complete way. He is the Spouse!: *"Give me news of our dear novices,"* she asked Sister Onesime Lefevre on 25 January 1850, *"God is giving them a great grace by calling them to take their place amongst his beloved spouses"* (872-6; 966-4). In Chamblanc in 1799, she called herself *"the spouse of Jesus Christ whose sole occupation is to please him..."* (2-3; 2-2). From 1799-1850 and until her death, her whole life was animated by these same convictions. Her heart did not change. We have already savoured what "the espousal with the Prince radiant with holiness" meant in the foundress' spirituality.

The vow of chastity seals this alliance and entails as its first obliga-

tion to love after the example of the Divine Spouse, to love like him. Now Jesus' human relationships are of a very high quality. They are at the same time warm, promoting the human person, welcoming and forgiving. It is the love of chastity. Balthazar's daughter invited her sisters to live this same type of love amongst themselves. For the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny the vow of chastity strives to create "a family" that lives harmoniously united in peace and joy. In 1825, she recommended all her daughters: ***"Love your sisters for the love of God, love them as spouses of Jesus Christ"*** (98-16; 107-11). She wrote to the sisters in the Marquises Islands: ***"May peace and the most perfect union reign amongst you"*** (471-2; 555-2). This was her wish also for the communities in Bourbon in May 1844 (480-6; 565-5). And to Sister Madeleine Colonge in Cayenne in January 1845: ***"I wish you to live in harmony for the greater glory of God and the salvation of your neighbour"*** (506-4; 592-3). Each member of this family is invited to put her talents at the service of others. In December 1825, the foundress sent directives to her sister Rosalie in Bourbon: ***"Do not forget to have your dear daughters instructed, those who are more educated should teach those who are less so, especially writing and grammar"*** (104-5; 113-4). This recommendation was already given in 1818 at the time of the first departures for Bourbon: ***"Share with each other the things that some of you already know and that the others don't. Let union and peace reign in everything amongst all the Sisters of St. Joseph. May this never change...Love each other as much as I love you... and you will be happy"*** (31-1; 35-1).

But the love of chastity that unites us to Jesus and to our neighbour is a delicate flower that has to be protected; it can be destroyed by imprudence. Consequently, the attentive mother has advice to give. First of all, dangerous occasions and places have to be avoided. Anne Marie herself refused to go to the farm in Pluvot to supervise the workers in 1799 (2-1; 2-1). Useless reading that is just satisfying our curiosity is not to be indulged in (297-4; 323-2). We should avoid

useless conversations with priests or men, no matter who they are. They flatter our feminine vanity and so we have “everything to fear” (98-10; 107-8). We are to be on our guard against particular friendships, they are the tomb of celibate love (98-16; 107-11). In fact, when the Lord requests it we have to sacrifice cherished friendships because the mission is calling us elsewhere (65-2,3; 74-2,3). In a word, we must remain free, because true love sets us free.

Poverty

The vow of poverty “invades” the letters of her who was so well acquainted with it so often during her life. Once again we are going to find that besides the requirements of Canon Law (misappropriation, duty of accountability), there are a certain number of her own demands.

Balthazar’s daughter, used to living in a ‘clan’, recognised very early that the Congregation should be a big family where everything was shared and she was going to have this written into the Constitutions even though it was not required by Canon Law at this time. In 1818, Mgr. Imberties, a great protector of the young Congregation of St. Joseph, had new statutes drawn up since they were needed because of new situations. He sent them to the foundress for her comments, and her reaction gives an idea of the charism and the concept of poverty that this young woman of 38 had: *“The Congregation can only be maintained if there is perfect unity and charity. All the houses must help each other and, so as to have everything in order, recourse must be had to the Council of the Congregation, to the Superior General, as to a mother, who in this capacity should provide for everyone’s needs. But how can she know these needs unless she is informed? How can she prevent abuses if she does not know about them? Where will she get the means to help those in need if she cannot dispose of the surplus of those who are well off?”*

Besides, should the aged and infirm sisters not find a peaceful home in the Principal House? How can we care for them if each house does not help with its surplus? So, in your wisdom, Monsignor, do you not think that it would be advisable to insert an article on the possibility of setting up a common fund for the houses of the Congregation, and the right of the Superior General and the Council to supervise the accounts?” (30-6; 32-4)

This aspect of poverty which characterises St. Joseph of Cluny came from Anne Marie's intuition and she would constantly refer to it. In 1888 St. Pierre and Miquelon was told about it: *“My child, you are not allowed to give away another's property. As long as the Congregation is in debt, we must work to pay it off... All the houses should co-operate to support such commitments in an honourable way”* (146-3; 162-2). Later, it was her youngest sister, Rosalie Javouhey, the superior in Bourbon, who was called to order: *“You have spent too much on different things. This has to be corrected. What you are spending unnecessarily could be of much benefit in France”* (154-20; 171-16). It was 1828. In December of that same year, Sr. Marie Joseph received a similar reminder. She was to assume better control of the communities under her charge. *“Write to her,”* Anne Marie requested, referring to a superior. *“She is not allowed to dispose of funds belonging to the Congregation which has so many responsibilities...you have to help to support it”* (176-7; 186-6). Two years later she complained to Sister Marie Therese that Sister Marie Joseph who had been badly advised, had bought a house in Senlis for seventy thousand francs when Sister Clotilde in Limoux was in need (202-5; 217-4). We could go on giving similar examples, but to be really convinced of the importance of this aspect of poverty in St. Joseph of Cluny, we will quote again from her letter of 10 March 1850. The foundress was then at the end of her mission. She had just bought the Mother House and had appealed to all the communities for help to pay for it. *“To pay for our big house which is, and will be, our salvation, we need the support of the whole Congregation”* (900-

7; 992-4). If this worldwide solidarity with all the communities that make up a single family is to be lived, then, order, economy, good administration, clear accounts and freedom from debts are required in each house. The eldest of the Javouhey daughters returned once more to this subject in a letter to Sister Marie Joseph: *"I will not be liked as I am preaching economy everywhere. When there are seven hundred people to be fed, you have to think about it and know how to count"* (368-5; 397-2). On another level, less far-reaching, Cluny poverty demands a certain style for the houses: simplicity and cleanliness. Anxious about the life-style in some of the communities, Anne-Marie wrote to Sister Marie-Therese in Martinique: *"There should be perfect cleanliness in all our houses but also great simplicity"* (274-5; 292-4). She repeated this several times and insisted on it, in season and out of season: *"Avoid everything that could increase expenses in your house. Let there be order everywhere. Simplicity and regularity are the most beautiful adornments of a religious house"* (457-2; 541-3). However, the houses should be functional and she herself saw to it that they were: *"I have just rented Versailles,"* she announced to Sister Marie Joseph in 1829. *"We take possession tomorrow. The boarding school will be perfect there. The numbers are growing..."* (179-1; 195-1). Nevertheless, these clean, simple, functional houses should be kept austere. Some things must be lacking. It was to Sister Marie Joseph again that the explanation was given: *"Next week I will send you twelve little beds with frames, mattresses and bolsters. Have patience! Do not let poverty discourage you! We make a vow of it. We cannot have all we desire if we really want to fulfill this holy obligation, so do not be anxious about it"* (524-4; 616-3). We must do without things, not to inflict suffering on ourselves but to be in solidarity with the poor: *"I am happy to be poor with the poor,"* Anne Marie wrote from Cayenne on 4 March 1836 (340-4; 364-2), and ten years later, in 1847, she confirmed this aspect of Cluny poverty. *"Love and cherish poverty," she wrote to Sister Marie Joseph... "we must not be too well off, there are so many poor people!"* (678-1; 769-1). However, in spite of these

demands of austerity, *“the house must be made pleasant and the chapel beautiful”* (132-2; 143-2), so that each sister will find her happiness within her community!

On a third deeper and more interior level, Cluny poverty is basically poverty of heart, poverty of spirit (154-20; 171-11). The foundress had affirmed: *“It is not the lack of things that constitutes poverty, but the spirit of poverty that makes the poor of Jesus Christ. It is this spirit that He called blessed. Oh, how happy we would be if we had this true spirit of poverty!”* Once again Anne Marie called on her spiritual experience: *“I wish I could make you understand it as God makes me realise it!”* (98-8; 107-6). She had acquired a wisdom that recognised the vanity of the things of earth and her heart was not attached to them (340-4; 364-2). Poverty at this level is intimately connected with the ardent search for God’s Will, and the freedom that gives peace. *“Remember that when we have him (God) we have everything; we wish for nothing more than the accomplishment of his designs for us...”* (98-8; 107-6). The vow of poverty then becomes a vow of confidence in God: *“Let us throw ourselves into the arms of Divine Providence, abandon ourselves to its care”* (98-8; 107-6). All these teachings on poverty of spirit date from July 1825. Twenty-five years later, on 29 December 1850, the same concept of the vow of poverty made her say: *“We are beginning the year 1851 with a debt of one hundred thousand francs; my trust in God and in my dear Congregation gives me perfect peace”* (986-5; 1079-4).

This deep and life-giving understanding of poverty can only be attained if it is nurtured by an interior spirit, silence and humility:

*“How happy, a thousand times happy,
is she who loves only poverty,
who strives daily to acquire humility,
and who loves silence!”*
(255-3; 272-3).

This is the second Cluny Beatitude!

References

1. Following Jesus

480-4; 565-3.

2. Obedience

a) the principles

98-10; 107-9

5-1; 5-2

683-1; 774-1

780-1; 874-2

586-4; 676-3

293-10; 313-7

b) Concrete Application

242-3; 258-3

454-3; 538-2

110-16; 120-13

309-2; 330-1

673-1; 764-1

927-2; 1019-2

326-4; 349-3

259-2; 276-2

269-1; 287-1

370-1; 399-1

3. Chastity

872-6; 966-4

2-3; 2-2

98-16; 107-11

471-2; 555-2

480-6; 565-5

506-4; 592-3

104-5; 113-4

31-1; 35-1

2-1; 2-1

297-4; 323-2

98-10; 107-8

98-16; 107-11

65-2,3; 74-2,3

4. Poverty

a) institute-family

30-6; 32-4

146-3; 162-2

154-20; 171-16

170-; 186-6

202-5; 217-4

900-7; 992-4

368-5; 397-2

b) Poor, clean houses

274-5; 292-4

457-2; 541-2

179-1; 195-1

524-4; 616-3

340- 4; 364-2

678-1; 769-1

c) Poverty of Spirit

154-20; 171-11
986-5; 1079-4

98-8; 107-6
255-3; 272-3

340-4; 364-2



Chapter 12

The Cluny Community

It is clear that the eldest of the Javouhey girls had in mind a certain model of community that became more precise and affirmed in the course of the years. We can find the profile of this community on the one hand, in her way of life, and on the other, in the advice and the counsels that she gave.

