

God Alone Suffices

Autobiography of Mother Veronica



*"Self seems to disappear  
while God and his mercy alone remain"*

*Mother Veronica*

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Alone  
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# **GOD ALONE SUFFICES**

**THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF  
MOTHER VERONICA OF  
THE PASSION**

**née-Sophie Leeves**

**(Foundress of the Apostolic Carmel)**

**1823 - 1906)**

## FOREWORD

Mother Veronica's autobiography reveals her as a unique blend of interior depth and profound social concern. This is the most distinctive feature of her life and writings. This combination makes her crucially important for us today. Today we live in an age when spirituality cannot be divorced from social sensitivity.

Mother Veronica's autobiographical writings trace for us her inner journey. The life of this great English woman, offers a timely message, for ecumenical dialogue, for the dignity and role of women in the Church and society, for a contemplative-prophetic spirituality, for a life completely attuned to God's will and a life totally identified with the Crucified. It speaks powerfully to the sisters of the congregation she founded as also to every woman and man of today.

The seeds of mature fusion of contemplation with compassion are present from the very beginning of her quest. These were nurtured in a deeply religious family and reach their full flowering in the years just before her death.

With relentless honesty and restless longing she probes into her own experience of life and the world around her, searching for truth, authenticity and true meaning. Her search leads her, at first to embrace the Catholic faith, then to respond to the call to Religious life, further to found the Apostolic Carmel and finally to enter into the sounding solitude of Carmel, to wait on the Lord's final call, to be united with him forever. Through painful experiences she gradually acquired the "Science of the Cross", so that Christ could lead her through his passion to the glory of his resurrection.

God became the essence of Mother Veronica's existence. In him she found the Truth and a close friend she could converse with always. However, like Edith Stein, she realized that "the deeper one is drawn into God, the more one must go out of oneself, i.e. one must go to the world in order to carry the divine life into it."

The life of Mother Veronica unfolds as a journey in silence to the inmost centre of her being. There she discerns the infinite presence in which her deepest self is rooted. There too she discovers her solidarity with others. It was there that she was awakened to her true self and grasped intuitively that her own reality is received as a free gift of love and is endowed with lasting meaning.

Her life reveals how the surrender of ego-control, through obedience to God's will, eventually gives way to a naked encounter with the living God. In this utter darkness one stands stripped of anything to hold on to, or protect oneself. In the midst of this stifling emptiness there is nothing, yet somehow God, alone is. He begins to fill up that emptiness and helplessness with himself. The Dark Night transforms itself more and more into the overflowing fullness of God. This surge of the Divine into all parts of her being was Mother Veronica's mystical experience, which made her exclaim "self seems to disappear, God and his mercy alone remain."

The expansive outpouring of God brings us to the realization that all our human powers and gifts are not simply ours but rather a sharing in God's own powers, as rays of light from the sun and as waters from the fountain. We will find our real identity in becoming channels of his truth and love. We do so by responding to the needs of humanity.

"Paradigmatic figures who emerge in the course of history are like the Milky Way thrown down from heaven to

earth ...a shining river of stars spiralling out from the centre of the galaxy... to light a path through the darkness. They are women and men who shine like the sun with the shimmer of divinity, showing the community the face of Christ in their own time and place. They distill the central values of the living tradition in a concrete and accessible form. The direct force of their example acts as a catalyst in the community, galvanizing recognition that yes, this is what we are called to be" (Elizabeth Johnson). This is what our foundress has to say to us today.

We are grateful to all those who have helped us to secure a copy of the original autobiography of Mother Veronica and to those who have painstakingly translated it into English. It will always remain a priceless treasure and a deep source of strength and inspiration to all those who choose to walk in the footsteps of our beloved foundress Mother Veronica.

Bangalore  
10 June 2001  
Feast of Corpus Christi

**Sister M. Vincent A.C.**  
*Superior General*

## INTRODUCTION

It was 6 January 1940. After the Sunday Mass at the Cathedral in Badulla, Sri Lanka, Mrs. Jayawardena, the sister of Dr. Lionel de Fonseca, a medical practitioner in Pau, came up to Mother Innocence, Superior of St. Ursula's Convent, Badulla, and handed her a box, saying that the Cloistered Carmel Sisters at Pau, France, had requested her brother to give the box to any Apostolic Carmel Sister he might meet during his vacation in Sri Lanka. With mixed feelings of surprise and joy, Mother Innocence hastened to the convent and opened the box. It contained "a good many beautiful pictures scapulars, altar linen, ciborium covers and a Manuscript written in French" (Convent Diary, January 1940). The box was immediately closed and sent to the then Superior General of the Apostolic Carmel, Mother Josephine A.C., at St. Ann's Convent, Mangalore.

When the Superior General and her Council received this treasure and saw that the manuscript was Mother Veronica's autobiography written in French, they were naturally filled with great excitement and jubilation. The manuscript was entrusted to Mother Candida, the archivist and official historian of the Congregation, well-versed in the French language, to be translated into English. This translated version of the autobiography was incorporated in the second history of the Congregation written by her in 1951, entitled, 'The Apostolic Carmel in France and India', and was made available to the sisters in cyclostyled form. It was regarded as an official history for all later purposes and was subsequently printed in 1974, under the title, 'The Apostolic Carmel Seed Time'. As might be expected, it created great interest in Mother Veronica among the sisters.

God's hour had struck for the Congregation to wake up and take note of the greatness of this woman, who, all would soon see, was the true foundress. The autobiography revealed details of her life and of the founding of the Apostolic Carmel, which the Congregation had not known earlier.