Linked to the charism of the Congregation

The Cluny community is first of all linked to the missionary charism of the Congregation. It is at the service of a mission project and from the very beginning the missionary teams are formed and prepared with a view to the evangelisation that has to be done. This characteristic is so clear, the references are so numerous and the reality so well accepted in the Congregation, that it is not really necessary to treat it at length. To take an example, here is the make-up of a missionary community about to leave for Bourbon where a second community was to be opened. ***“I am longing to know if the Bourbon Sisters have left. It seemed to me that Sister Louise, who is dying to go, appears to be perfectly suitable for the work that she is destined for. She will have to be given our young Sister Petitjean with Sister***

Angadreme, and Sister Marguerite as bursar, if you do not need them for other houses. Here are four very capable people. A better-trained bursar could be sent instead of Sister Marguerite who could be employed in teaching. You could appoint another bursar there on the spot” (50-2; 58-1).

The community is the place for seeking God’s Will and carrying it out

This first goal can only be achieved by dialogue, which requires trust and sharing. Anne Marie was aware of this and insisted several times on the atmosphere of trust that has to be maintained. *“I urge you also to trust our dear daughters implicitly. To please them, tell them everything that you think will be of interest to them. Always show them the letters you get from us; that will give them so much pleasure. You will then be happy with their trust. This is how I act with all our dear daughters and I get along marvellously” (507-1; 593-1).*

Seeking God’s will is done through **discernment**. Now the condition for discernment is mutual love. “So as always to recognise what is best, let your love for each other grow more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception.” This rule for discernment is given to us by St.Paul (Ph.1:9-10). It is impossible to have successful discernment in community if there is a climate of suspicion, antipathy, and even mutual rejection. So the Cluny community is firstly a community of interpersonal bonds, and not just a community living together under the same roof. We certainly have to live under the same roof, but to what avail if we live as if in a hotel. The most fundamental requirement is a communion of hearts. Anne Marie Javouhey strove to achieve this. She gave a good number of recommendations on this subject. *“Speak to them often” (104-5; 113-4)*, she wrote to Sister Rosalie who was in charge of the Bourbon

communities. She asked the sisters to have mutual, practical affection for each other: to foresee **what could give pleasure to others** (28-7; 29-3), do everything that could be useful and be obliging (98; 107-11). People have to know one another in order to love one another. ***“Stay together for a few days to get to know each other well, and to prepare yourselves to begin this new establishment”*** (31-1; 35-1). Now this “new establishment” meant the accomplishment of God’s Will. The community is also the place where this affection is rekindled and recreated unceasingly. She who animated so many communities in so many different countries knew that hurts are inevitable. Clashes have to be constantly mended, wounds have to be healed; in other words, there has to be mutual pardoning. ***“Forgive each other your minor faults,”*** she wrote to the sisters in Bourbon in 1818, when she was 38 years of age. Thirty-two years later, in November 1850, when she was aware that her two former collaborators in Cayenne and Mana could not get on together, she wrote to Sister Madeleine Collonge: ***“I am going to write to Sister Isabelle to request her to come back to France, to have a rest from her work, and renew her strength for some new undertakings. I really would like the two of you to be openly reconciled before you leave”*** (965-4; 1058-2). And if revenge has to be taken, it is by doing good deeds (93-2; 102-2). To make mutual pardoning easier, she invited each one to look into her heart to see if she would not find there the roots of the same faults that she reproached others with. (259-2; 276-2). The affection that the Cluny community engenders rejects everything that could destroy another person: harsh words (678; 769), blame (98-4; 107-3), mistrust (831-1; 926-1), and suspicions (551-3; 640-4). It was recommended never to speak ill of others (69-3; 80-2) no matter who we are; not to rule like a despot when we have to serve in authority (87-13; 96-10); to pay no attention to stories that do so much harm. ***“Do not place any trust in stories, make no judgement until you yourself have investigated at length, never rely on words but on deeds.”*** Such were the recommendations given by Anne Marie to her sister Rosalie (90-11; 99-9,10). This demands of us continuous conversion. The first

step without doubt is to get rid of the strange capacity we have for noticing other people's faults. ***"I have noticed with sadness that (Sister Madeleine) has a scrutinising eye to see other people's defects. I will try to make her get rid of this bad habit and adopt a more kindly attitude"*** (383-4; 421-2). All criticism and making fun of sisters in other communities has to be eradicated (69-3; 80-2). ***"Never allow that spirit of mockery that causes such harm in religious houses"*** (178-4; 194-4). It is the Superior General of 49 years of age and already well experienced through 22 years in office, who is giving us these recommendations (178-4; 194-4). All we have just quoted completes the description of the celibate love that ought to unite the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny.

The Cluny Community is also a place of prayer

Prayer is the means to the vital meeting with God, a necessary condition for discerning God's Will, the only way to live celibate love! It is in fact impossible to love others, these others that we have not chosen, if we do not spend periods in deep intense prayer. So the community should be the place that promotes prayer at every level, community prayer of course, and personal prayer. The place of prayer in Anne Marie Javouhey's spirituality has already been treated at length in Chapter 11. We emphasised when speaking about poverty that the foundress recommended having ***"beautiful chapels"*** (132-2; 143-2) in spite of the austerity that she asked for. Here we simply wish to add that there will be no real prayer if an atmosphere conducive to solitude and silence is not present in our communities. She, who cherished Mana, explained the reason clearly: it was her place of solitude and retreat. The quotations abound, each one more striking than the other. ***"I long to be back in our dear solitude in Mana...It is only in solitude that (the Divine Spouse) makes Himself heard, where it is easy to converse with Him"*** (212-1,2; 228-1,2). ***"I am happy to have come to Mana to learn so many truths that the***

noise of the world prevented me from hearing!" (233-4; 249-3). And again, *"the retreat and the solitude that I lived for six years have been for me and the Society, a source of great benefits from Divine Providence that wants to save us"* (255-3; 272-3). All these quotes refer to Mana 1 (August 1828 - June 1833), a period during which Anne Marie had a mystical experience of God, in solitude and silence, a period that left its mark on her and on the spirituality that she willed to us. In May 1850, towards the end of her life, she revealed the indelible seal she had received from the atmosphere of solitude and silence: *"It seems to me as if you are in Mana which I loved so much,"* she wrote to the sisters in Mayotte, *"and nevertheless, I shed tears there which were not without consolation. God alone witnessed them since He was the cause."* (*1024-1). This experience of solitude that did so much good for the Foundress and for the 'Society', that is to say the Congregation, should be found in all our communities! If, because of our modern way of life, solitude can only be relative, Anne Marie's insistence on silence should, on the contrary, be taken literally to a certain extent. Here also the quotes are multiple. If our communities are places of continual useless chatter and idle gossip, they will not be conducive to prayer.

"How happy, a thousand times happy is she who loves silence" (255-3; 272-3). This is the third element of the second Cluny Beatitude.

A place for the experience of Poverty

Finally, and for the record, the Cluny community is the place for experiencing effective poverty. Since this aspect has been developed before, we only recall it here.

References

1. Linked to the Missionary Charism.
50-2; 58-1.

2. Place of seeking God's Will in charity.

507-1; 593-1	104-5; 113-4	98; 107-11
31-1; 35-1	965-4; 1058-2	93-2; 102-2
259-2; 276-2	678; 769	98-4; 107-3
831-1; 926-1	551-3; 640-4	69-3; 80-2
87-13; 96-10	90-1; 99-9,10	383-4; 421-2
69-3; 80-2	178-4; 194-4.	

2. Place of Prayer and Silence.

132-2; 143-2	212-1,2; 228-1,2	233-4; 249-3
255-3; 272-3		
*1024-1		

*not in English Letters

PART II

The Cluny *"Ascent to Carmel"*



Chapter 13

To Uproot & Destroy

To discover the marvellous Fatherhood of God, to welcome his love, to respond to it by doing his will, with Jesus and as he did under the influence of the Holy Spirit, therein lies the way to holiness in its simplicity and daily accomplishment, as offered to us by Anne Marie Javouhey.

It is a pathway that is both personal and communitarian, like the seeking and doing of God's Will. At a personal level, it calls for the commitment of each individual. At community level, it brings into play interpersonal relationships and dialogue that ensure the objectivity and the realism of our commitment.

This path which is so simple and beautiful can disappear from our lives, overgrown by bushes, brambles, thorns and weeds. Like every path it has to be constantly cleared and maintained, and strength is needed to travel along it. In other words, the gift that God gives us by calling us to holiness through the doing of his Will requires asceticism, discipline, sacrifice and renouncement. It is this aspect that we have to examine now.

Like prayer, asceticism in St. Joseph of Cluny is not anything extraordinary or particular in the Church. It has to do rather with the life of the Church and the grace of baptism. ***“We do not digress from ordinary life”***, the country girl from Burgundy wrote, ***“so we have no need of anything extraordinary”*** (101; 110-2). This call to remain in the People of God and with them, does not require any extraordinary means of sanctification for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny. Nevertheless, it is a true pathway to holiness with its ordinary, daily means that have been confirmed by the experience of the Church.

To eradicate sin

Sin is the first thing to be eradicated in order to welcome God's Will. Anne Marie had a deep horror of sin; but at the same time, she made very important distinctions: ***“Yes, my dear daughters, let us place all our confidence in God in spite of our sins. This trust should be based on our poverty, our needs, and the merits of our Divine Saviour whose mercy is infinite. However, do not think that this confidence can exist with the habit of sin or attachment to it. No, not at all. We have to detest sin and not want to commit it; then we have every right to have complete trust”*** (98-8; 107-7). In this letter of 1825, the foundress clearly states that faults of weakness do not really separate us from God. In fact, they keep us humble and cannot in any way destroy our confidence in the mercy of Jesus who gave everything to save us. On the other hand, the real danger lies in attachment to sin which turns us away from God and from his Will. It is a poison for the Congregation and for religious life itself. During her profession retreat in April 1807, she became very conscious of the perverse effects of sin and we have three important paragraphs on this subject (*15-6,7,8). It highlights that not only are we to flee from sin, but also from occasions of sin. With the passing of the years, and her experience of the immeasurable love of God, this conviction became stronger still. ***“Place all your trust in God, and fear nothing as***

much as sin” (639-1; 730-1). This was the recommendation that the mother full of wisdom and experience gave to one of her daughters in 1847. Two years later, she gave the same recommendation with even more insistence to another of her daughters: *“Oh! Let us fear only one thing, sin ...Let us fear only one thing, sin”* (791-7; 885-3) - injunctions that were repeated twice with only a line between them! This shows an extraordinary sensitivity to the malice of sin. Then again, two years later, in March 1849, she confided to Sister Raphael Montet, an old friend from the early years, *“I will soon be seventy years of age...pray for me...so that I may do what God asks of me and my dear daughters, until he reunites us with him in eternity. How I long for us to be there so that we will not sin anymore”* (802-8; 897-5).

Biblical enlightenment

Do we understand why this horror of sin increases in the measure that we make progress in holiness? John Paul II’s encyclical on the Holy Spirit (*Dominum et Vivificantem*, 1986) analyses all its malice. May this Spirit instil in us this same horror of sin. After having recalled the words of Jesus in St. John 16: 8, the Pope affirms that the role of the Spirit is “to convince the world of sin”. It is a role of salvation, because how can one be converted if one is not conscious of evil? (D.V. 31: 2) The Spirit gives us the gift of a truthful conscience. In this light, we understand the mechanism of all sin that appeared from the very beginning of the Book of Genesis (Gn 3: 1-7). Eve’s fault is first of all an **act of disobedience**, that is, the opposition of the human will to the Divine Will. Already at this stage we can see how sin can be “mortal” for a charism that is meant to put us unceasingly in harmony with the Divine Will. Finally this disobedience **is a refusal of the truth** contained in the word of God. Under the influence of the father of lies, Eve did not believe in the promise of life that God had made. She adhered to the serpent’s lie! (D.V. 33).

She also adhered to the proud attitude proposed by the tempter: “You will know good from evil!” It is the desire to set oneself up as a supreme intelligence, to no longer accept oneself as coming from God, consequently, denying one’s condition as a creature to become a creator, to create the moral law, the scale of moral values (D.V. 36). It is the claim of the human person to be able to decide good from evil. This very fact awakens in us an attitude of shutting out God. We turn our back on him and at the same time, we open ourselves to the father of lies. We trust him; we follow his proposals (D.V.37). God, our Father, in whom we should have complete trust, is placed under suspicion, indicted. It is he who becomes the enemy, a danger, and a threat. We are urged to become God’s adversaries. It is quite simply hideous! So if we now compare these perverse attitudes with Anne Marie’s profound spiritual discoveries: ***“A Father God, the most reliable Friend”***, we are horrified! We now understand the reaction of her who adhered so fervently to God’s Will: *it is better to die than to commit sin*.

To root out all that kills the spirituality of God’s Will

The rooting out of sin is not the only thing that is necessary; we must also uproot the vices (4; 4-1). This means the attractions, the tendencies, and the traits of character that are the roots of sin. The deep-seated tendencies to selfishness, to violence, to the ignoring of others have to be eradicated. Amongst the vices, there was one that Balthazar’s daughter struggled with energetically: it was the lack of truth. We are attacked all day long by the world’s lies, and we fall, if we are not careful, into “little daily falsehoods”, into “half-lies”. It is a virus that attacks our capacity for attachment to God’s Will. Now we understand better Anne Marie’s struggle for truth. ***“My dear daughter, let us love the truth, let us be attached to it; no matter how hard it may be at times, it never does harm”*** (109-4; 119-3). She wrote this to Sister Rosalie in 1826. This search for truth should

make us examine ourselves and it is important to do so. ***“Let us aim at the real good, let us not fear to retrace our steps if we have taken a false one”*** (60-3; 68-2). Turning away from deception is surely going to cause us to acknowledge our defects. In 1822, the Foundress was 42 years of age and the Congregation had begun to expand overseas. She was constantly in contact with ministers and governors. Once when a new minister was appointed, she wrote to the Director for the Colonies, Mr. de Maudit: ***“Tell him (the new minister) the good and bad things that you know about us so that he will not be deceived”*** (42-2; 48-2). That same year, she corrected her beloved niece, Clotilde Javouhey, for her half-truths: ***“You have experienced the embarrassment that one suffers for uttering half-truths”*** (44-8; 51-5). She herself courageously took responsibility for the defects of the Congregation and those of her sisters: ***“As regards the reproaches levelled against us,”*** she wrote to Minister Mackau, concerning the employment of mediocre and incompetent persons in the classroom, ***“I am afraid that there are reasons for this complaint. We have been so under so much pressure during the past few years to supply sisters that we have been obliged to employ some who were not trained for the required subjects and especially not in educational methods”*** (472-5; 556-3). It was a brave admission of the truth as they could have called on another Congregation!

The struggle for truth in ourselves and around us, requires great self-knowledge: ***“Let us fear looking at it from a human point of view!”*** (505-1; 591-1) warned Anne Marie. Psalm 35 says of the wicked person:

***“ He sees himself with too flattering an eye
to discover and hate his fault.”***

We are all a little “wicked”, meaning blind, as regards ourselves. But each of us has within us the other “eye” that is not a flatterer: it is love of the truth. In this stage of cleansing that lasts a lifetime, prayer

to the Holy Spirit opens the heart to his light and strength. He empowers us to do what we are incapable of doing ourselves: discover the evil that is within us and be converted. It is a daily task. ***“Each day it is our task to study how we can die to self, discover our vices and replace them by virtues”*** (4-1; 4-1).

References

1. St. Joseph of Cluny form of penance
101; 110-2
2. Eradicating sin
98-8; 107-7
- 3 Eradicating what kills the spirituality of the Will of God
109-4; 119-3 472-5; 556-3 178; 194-4
- 4 Requirement: clear knowledge of self
501-1; 591-1 4-1; 4-1

Chapter 14

To Build and To Plant

The work of asceticism is not just one of uprooting, it is also necessary to plant, to acquire virtues and Anne Marie is very precise on this subject: “...*virtue appears natural but God only gives it, if it is worked at...*”(996-2; 1090-1). So effort is the way that has to be resolutely followed!

The wise country girl advised us to work on three levels - humility, simplicity and poverty: “*Let us put aside pride and self-love. Let us love poverty; let us seek only God’s Will*” (705-4; 796-4). The frequent references to the short list of virtues that should be acquired show the importance that the writer of our letters attached to them. Humility and simplicity occur 89 times and poverty 78 times. They are all linked.

Some remarks

Simplicity comprises both humility and poverty. The simple heart is both poor and humble, material poverty is evidenced by simplicity and humility seeks it. When it was a question of seeking God’s Will,

Anne-Marie spoke unceasingly about humility, simplicity and poverty. The linking of humility, simplicity and poverty with doing God's Will is a psychological and spiritual subtlety. In fact, what is it that most strongly opposes the accomplishment of God's Will in and around us if not human desires? When the Divine Will appears to be opposed to our wishes, we feel an insurmountable resistance rising up in us. Now human desires usually have a double source, stemming from a seeking of self-love and of material goods. This means that the acquisition of humility, simplicity and poverty lays a good foundation and removes many obstacles to doing God's Will.

Humility and Simplicity

For Anne Marie, as for many of the spiritual masters, humility has many degrees.

The first degree is a disposition of heart concerning God. Like Mary in the Magnificat, the humble of heart recognise the marvels of God, the good he allows us to do, and the rich gifts he has given to us. However, one must be wary of attributing this glory to oneself. All has to be referred back to God. This is what Balthazar's daughter strove to do. *"I give thanks to God who uses poor creatures like us to do great things. Everything is good in his hands when he wishes to use it, but all the glory has to be given back to him"* (136-1; 148-1). This recommendation was given to a sister in Martinique in 1827 and she often repeated it: *"My dear daughter,"* she wrote to her sister Rosalie the following year, *"Let us give all the glory of it to God. Let us fear abusing so many benefits by claiming for ourselves what is entirely his"* (154-1; 171-1). She had already confessed that she had committed this fault in the past and she accused herself humbly: *"I have claimed God's gifts for myself very often, I have used them to offend Him by taking pride in what was not mine, but his. To him alone is all the glory to be given"* (*15-20). She was then 27 years

of age and this was during her profession retreat in Dole. She sometimes highlighted the fact that some of her sisters had reached this stage of humility. *"You have very good sisters,"* she wrote to Sister Scholastica Delorme in 1849, *"they are astounded and surprised at what they have been able to do and to have been so successful, with God's grace. You see, they do not take the glory to themselves but attribute it all to God who has come to their aid"* (799-1; 894-1). She was then 69 years of age. All during her life, she invited others to humble themselves before God and to give him thanks: *"Let us humble ourselves before the obstacles which, through our laxity and imperfections, often oppose (God's designs). Let us redouble our zeal and courage to perfect, with God's grace, what we have so happily begun..."*(127-1; 138-1).

As regards others, the humble heart is able to recognize faults, mistakes and then take a new look at itself. Anne-Marie had no difficulty in recognizing her own faults. We have a certain number of letters in which she readily acknowledged her mistakes. In July 1848, Guadeloupe was in a very embarrassing situation. The principal of the school was owed a sum of a hundred thousand francs that had to be written off as lost. Anne Marie took her share of the responsibility: *"My dear daughter,* she wrote to Sister Onesime Lefevre, *"I consider myself guilty for not having taken the necessary steps that would have settled everything if I had exacted the accounts every six months as is required by our Congregation statutes. I am at fault and I must work at correcting myself by doing my duty; I am going to put everything in order..."*(744-5; 838-2.3). A month later, the same Sister Onesime Lefevre, a friend of long standing, took it on herself to offer some remarks to Anne Marie regarding the administration of the Congregation's temporal affairs. She received the following reply. *"Thank you for the good advice that, in your goodness, you felt it your duty to give me, to make me understand how I should administer. I will try to profit by it"* (748-1; 842-1). Humility means accepting the truth.

This humility, far from paralysing us, increases our capacity to undertake things because it diminishes our fear of failure. ***“Do not listen to the pride that hides under violet leaves and is so afraid of failing because it fears being laughed at”*** (117-7; 128-6). This was the advice given to Sister Clotilde Javouhey in 1826.

The second degree of Cluny humility consists of “counting oneself as nothing”. This gives a great facility for pardoning. The missionary of freedom wrote from Mana, the country of spiritual consolations and the land of trials: ***“We need a more solid virtue and more robust humility, to count ourselves as nothing and to pardon 77 times a day the slights to our self-love that is so sensitive”*** (383-1; 421-1). And formed in such a good school, she wrote to the Mistress of Novices: ***“My dear daughter, teach them only humility and simplicity, then undoubtedly, everything else will follow. Teach them to reflect, to consider themselves as nothing, but nothing, and not just by lip service but let it come from the heart”*** (376-5; 406-4). In order to understand properly this “humility of lip service” and “humility of heart”, we must recognise that in general, we have a negative feeling about ourselves. We are not anything great and we tell ourselves this, but everything changes when others say it to us. We then feel that it is an injustice. In this case, our humility is lip service. But if God gives us the grace to live peacefully, to be treated as worthless, then humility is of the heart. In any case, what allows us to make progress is goodwill. In 1822, Anne Marie was just 43 years of age and she was managing a developing Congregation. She wrote to her niece, Sister Clotilde, who was responsible for the formation of the novices: ***“Work at forming well the novices confided to your care...Do not let them be weak women who listen to themselves and consider themselves to be something. They need courage and goodwill”*** (54; 69-2). Twelve years later in 1834, she is still talking about goodwill: ***“Preach simplicity and goodwill everywhere,”*** (263-5; 281-3), she recommended to Sister Onesime Lefevre. This was repeated frequently. Goodwill is that attitude of the poor that makes one always begin

again after failures, mistakes and falls. Goodwill is always ready to recommence without being discouraged. *"We must never be discouraged; pride causes discouragement, humility works miracles"* (642-3; 733-3). Satan is present in discouragement, which never comes from God. But it is overcome by goodwill. Anne Marie herself was always a soul of goodwill. She was aware of her limitations to the end of her life, but she was always ready to begin again. In January 1850, a year and a half before her death, she wrote, *"I am going to begin a new life by working to repair what I have only touched on up to now. I think that my eyes are being opened to the light. I thank God for it. Help me to thank him adequately for such a favour"* (868-2; 962-2). The heart that is full of goodwill is constantly aware that 'as yet it has done nothing' and it is ready, even on its deathbed, to begin again courageously. This is a part of humility. In October 1849, at 69 years of age, Anne Marie was a well-known, esteemed foundress, responsible for a Congregation of nearly 1,000 members spread over the five continents and full of goodwill. She wrote then, *"It is time to set to work, we must do everything to respond (to God's designs)"* (831-4; 926-3).

The third degree of humility consists in not seeking self in anything. Already in 1825 when she was 45, the Superior General wrote to her sister Rosalie concerning a young sister in her community: *"Try to inspire Sister Batilde with that spirit of sincere simplicity where there is no seeking of self"* (84; 93-3). At this stage, there is "a disdain for ceremonies": *"I find it impossible to overcome my antipathy for ceremonies; I know they have to be, but the fewer the better"* (747-1; 841-1). A distinction has to be made for festive celebrations. Ceremonies follow a code of conventions that is inspired by the world and include rituals that are often full of hypocrisy and deceit. A feast-day is an expression of joy, a celebration for God and his children. In fact, humility at this level justifies itself by the benefits accrued. It does not strive to make the other person pay for the hurts and the evil they may have done to us. It bears witness to the Gospel love of our

enemies. When, on 26 May 1825, the sad story of Sister Thais ended, Anne Marie recommended to her daughters: ***“Do not return injury for injury, seek revenge only by doing good”*** (92-9; 101-5). This recommendation was so important and she had it so much at heart that she returned to it again in a following letter: ***“Be modest and charitable, seek revenge only by good deeds”*** (93-2; 102-2).

Humility at this level is a gift of God himself. This is why it thrives on silence, because in silence one opens oneself to God, and he is given full scope. Humility, silence and pardon are inextricably linked. ***“Charity pardons all, humility arranges everything and these are nurtured by silence”*** (119-5; 130-5). The perceptive foundress recommended silence so often, so very often.

The spiritual work needed to acquire humility is what brings about, at the same time, a growth in holiness: ***“We have an important task to do,”*** observed Anne-Marie in 1846 when she was already more than 66 years of age. ***“We have to consolidate our dear Congregation...by working with all our strength to become holy religious through the practice of humility that is the foundation of all holiness. If you knew what a longing I have to become a good religious”*** (588-6; 678-3). This is why the same Anne Marie insisted that all her daughters should ask God for humility: ***Let us ask for it 50 times a day, and even that is not enough”*** (Annals p.754).

Poverty

To grow in the spirit of poverty is to become more and more available for God’s Will. Anne-Marie was convinced of this. In 1826, Sister Batilde Laparre, a very intelligent young person, came back from Bourbon with a whole personal library. The foundress, who liked her a lot, undertook to speak to her: ***“She has made the sacrifice of everything she was dragging after her. I made her understand that***

God could not approve of this spirit of ownership that is so contrary to the vow of poverty. She did not keep a single book...so God blessed her sacrifice. She will be more humble and will serve the Congregation better. Alas! My dear daughter, what are we without humility, a love of poverty and the interior spirit? Without these, we are not religious..." (111-1; 123-2). This letter was written to Sister Rosalie in Bourbon and once again it underlines the link between humility, poverty and God's Will. This link between poverty and God's Will might surprise us and yet, in the Gospel, it was material possessions that prevented the rich young man from following Jesus. (Mk. 10, 17-22).

Balthazar's daughter must have had quite a fight in the Congregation in the cause of both humility and poverty, especially poverty of heart, the spirit of poverty. Of course the spirit has to be translated into action, and we are referred back to the Rule. We will not expand more on this subject because it has already been dealt with under the vows. Nevertheless, the second Cluny Beatitude has to be mentioned again:

*"How happy, a thousand times happy, is she
who loves only poverty
who strives daily to acquire humility
and who loves silence" (255-3; 272-3)*

References

1. Humility and Simplicity

705-4; 796-4 128-3; 139-3

a) 1st degree

136-1; 148-1	154-1; 171-1	*15-2
799-1; 894-1	127-1; 138-1	590-2; 680-2
469; 553-1	744-5; 838-3	748-1; 842-1
117-7; 128-6		

b) 2nd degree

383-1; 421-1

376-5; 406-4

212-3; 228-3

54;69-2

263-5; 281-3

c) 3rd degree

84; 93-3

747-1; 841-1

452-1; 536-1

92-10; 101-5

93-2; 102-2

483-2; 568-1

99-5; 108-4

588-6; 678-3

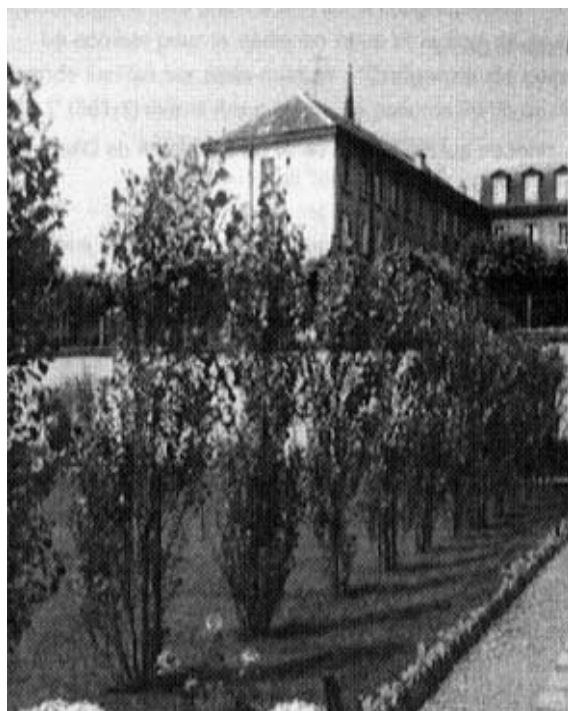
119-5;130-5

335-6; 359-3

642-3; 733-3

2 Poverty

123-2; 796-4; 123-2; 107-6; 272-3



Chapter 15

The Asceticism of Common Life

As well as the struggle for humility and poverty, common life is also a source of daily purification for a sister of Saint Joseph of Cluny. Anne Marie said or rather wrote a lot on this subject. The subject is so wide that we have been obliged to treat it from three different angles. Love of chastity described the links between unity and mutual service. The Cluny community analysed the network of relationships that make it up. Now, on the level of asceticism and sacrifice, we come back again to human relationships in the common life.

Mutual Support

Here the Foundress insisted greatly on mutual support. It is a source of daily purification. First of all, let us not believe that because of her position as superior of all the Sisters she could escape from this “trial”. So many of her letters bear witness to the contrary. Sometimes it was small things that hurt her, coldness, for example: ***“Sister Scholastica saddened me by the brevity of (her letter); she wrote as if she had to make a big effort to greet me; but in fact, it is for God that we***

must suffer what hurts us..." (211-6; 226-6). Sometimes it was painful betrayals: *"Sister Theodosie whom I liked a great deal, and who I thought had such potential, has gone back to the world together with Sister Louise. I was very upset because she deceived me in a most hurtful way. She tried to do me harm and I was fooled by her right to the end.* (232-2; 248-1). At other times she was attacked by sisters who would not accept new situations. *"The letters from Martinique and Guadaloupe are not kind. You would think that it was I who made the laws for the abolition of slavery and for the mixture of races. They speak to me in a tone that is far from religious. Poor sisters, they forget from where they came and where they are going. My God! How difficult it is not to have a worldly spirit when you are constantly in contact with it!"* (615; 708-2).

When Anne-Marie taught us about mutual support, she knew what she was saying. We can listen to her teaching because it came from first-hand experience.

According to the eldest daughter of the Javouhey family, the asceticism of common life consists first of all in seeing the positive qualities of the people who surround us and encouraging them. *"We must believe that each person is doing her best"* (*802-2), she wrote to her faithful Madeleine Collonge who found it difficult to live in certain community situations. As regards ourselves today, why do we not take the time to write down our companions' qualities in order to thank God for them? We must also make known their positive qualities: *"I planned to keep (Sister Stanislaus) with me and to send you dear Sister Natalie who wants to be with you...she will be more useful to you than to us. She does not like the blacks very much; she would be better as head of a school. She is an excellent religious"* (345-1; 370-1). Sister Natalie's attitude must have been a cross for Anne-Marie whose affection for the blacks could not be questioned. However, she recommended her to Sister Marie Therese and pointed out that she was leaving because she could not adapt to

Mana. In fact, the negative has to be played down as much as possible. On 7 December 1850, the Foundress sent some Sisters who were far from competent to Martinique, and with them, the following message: *“A short note just to ask you to accept our dear daughters with your usual kindness. Alas! They are like myself. They know about as much as I do; they have good will, that’s all. You will do the rest, with the grace of God.”* (983-1; 1076-1).

Mutual forbearance is also the patient and courageous endurance of the negative qualities of people with whom we live, without dramatising them. On 10 April 1831, the Foundress of Mana was delayed in Cayenne on business, so she wrote to the community to encourage them. The encouragement was based above all on unceasing prayer and mutual support. She was 51 years of age and showed great wisdom regarding human relationships: *“Let us be very charitable towards our neighbour, and we will bear courageously the little upsets that annoy us”* (212-3; 228-1). This recommendation has a double significance. Firstly, it requires that we do not wish to have others fashioned according to our taste. We can waste hours sometimes “re-creating” a community companion: she is too nervous, she folds her table napkin in an annoying way, her way of acting is nerve-racking, her tone of voice is unpleasant...and you can go on enumerating all the little annoyances! Anne Marie’s sound common sense made her say to herself: you have to bear these things courageously, you must accept others as they are! In the second place, this acceptance is an exercise in mortification and patience, part of the programme of asceticism that is needed in every walk of life. Besides these inevitable annoyances, there are also the little hurts caused by the unavoidable rubbing of shoulders in community life. The writer of our letters continued: *“We should not recall what has hurt us, and then we will truthfully say: ‘forgive me as I forgive’ ”* (212-3; 228-3).

Mutual Pardon

We must speak about mutual forgiveness in what concerns common life, if not, we will be at an impasse. This pardon has its origin and final justification in the “Our Father” that we must be able to say in all honesty. ***“Charity pardons all and humility arranges everything”***. Anne Marie wrote this in 1826 (119-5; 130-5). She herself had forgiven a lot during her life and she did not cease encouraging her daughters to do the same. In 1845, the Superior General, now 65 years of age and settled in Paris, gave support to her daughters in the four corners of the world. In a letter to the sisters in the Marquesas Islands, she returned again to the subject that she had so much at heart: ***“Try, my children, to find your happiness together by your mutual agreement...Forgive one another the little character faults that you encounter...”*** (503-7; 589-5).

Praying for each other

Mutual support is reinforced by praying for each other in order to bring about change when it is not just a question of little foibles but of more serious faults. She, who longed to have a big united family reiterated to the sisters in the Marquesas Islands: ***“If unfortunately there is a bad character amongst you, put up with her for the love of God; pity her, pray for her. Let us know so that we can join our prayers with yours in order to obtain the grace that will bring about a change.”*** (503-4; 589-3). The importance of mutual prayer can never be insisted on enough. In the chapter on prayer, we have already come across this link that is a binding force for communities and congregations. The foundress asked us so often to pray for one another. Here the urgency was more serious because of possible scandal: ***“Do not scandalise the weak by speaking harshly to each other!”*** (503-3; 589-3). Prayer is the only possible solution in these difficult situations: prayer for the one who is causing suffering, prayer

for the one who scandalises, prayer for the person who is oppressing us.

The way of mutual forbearance is the only possible means to have communities worthy of the name. When there is no mutual forbearance, life becomes unbearable, it is hell. At best, each one tries to survive by forming relationships in one's workplace or apostolate and is content with a "hotel-community". At its worst, there is scandal and people have to be constantly changed. At any rate, it is the best way of hindering vocations for the Congregation. In November 1847, Anne Marie visited Alencon and had the experience of being in a community where there was no forbearance or love. She spoke to the superior of the community who was none other than her sister Marie Joseph and gave her the task of conveying the following message: *"Kind regards to all our dear daughters. Tell them that I was not edified by their lack of charity towards their companion...I am still upset about it...and then, not a word of humility to blot out such evil. I am very glad to be in Paris. I am less fearful"* (678-2; 769-1). **A community without mutual forbearance and without love creates fear!**

The rule for happiness

For communities as for families, the rule for happiness is mutual forbearance as described above: to affirm the positive in others, accept the negative and the annoyances and give mutual support through prayer. In May 1847, Anne Marie who had left Mana four years before, wrote to Sister Alexis in Acarounay whom she knew very well: *"I do not know who your companion is, but I want you to agree; bear each others' defects, for without this, there is no happiness"* (650- 2; 741-2).

References

1. Mutual forbearance

212-3; 228-3 503-3; 589-3 383-1; 421-2
650-2; 741-2

2. Mutual pardon

200-5; 215-2 503-7; 589-5 212-3; 228-2,3
965-4; 1058-2

3 Finding happiness in unity

200-1,3; 215-2 212-3; 228-3 503-7; 589-5
503-3; 589-3



Chapter 16

Sacrifice according to Cluny

There is no holiness without sacrifice and the Cluny “Ascent to Carmel” incorporates also its idea of sacrifice. Whenever we say “sacrifice” we mean “renunciation”, “doing things that cost”. Some religious Orders and Congregations have their chosen programme of sacrifices and penances that they have decided to live by.

It is God who chooses

In the light of a spirituality that is completely directed to God’s Will, sacrifices are not primarily desired, chosen, or planned by us. They are willed and planned by God and we welcome them. So they come to us from life, from our life in which God is constantly present and acting: “The hairs of your head are numbered”, the smallest details are known to God. He tries us with love to form us, to make us grow, to purify our mission, to make it succeed. *“I see you are overwhelmed,” Anne Marie wrote to a sister. “The cross is always the cross. You must always say from the bottom of your heart, Fiat, Fiat. Alas, we baulk in vain against a Father’s hand as he knows*

what has to be done in the interest of his children's salvation." (270-1; 288-1). It is God who chooses the sacrifices that have to be made, and the greatest sacrifice is that of our own will. In 1807, as we have already pointed out, the young disciple of Fr. Ballanche wrote in her retreat notebook about the need to unite the sacrifice of one's own will with all the other sacrifices and how difficult that was! Twenty-four years later, in 1831, the Superior General of 52 years of age, confessed that she had made a vow to do this: ***"Yes, my dear daughter,"*** she wrote to her sister, Marie Joseph, ***"let us not want anything except the Holy Will of God. I have made a vow to have none other"*** (210-3; 225-2).

On the other hand, sacrifices are necessary: ***"God's work is only confirmed by the cross, so I am not surprised at all that we have to suffer,"*** she reiterated two years later. (*279-4).

Sacrifices abound in all ways of life

In this perspective, sacrifices arise in every walk of life. In the first place, they come from our mission. Anne Marie spoke about ***"the difficulties that are inseparable from the works that we are responsible for"*** (393-2; 436-1). They also come from the circumstances of life and the wickedness of people. In October 1840, she was in Mana when Fr. Lafond returned from France, bringing with him an order from Mgr. d'Hericourt: either sign the changes in the statutes of the Congregation or find yourself deprived of the Sacraments. Fr. Guillier refused to hear her confession. Anne Marie encouraged her faithful friend, Sister Madeleine Collonge in Cayenne and said to her: ***"I want to say to you that we must never be discouraged by the troubles and humiliations that come to us. Our Saviour endured much more for love of us! We must adore his designs without grumbling"*** (395-1; 438-1). But with her usual frankness, she added: "However, that is not how I used to behave. I

grumbled a lot about Fr. Lafond. He is a holy priest, but a very *wicked man...*" (395-1; 438-1). This gives us consolation when we do not manage to bear all of life's trials in peace! In Anne Marie's letters, we come across many other circumstances that were a source of sacrifices and trials: a long Lent from Christmas to Easter because the sea voyages were unending (118-1; 129-1), the physical exhaustion caused by spending six nights in a coach without ever getting to bed, and she was 48 years of age! (129-4; 140-4), etc. The material conditions in the mission were also a source of sacrifice. In 1841, Anne Marie was in Mana, involved in the hard task of freeing the slaves. Besides their spiritual and moral formation, work was one of the essential elements of their training for freedom. However, she had to wait a year for the tools she needed for the 500 people under her care: *"The tools that we were to get from Le Havre a year ago, have not arrived. I wonder if it is possible to claim for them..."* (410-1; 459-1). To all these forms of sacrifice that we find in the foundress' life we can add her separation from her family (276-1; 294-1), her health, the trials in her spiritual life, the unforeseen events of life, and the political situations in the countries. It is God, our Father, who lets us grow and purifies us through them all.

Resignation and submission in serenity

Acceptance has to be from the heart: *"I am really sorry not to have the pleasure of seeing you, but what can we do. except offer to God the sacrifice of what we hold most dear?"* (330-3; 354-3). This letter was dated November 1835 when she was undergoing persecution from Mgr. d'Hericourt. She was leaving for Mana II and she would have loved to meet Fr. Gondin, a long-time friend, but God did not permit it. In 1841, she wrote from Mana to Sister Madeleine Collonge: *"I often have my share of little crosses. God gives me the grace to endure them peacefully. Sometimes I laugh at them, at other times, I weep. It does not matter, I am courageous"* (414-5; 469-3). It is the

small things that make for holiness because they are sent by God.

Two words that recur constantly in the writings of our spiritual guide are resignation and submission. *“I am resigned to suffer, provided that I am doing God’s Will”* (417-3; 476-2), she wrote to Sister Madeleine Collonge in November 1841 when both the Cayenne colonists and the local clergy had banded against her. At the same time and to the same person she repeated: *“We must submit to God’s Will and make good use of the crosses that the Lord sends us”* (416-1; 474-1). The words resignation and submission no longer get good press in 21st century mentality. We prefer “prophetic denunciation” or “assertiveness”. She, whom God called to witness to adherence to His Will knew from her spiritual experience that resignation and submission give peace and strength. They bring about change and conversion, flow from trusting, loving prayer and produce inestimable results.

From this perspective, Anne Marie regretted the waste of grace in our lives when we do not know how to profit from every opportunity that presents itself. In 1832, at the end of Mana I, she confided to her sister Marie Therese: *“I can only feel sorry for people who suffer and do not know how to profit from the trials that Heaven sends them to merit an eternity of happiness”* (242-1; 258-1). Consequently, she recommended that we put up with life and its contradictions. She herself had experienced the fruitfulness of the cross and how it turns to joy. The cross is never loved for its own sake, not even by Jesus. It is loved because it is an efficacious sign of love. It saves.

Joy and love of the Cross

The Cross makes our apostolate fruitful by uniting us with Jesus. Then it is even an honour. *“The evils that befall us”*, said our spiritual guide to her sister Marie Therese in March 1841, *“are often a*

sign of God's love for us" (404-4; 451-3). In 1842 she wrote from Mana, ***"My health is weak but still good. I endure courageously, I would say with pleasure, all the crosses that God sends me. I find consolation in them"*** (439-3; 507-2). Seven years later, when she was 69 years of age, and enduring Mgr. d'Hericourt's final attacks, she wrote from Paris to the faithful Sister Onesime Lefevre: ***"For the past six months, I have no longer been in this world. I have had to make so many sacrifices that there has been no let-up. Oh, how good it is to suffer for God. He is never outdone in his generosity. Because we have suffered, he wants to reward us. The Archbishop of Paris has just approved of our principal novitiate in Paris. He gave us Fr. Caire as our spiritual superior. He is the man we needed"*** (829-1; 924-1). And a month later to her sister Rosalie: ***"Your persecutions do not surprise me. I thank God for his loving, merciful designs on us. Humiliations are a great favour. May we know how to endure them without complaining"*** (834-1; 929-1).

The presence of the cross in our life is even a sign of God's presence. We often need to be confirmed in our mission, to be assured that we are doing God's work. For Anne Marie the cross, difficulties and sufferings were this seal of approval. ***"Our security is in adversity, it is the seal of God's work..."*** (*563-1). It was in 1844 that the foundress, strengthened by her spiritual and missionary experience, was able to affirm this. She was 64 years of age and had just finished Mana I.

Sometimes, the consolation and joy of the cross disappear. Anne Marie also knew times when life's sacrifices were hard and frightening. The only solution then was to cling tightly to submission. In August 1833, when she was 53 years of age and had returned to French soil after five years in Mana, her first letter was to her dear niece, Sister Clotilde, in Limoux. But the joy of returning was badly tainted by the apprehension of the difficult situations that she would probably have to face: ***"I dare not ask you for news of all that***

interests me. I am afraid of hearing something that will hurt me or you. In vain I say that I have made every sacrifice. I feel that I am very much alive, but I hope with God's grace, to be able to endure the hardships that Heaven has in store for me, and to do so with courage and submission, if not with joy" (250-3; 266-3). When consolation disappears, we have to lean heavily on submission to God through events, sacrifices and hardships. To a sister who was having difficulties, Anne Marie did not recommend joy which is a gift from God, but acceptance and submission which are our humble prayer: *"My dear daughter, I still find you sad and unhappy, I would nearly say uncharitable...you would do very much better if you were calm and peaceful...Place everything at the foot of the Cross and say: Lord, uphold your work, you know my weakness, my only strength is in you"* (292-4; 312-3). God is never outdone in generosity. Consolation will return, thanks to our submission: *"God honours you with his cross,"* she wrote her sister Marie Therese in Martinique. *"He often gives me little reminders, but since I am weak, consolations quickly ensue"* (362-1; 389-1).

When we examine very carefully "the spiritual theology of the cross" of her who had ample experience of it, we are struck by the number, the importance and the depth of the quotations that all come from the time of Mana I. We are in a position to say that it was during her second stay in Guyana, 1835-1843, that she had this mystical experience of the cross through her union with Jesus, our Redeemer, as well as her missionary success and the joy it gave her: *"I often regret the lovely times of retreat that I had in Mana. I think of it often. I had some difficulties, I sometimes wept...but what interior consolations I enjoyed. Here we haven't time to bless ourselves, we are always busy, surrounded by people.... what to do? I was happier in Mana. The ridiculous things they said to me there did me far more good than the compliments they shower on me today"* (490-8; 575-4). This letter to Sister Madeleine Collonge, dated September 1844, reveals what God our Father did for her during this period of

her life. Similar affirmations can be found throughout in the foundress' letters.

Energy and Courage

The “Cluny” spirit of sacrifice, such as we have just analyzed it, has firstly and emphatically an aspect of passivity. We must welcome the trials, the sacrifices, sufferings and renunciations that God sends us for our sanctification and the success of the mission. In certain cases there is also an active aspect. Life has to be faced courageously, what we are responsible for has to be carried out energetically, and we have to be dynamic and joyful at all times even in the humble tasks of eating and drinking... and not seek self in anything. In 1828, on her arrival in Mana, Anne Marie wrote: ***“My dear sisters give me a lot of hope. They do not complain about the heat”*** (166-2; 182-1). Later, in 1833, she sent these recommendations to the sisters: ***“Let them have courage when at table and courage to get up in the morning, and all will be well”*** (249-2; 265-2). If we bear the small things of life courageously, we will be gradually guided to sacrifice everything: ***“Do what you have the greatest repugnance for. It is the only way to please him and of drawing down his most abundant graces on us”*** (288-2; 308-1). In this way, Balthazar Javouhey's fervent daughter leads us step by step to the heroic acceptance of each day's humble routine. Frightening ascetical practices are not the Cluny way to holiness. We must stay with the ordinary things of the life of God's people (101; 110-2), and give of our all.

The starting point for this is to receive everything from God: ***“Get into the habit of accepting every event of life as coming from Divine Providence. Remember that everything that happens to us is for our greater good”*** (649-1; 740-1). When Anne Marie wrote this, she was 67 years of age and had long experience behind her. Therefore, this “get into the habit of” has to be taken very seriously. It requires working on oneself, the humble daily task of arousing in oneself a

faith response. But the Spirit of holiness helps us and is always with us.

To close this chapter on “Cluny sacrifice” we have the letter addressed to us by her who had lived it so well.

*“My dear, well-beloved daughter,
I thank God with all the fervour of my soul for the crosses and little tribulations that he sends you. He is giving you a great proof of his love. It was time for them to come. You were heading to your ruin without being aware of it.*

Endure your little hardships with joy in Our Lord. Try to love holy poverty and sufferings. If what is hurting you was taken away, something less pleasing would happen.

Let us accept the crosses and the difficulties that God sends us, no matter what they are. How happy you would be if this were so. Fear ambition, avoid sudden outbursts of jealousy, which is so subtle that we do not notice it until it has wounded us.

Goodbye, my very dear daughter. Pray for your sister and friend,

*Sister Javouhey,
Superior General” (918; 1010-1,2)*

References

1. It is God who chooses and the cross is necessary
270-1; 288-1 419-3; 481-2 *279-4

2. Sacrifices arise in every walk of life

393-2; 436-1	395-1; 438-1	410-1; 459-1
276-1; 294-1		

3. Resignation and submission with serenity

330-3; 354-3	414-5; 469-3	439-3; 575-4
417-3; 476-2;	459-2; 543-1	416-1; 474-1
244-2; 260-2	250-3; 266-3	284-5; 304-5
294-2; 314-2	111-1; 123-1	

4. Joy and love of the cross

918; 1010-1,2	234-1; 250-1	439-3; 507-2
491-2; 576-1	506-1; 592-1	649-1; 740-1
650-1; 741-1	701-2; 792-1	761-2; 855-2
750-4; 844-3	404-4; 451-3	*563-1
197-2; 213-2	343-2; 368-2	242-1; 258-1
317-6; 340-3,4	377-2; 411-1	392-3; 434-2
532-4; 619-3	654-3; 745-3	829-1; 924-1
834-1; 929-1	250-3; 266-3	292-4; 312-3
362-1; 389-1		

5. Energy and courage

166-2; 182-1	293-9; 313-6	249-2; 265-2
288-2; 308-1	241-3; 257-3	



Chapter 17

Peace like a River

Anne-Marie Javouhey's spirituality outlines a wide and simple course of action. It begins with experiencing that God loves us to distraction, in Jesus, and that his Will for us is happiness, growth and success. It invites us to respond to it by accepting a certain asceticism, a certain way of sacrifice that is both normal and necessary in every sphere of life. What student does not have to make sacrifices to get through exams? What parents do not have to make sacrifices to help their children attain success? Every success comes at a price! Asceticism is a law as much for the intellectual and affective life as it is for the spiritual. The Cluny way of God's Will also includes this ascetical aspect but it quickly flows into peace. It tends to make peace flow like a river. (Is. 66: 12).

Peace, the Supreme Good

Peace was always God's greatest gift in the Old Testament. "Shalom" is the magnificent gift that includes all others, from material riches to union with God. It has a centre, a Prince who has the power of reconciling opposites: the wolf and the lamb...the infant and the

cobra! (Is.11:1-9). In the New Testament, peace is the gift of the Risen Christ, the Prince of Peace. It is this interior life, this wholeness of being that allows one to enjoy all the other gifts and withstand all adversities. We need only to look at very concrete examples to illustrate this double affirmation. For example, lack of peace in a family hinders the enjoyment of all the other gifts, riches, health, social success. Lack of peace prevents us from being present to reality, to what is happening around us, to conversations, to the beauty of nature, to prayer. Lack of peace causes us to be absorbed in ourselves, to be closed in on ourselves. We do not have freedom of mind or an open heart. Peace gives all these riches and more because it unites us directly to God and through him to others, no matter who they are.

So Anne- Marie spoke about ***“this lovely gift that we should prefer to all others”*** (459-3; 543-1). She advised her niece Clotilde Javouhey to ***“maintain peace which is the most precious gift that we can have in this world”*** (*485-5). It was after the experience of Mana II that this topic took on considerable importance. It seemed to be linked with the mystic experience of union with Jesus in the suffering and joy of the cross. The majority of the quotations are from Volumes 3 and 4 of the Letters, that is, after 1843, the year of Anne Marie’s second return from Mana.

Peace is the criterion for the discernment of intuitions as our spiritual guide. If intuition stems from an atmosphere of peace, it comes from God; if it does not, it has to be rejected. ***“God communicates only in peace: it is my compass; it never deceives me”*** (601-2; 692-1). This letter is dated June 1841. Anne-Marie was 66 years of age and she was writing to the Superior in Pondicherry to help her discern her initiatives. She employed the unusual word “compass” which she had already used to point out how reliable a criterion the Rule was in the discernment of God’s Will: “The Rule is my compass,” she used to say (88-2; 97-2). This expression dated from April 1825. Twenty-one years later, she is speaking about discerning the validity

of our intuitions, and it is the lived experience of peace which gives the certainty. This rule for the discernment of intuitions only appeared in her mature years.

Preserving it at all costs

Since peace is the supreme good, it has to be preserved at any cost. (648-5; 739-3). So the important question is, “How do we attain it? How do we safeguard it?” Anne-Marie has a triple response: First we must banish from our lives all that does not concern us. ***“If only you could stop being bothered about this thing that has been tormenting you for such a long time...turn away from all that does not concern you, and you will have peace of soul”*** (459-2; 543-1). It was Sister Josephine Tarriot, superior in Pondicherry, who received this condition for peace. She, apparently, was inclined to want to meddle in everything! Next, we must flee from anything that troubles us: ***“We torment ourselves for nothing. We lose our peace of soul so easily because of the lack of reflection, lack of thought,” complained Anne-Marie. “Alas! Are we not to be pitied if we do not see all the happiness we are missing through our own fault!”*** (480-1; 565-1). Sister Raphael Montet in Bourbon was the recipient of this letter in May 1844. And once again Sister Josephine was corrected: ***“Let us keep our soul in peace and we will be able to do a lot of good; anything that disturbs us does not come from God”*** (601-2; 692-1). Finally, we must struggle against self-love. We know from our own experience that this is true. How many times have we not lost our peace because of our own susceptibility? Sister Chantal received the following letter: ***“I am happy to hear that you are well, that peace and mutual acceptance reign in your little society. Maintain them, my dear daughters. It is the greatest of all gifts. God lives where peace reigns. In order to keep it, do not be afraid to sacrifice self-love which is the enemy of peace”*** (719-3; 811-2). Our own experience and a glance at the world around us show us how right

Anne Marie was, and how we should really take to heart the advice that she gives us.

To create conditions of peace

Growing in peace does not imply just a negative work of struggle and of shunning certain modes of behaviour, attitudes and feelings. A positive step has to be taken as well.

Firstly, peace develops in an atmosphere of silence. How much trouble have we experienced because of gossip, indiscretions and useless communications. So Anne-Marie recommended, ***“Do not be upset about anything, go gently. May God be well served! Let silence be well kept and there will be peace”*** (975-3; 1068-3). This letter is dated November 1850, towards the end of the foundress’ life. It was written to Sister Marie Joseph, and from paragraph two onwards, it dealt with the quality of religious life. Then came the sentence quoted above, which contained the most important point of the advice given. Well-observed silence is the sine qua non for breaking the infernal cycle of malicious gossip and perhaps calumnies that destroy communities and communion with God.

Then, we must put our whole trust in God and banish fear of the future. In August 1843, having freed the blacks in Mana, she returned to France after an absence of eight years. From Bordeaux she notified Sister Rosalie of her arrival. It was a short letter, the tone of which was not too enthusiastic - she had been deprived of the Sacraments for two years already! So this was how she ended it: ***“I find this note too sad. You are going to think that I am unhappy. No, no, I am very happy.... Come on! Be at peace. We are in the hands of Providence”*** (448-3; 532-2). She had experienced how abandonment into the hands of God takes away worry about the future and it was this wisdom that she shared with Sister Louis Foures

in June 1846: ***“Place all your confidence in God and less in creatures, then you will have peace”*** (603-1; 694-1). In February 1848, revolution broke out again in France. Anne Marie was 68 years of age. She had matured in spiritual wisdom at the expense of her experiences. From Cortenberg in Belgium where preparations for a new foundation were in progress, she encouraged her daughters: ***“The atmosphere is very bleak, storms come in quick succession. It is like the revolution. Let us place all in God’s hands, let us keep our soul in peace”*** (697-2; 788-1). The following year, it was Sister Madeleine Collonge’s morale that she was trying to boost: ***“Do as I do, my very dear daughter. You will be the better for it. I place everything that hurts me in God’s hands. I would love to know that you were happy. Keep your soul in peace.”*** (831-1; 926-1) The ***“do as I do”*** in this letter reveals her secret! At the end of her life, her spiritual sensitivity led her to understand how much loss of peace harms the soul. She denounced the instigator of the crime. It is Satan. ***“You must not let your imagination take over as it often comes from the enemy of our peace and takes away our trust in God”*** (860-1; 1083-1). This letter was written on 6 January 1851 to Sister Stanislaus Rivoire. It was not meant to be a letter of spiritual direction, but it became so because it identified the action of the Evil One.

To seek only God’s Will is a powerful means of maintaining one’s peace of soul. It gives us a solid foundation. Anne Marie had experience of this and she shared it with Sister Batilde Laparre in June 1842, when she was at the height of the troubles in Mana II: ***“Oh! What peace we enjoy in adversity, in contradictions, how happy we are when we want only God’s Will. We are indifferent to good and evil”*** (434-3; 501-2). From this period onwards, we often come across this aspect of Cluny spirituality: ***“Oh! My very dear daughter, what consolation there is in doing God’s Will. Let this be our sole ambition as it will bring us peace on earth and glory in eternity”*** (487-8; 572-6). This letter was addressed to Sister Onesime Lefevre,

a friend with whom she could share the secrets of her heart. In December 1846, there was disturbance everywhere, in France and in the colonies. Sister Leonce Tristand made her worries for the future known to her superior general and here is the reply: ***"Let us seek only His Will and we will have peace"*** (632-1; 724-1). Two years later in a letter to Sister Chantal, Anne Marie highlighted again this very important spiritual discovery: ***"I hope to do God's Will, that is the extent of all my desires, therein are found peace and tranquility"*** (686-1; 777-1).

In order to safeguard peace, we have to submit to God's Will as soon as it is made known, even when it brings humiliations and sufferings: ***"Place all your confidence in God, and let us submit to his holy Will. If we were faithful to this holy practice, we would always have peace of soul and soon have union with God"*** (650-1; 741-1) was what she recommended to a sister in Acarounay in May 1847.

Besides, when the world condemns and humiliates us, its judgment does not matter, only God's judgment counts: ***"Father Guillier did not want to hear my confession. I keep my soul in peace. It is not the opinion of the wicked that will make me guilty in God's sight. This is my consolation!"*** (395-4; 438-4). This time the letter was dated October 1840, when Mgr. d'Hericourt hardened his position by following his victim to Guyana. He forbade her the sacraments.

In order to keep our peace we also have to take time into consideration. In St. John's gospel, Jesus teaches us that we must await "the hour". Maturity comes with time; there is a time for sowing and a time for reaping. She who was acquainted with prolonged uncertainties over the years 1798-1807, knew this only too well: ***"My dear daughter, good is accomplished slowly, we must know how to wait without ever becoming discouraged; then you will have peace of soul and will be able to give it to others"*** (892-3; 984-2).

In order to live in peace, we must also give God the credit for the good that is done. *“Attribute all the glory to God and keep your soul in peace”* (462-8; 546-5). This advice was given to Sister Madeleine Collonge in November 1843. She had suffered a lot because of the tactless actions of some people in Cayenne. God gave victory to his cause. Whether there are humiliations or triumphs, peace must always be kept.

Then there is the final recommendation for us to preserve our souls in peace: have a positive outlook on others. In March 1850, Anne Marie was 71 years of age, and once more she confided her spiritual experience to Sister Madeleine Collonge and gave her advice. Friends share everything and they can help each other to grow in holiness: *“Alas. my very dear daughter, we have not always thought as we do today; our ideas mature with age. God allows the defects, the lack of depth in youth in order to keep us humble in our mature years. Let us not condemn too easily. Let us try to encourage the weak and to bear patiently what we cannot correct. Never let your soul be troubled; let us keep our peace at any cost, and we will spread it to all around us.”* (897-3; 989-2).

The “contagion” of peace

Because peace is contagious, she who led us on the way to holiness repeated it several times: *“Let us have peace, then we will give it to others”* (892-3; 984-2, 897-3; 989-2, 292-4; 312-3). When new societies for the promotion of peace appear and expand, **it is then that the Reign of the Prince of Peace is being established and extended** (Is.9, 5).

References

1. Peace, the supreme gift.
459-3; 543-1 601-2; 692-1

2. To be maintained at any cost

648-5; 739-3	480-1; 565-1	601-2; 692-1
459-2; 543-1	719-3; 811-2	

3. To create the conditions for peace

975-3; 1068-3	448-3; 532-2	603-1; 694-1
860-1; 1083-2	434-3; 501-2	487-8; 572-6
632-1; 724-1	686-1; 777-1	649-1; 740-1
244-3; 260-2	532-4; 619-3	650-1; 741-1
506-1; 592-1	697-2; 788-1	424-2; 489-2
294-2; 314-2	434-9; 501-6	726-1; 819-2
831-1; 926-1	892-3; 984-2	462-8; 546-5
395-4; 438-4	738-1; 832-2	
897-3; 989-2	980-1; 1073-1	

4. Peace is contagious

892-3; 984-2	897-3; 989-2	292-4; 312-3
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Chapter 18

Mary, Our Mother General

What is the place of Mary in Anne Marie Javouhey's spirituality? What role did she play in the life and growth of the one who guides us? In order to answer these questions we will first of all examine the historical facts. We will then look at the letters to see what Anne-Marie had to say about Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Historical facts

The Origins

When we reread Anne Marie's life, we find Mary at the very beginning of her existence. These were the preliminary preparations. We learn that all the Javouhey children were consecrated to the Blessed Virgin because of their parents' devotion to Mary. The Rosary was said in their farm-home and we can conclude that Nanette's childhood was spent in an atmosphere of trust with regard to the Mother of God.

From 1796-1798, the growing adolescent had the first mystical expe-

rience that we referred to earlier. Nevertheless, we must complete the information on this subject by basing it on what she said herself. In May 1850, she was in Chalon with the parish priest of St. Peter's, looking at the possibility of founding her "society" in this town. But the parish priest whilst offering her accommodation and a site for her mission, already saw himself as the spiritual father of this group of young girls that was about to be started. Anne Marie was afraid, as she was already linked to Dom L'Estrange by a vow of obedience, so she decided to go to Autun to see the bishop, and get his guidance and protection. In Autun, she entered a church where she made her confession to the priest who was there and then she told him about her plans for a foundation in the diocese. It was this priest, Fr. Gally, who although he opposed her plans, received her confidences. "She said to me," he wrote later, "that it was impossible for her to abandon this project, that the **Blessed Virgin had told her that it was the Will of Jesus Christ, her Son...She had commanded her on three different occasions, to found with your sisters an institute for the education of the children of your sex**" (Annals p.35; 28-29 and 78-79). So, during this period that led up to the ceremony of 11 November 1798, the young girl received from Mary the call to consecrate herself to Jesus as well as the command to found her Congregation and what its goal was to be. The striking intervention of Mary in the young girl's life cannot be questioned.

Anne Marie spoke little about herself and consequently, we have nothing of this recorded in a spiritual notebook. But the Annals tell of young Anne's devotion to Mary when she was groping to find the way to realize the message that she had received. We read especially about her pilgrimages to places consecrated to Mary: Our Lady of Mount Roland, very near to Dole, and Our Lady of the Hermits in Switzerland.

Significant Events

More significant still were the happenings that stand out in her life.

In May 1804, the first convent which Mr. Javouhey had undertaken to build, was placed under the protection of Our Lady. In 1805, she arranged that the first sisters to arrive in Chalon would do so on 15 August. In 1806, Anne became Sister Anne Marie. In 1807, the first clothing and the first public profession ceremonies took place on 12 May, in honour of Our Lady. Prayers to Mary had an important part in the life of the young society. The La Trappe Salve Regina was kept and made part of the obligatory prayers of Rule in 1810, as was also the Rosary. The latter went everywhere with Balthazar's daughter all during her life. The miraculous cure of Fr. Larroque's vocal cords was attributed to it (Annals p. 759). In October 1849, the Mother General who was then 67 years of age, attributed the miracle of the opening of the Novitiate in Paris to Mary. From then onwards, it was called the Holy Heart of Mary Novitiate. In fact, the Mother of Jesus was 'proclaimed' Mother General on 26 December 1849 (846-2; 941-2).

Marian Theology in the letters

What type of Marian theology is evident from the Letters? Each saint had his or her own particular way of approaching Mary. St. Bernard and St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort have a language peculiar to themselves when speaking about Mary. And Anne Marie Javouhey? Unfortunately for us, she did not give any sermons like St. Bernard nor did she write books like St. Louis Marie. Our only sources of information are the letters and here is what we find in them.

A Mother

Mary was a mother, a real mother with whom she was happy to spend time. She particularly enjoyed the special occasions that brought her closer to her. Above all, there was the "month of Mary". ***"This month of Mary is so full of fervour, is so consoling, that one cannot but***

be full of hope”(725-1; 817-1). She knew that she was loved by Mary, and sought to return love for love and to lead others to do the same: ***“By your example,”*** she recommended the sisters in Mayotte, ***“inspire the local people with love of God and love of Mary”*** (638-1; 729-1). She knew her mother’s tastes and tried to please her: ***“Let us try to please (God) by our deep humility: it is the virtue that we need, the one that is most pleasing to him. Let it be our favourite virtue and we will be sure of pleasing Jesus and Mary”*** (604-2; 695-2).

She confided lots of things to her. First of all, her spiritual life, her desires for holiness, her wish to be faithful, to correct herself. We are fickle, unpredictable, who is going to help us to keep on course? Mary. She brings us to birth in grace, and like a vigilant mother, she watches over our spiritual health: ***“Holy Virgin, my dear mother, I place myself under your powerful protection, do not abandon me”*** (*75-2). This prayer was written at the end of a short personal text when she was in Sierra Leone. She was meditating on the different aspects of holiness and on her wish to make progress in it. She also confided to Mary all those who were dear to her, particularly those who were in danger, travelling by sea for example, or going through trying times: ***“I leave you under the protection of our good father, St. Joseph, and the Blessed Virgin who will console you in all your troubles and soften all the bitterness”*** (334-10; 358-6). This was addressed to her beloved niece, Sister Clotilde, who was going through a hard time. And again, she confided to Mary the plans that God had for the Congregation in the accomplishment of his Will. She asked that novenas be made to our mother in Heaven, because Mary is a “specialist” in God’s Will. From the Annunciation to Pentecost, and by way of the cross, the Faithful Virgin unceasingly welcomed the Father’s plan in order to carry it out. In 1842, Anne Marie was in Mana where she had finished the work of freeing the slaves. She was 62 years of age, and had experienced the faithful love of the Mother of God. During the intense persecution by the Bishop of Autun which was then crushing the Congregation, nothing could be seen clearly

any longer and she wrote to Sister Batilde, Sister Marie-Joseph's secretary: *"But nevertheless, I beg you not to go faster than Providence that wants to be supported, not anticipated. Wait for its time without hastening it. Leave the Bishop of Autun and the Archbishop of Paris in perfect peace. Do not give the impression that you are worried about it. Pray, pray a lot. Place everything in the hands of Mary and Joseph and then, sleep in peace"* (434-9; 501-6). The foundress often linked her trust in the Mother with trust in St. Joseph, her spouse. In fact, this girl from Burgundy with her strong French characteristics could not but suffer because of the lamentable disturbances in her native land. She confided this also to Mary: *"Let us ask God to pardon France, to give it peace. We hope for a lot in this beautiful month of Mary. Many fervent souls spend the day and often the night, at the foot of Mary's altars"* (719-5; 811-2).

A very powerful Mother

Mary is an all-powerful mother for her children. Anne Marie knew this from personal experience. That was why she prayed to her unceasingly and recommended that others do the same. In 1845, after the Cluny novitiate was closed, other doors opened miraculously. The foundress hastened to write to her youngest sister: *"Be very careful not to write or let anything be published in the papers, or we could spoil our project which is going quite well. In a few days we will know more. Pray to Notre Dame des Champs"* (519-2; 606-1). And here is how Balthazar's daughter made known her enthusiastic admiration for the kindly power of God's mother: *"We have just finished the month of Mary and what graces God has given us! They are all the greater as we had not asked for them...nevertheless, I am aware of the cost"* (434-2; 501-2). She had a limitless trust in Mary. In 1845, still at this crucial period already mentioned, she expressed herself thus: *"I have spent the whole of this week in a state of great anxiety, still watching the holy bishop carrying out his*

plans, but stronger hands than his are holding me back from the edge of the abyss, those of Joseph and Mary" (518-1; 605-1). And whenever Mary revealed herself and obtained the sought-for graces, Anne Marie never forgot to thank her: *"We are going to celebrate the month of Mary in thanksgiving. Both the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph protect us in a very special way"* (470-9; 554-6). This was another letter from those hard years: April 1844. A few months later, she shared with her sister Rosalie: *"Mgr. D'Autun... is caught in his own nets...thanks to Mary who has prayed to Jesus for us. Yes, all is going well"* (483-2; 568-1). And the following year when the horizon cleared: *"Let us thank our good mother Mary and her holy spouse, our father, for all the favours they are obtaining for us"* (576-576-1; 665-1).

A Model to imitate

Finally, for the eldest of the Javouhey daughters, the Mother of Jesus is a model, the perfect model that must be imitated: *"Let the Blessed Virgin be your model in all your actions"* (503-7; 589-5), she advised the sisters in the Marquesas Islands in 1845. That supposes a constant contemplation of Mary so that the outstanding traits that characterise her may be reproduced in us. To follow Mary, is to take the easiest and surest spiritual pathway. It was Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort who wrote this. Anne Marie lived it without ever writing a dissertation on the subject.

Sure discernment

She knew exactly what true devotion to the Mother of God entailed. We know how prudent and slow the Church is to recognize the authenticity of Our Lady's apparitions. Years can pass before they are

officially recognised. Now, from February 1835, the Foundress encouraged her sisters to pray to Mary under the title “Mary conceived without sin”. However, the apparitions to Catherine Laboure in the Rue du Bac occurred in 1830, only four and a half years earlier. As regards the dogma, it would not be proclaimed until 1854, twenty years later. We often say that Anne Marie was ahead of her time...this was true even of her devotion to Mary.

The writer of our letters spoke a lot about God’s Will. The expression is used 339 times in the 1135 letters that we actually have. On the contrary, Mary’s name is mentioned less frequently: 34 times...Even if she did not feel the need to say the name of Mary she nevertheless, lived constantly with her who led her to her Son and to do, as he did, the Will of the Father. Her Marian piety was characterized by three qualities that must be retained at any cost: consecration of oneself to Mary, constant prayer to Her, especially the Rosary, and imitation of her, so as to be, as she is, daughter of the Father.

References

1. Facts from History (see the Historical Annals)

19; 20-3	846-2; 941-2	253-3; 269-2
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2. Marian Theology in the Letters

a) A Mother

716-5; 808-4	725-1; 817-1	*75-2
498-5; 584-4	84-1; 93-1	334-10; 358-6
335-5; 359-4	523-1; 610	817-1; 912-1
429-5; 495-2	434-9; 501-6	719-5; 811-3

b) Very powerful

638-1; 729-1	434-2; 501-2	519-2; 606-2
652-3; 743-2	716-5; 808-4	719-5; 812-2

518-1; 605-1

670-1; 761

903-995-7

305-1; 326-1

576-1; 665-1

481-1; 566-1

721-1; 813-2

483-2; 568-1

597-688-2

657-2; 748-1

757-2; 851-1

470-9; 554-6

604-2; 695-2

b) A model to be imitated

503-7; 589-5

c) Anne –Marie began very early to use the invocation “O Mary, conceived without sin”

305-1; 326-1

335-5; 359-3,4



Conclusion

A strong life-giving spirituality is what we discover throughout Blessed Anne-Marie's letters

To follow her way is to gradually welcome the grace of childlikeness, to become "little" again in order to enter the kingdom of Heaven, (Mk.10:13,16), children who rest trustingly in the Father's arms and who are at peace. It also means welcoming the grace of the "espousals" and consequently, of love of the mission and the struggle for the kingdom, beginning with oneself.

We are not alone on this pathway, Mary is with us.

However we could not finish this work without speaking about another companion on our journey, **Saint Joseph**.

He had not been chosen patron of the Congregation at the beginning because the young 26 year-old from Burgundy had spontaneously thought of St. Bernard. The proposal that was made by the parish priest of St. Peter's to choose St. Joseph was received as a gift from St. Teresa of Avila (Annals p.96). In the course of the years, the great St. Joseph became more and more the father of the Congregation, its

protector, support, irreplaceable friend, humble and silent but efficacious.

He is for Anne Marie and her daughters what he was for Mary herself: a loving reassuring presence, eminently active but so discreet and self-effacing that he was really the shadow of the Father, without overshadowing him.

In the shade of the belfry of St. Joseph's Church in Mana

19 March 2000

Sister Marie-Suzelle GERARD s.j.c.