This manuscript copy of the autobiography ends with the closing down of the Little Carmel at Bayonne, on 10 October 1873. It is written in three parts: Part I is devoted to Sophie's Life outside the Church; Part II deals with her Life in the Bosom of the Church and Part III with her Life in Carmel. Only Parts I and II and the first two Chapters of Part III were copied in this manuscript. Her second novitiate at the Carmel of Pau, where she made her solemn profession in 1874, the twelve years she had spent at Bethlehem and her return to the Carmel of Pau are not found in the manuscript. It was her prudence and charity that made her gloss over all the trials and sufferings she had undergone at the Carmel of Bethlehem and the state of affairs which prevailed there.

Referring to the autobiography, one of the sisters from the Cloistered Carmel of Pau gives a succinct appraisal of Mother Veronica's life written by herself. "...This autobiography is so filled with precise details and facts, that the truth of it cannot be doubted in the face the uprightness, the scrupulous duty of always saying what is present, what is past, what she has seen or what she has only heard. There is always such a constant diligence in writing only the truth..." (Notice on the Life of Sister Veronica of the Passion by a sister at the Carmel of Pau).

With the autobiography in hand, the quest to obtain more material pertaining to Mother Veronica and the Congregation she founded continued unabated. In 1952, three Apostolic Carmelites, namely, Sisters Doreen, Fidelia

and Sophia, who were sent to Belgium for studies, were asked by the then Superior General, Mother Sylvia, to visit Pau and Bayonne, the cradles of our Congregation, with the sole purpose of collecting more historical material for the archives. God ordained, deliberately, it would seem, that these sisters should find at the Carmel of Pau, Sisters Marie of the Trinity and Madeleine of the Eucharist, who had lived with Mother Veronica during the last lap of her journey. The Apostolic Carmel sisters, naturally, made the most of this very important circumstance to get as much information as they could. When these sisters were interviewed, it was found that they remembered Mother Veronica vividly, though more than four decades had passed since her death. In addition to the interviews, the Cloistered Carmel sisters also wrote down their recollections and reminiscences for the Apostolic Carmel archives. Thus was obtained a very useful account of the last nineteen years of Mother Veronica's life at the Cloistered Carmel of Pau, ending with her saintly death on 16 November 1906.

The call of Vatican II to go back to the sources, in order to study the origins of the Congregation and of the foundational charism, which had inspired the founders and foundresses to bring their Congregations into being, was well timed. In response to this call, the Superior General, Mother Theodosia (who had been invited to Rome to attend the Vatican Council as an auditrix), after the concluding session of the Council, visited the Cloistered Carmel convents at Pau and Bayonne and, on her return to India, initiated the study of the origin, spirit and foundational charism of our Congregation. The Special Chapter of 1969 and the General Chapters of 1972 and 1978 researched the life of Mother Veronica and, after much reflection, prayer and discussion, came to the conclusion that it was she and she alone, who had

toiled, suffered and agonized to found the Apostolic Carmel Congregation.

Hence, the Congregation was eager to possess the entire autobiography of the foundress. Having come to know that it was preserved in the Archives of the Diocese of Bayonne, France, the General Chapter of 1978 gave the mandate to the Superior General and her Council to procure a photocopy of the original autobiography for the Apostolic Carmel Archives. Sister Amabel, who knew French well, was commissioned by the then Superior General, Mother Carmelita, to visit the archives of the diocese of Bayonne to secure a photocopy of the original and complete autobiography of Mother Veronica. During this visit, she met His Lordship Rt. Rev. Msgr. Jean Paul Vincent, the Bishop of Bayonne, personally. He gave her a photocopy of the original and complete autobiography of Mother Veronica, written in three parts in two exercise books.

When Sister Amabel returned with the photocopy of the autobiography in 1980, she was asked to translate it into English. This task being completed in 1982, she presented it to the Superior General and her Council. The two biographers of Mother Veronica, Sisters Carol and Valeria, were indeed fortunate to have the autobiography as they made extensive use of it while writing 'A Strange Destiny', published in 1989, and, 'As Clay in His Hands', published in 2002.

Mother Veronica is one of the few holy people who wrote their autobiographies under obedience. It was in obedience to her spiritual director, Father Lazare D.C., that she began writing it, after her return to Pau in 1887, completing it in 1889, seventeen years before her death on 16 November 1906. Before submitting it to Father Lazare,

She wrote: "I finished this account on the 28 March 1889. It is destined for good Father Lazare who is free to do with it as he pleases after my death. Perhaps it would be better to burn it. And I beg of him to be kind enough to forgive me for whatever he finds defective".

However, Father Lazare did not burn this precious document. He preserved it along with his spiritual books and writings at the Carmelite Monastery, Montpellier, France, where he was Prior. When the Cause of Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified was taken up for beatification on 19 May 1924, the Historical Commission, having found in it several references to her and an entire chapter on her marvellous life, took hold of it and submitted it to the Diocesan Tribunal. Today, it is preserved in the archives of the diocese of Bayonne, along with other documents (*Copia Publica*) pertaining to Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, who was beatified by Pope John Paul II on 13 November 1983. After going through the very inspiring life of our foundress Mother Veronica, we find the need of publishing it so that, not only our sisters but all those who read her life, may find in her a fitting model to help them face life's challenges with deep faith in God and indomitable courage. In enabling us to discover the autobiography, we see the loving attention of God to her, as also his love for us, her daughters, and for the Apostolic Carmel Congregation as a whole.

**Sister M. Liceria A.C.**

Archivist & Vice Postulator,  
Cause of Mother Veronica

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**PART I****LIFE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

It is out of obedience alone that I begin to write this narration of my poor life on 6 October 1887 in the Carmel of Pau. I have just completed my 64th year, having been born at Constantinople on 1 October 1823. My parents were English – my father, a Minister of the Anglican Church, had studied at Oxford and was called Henry Daniel Leeves, and my mother, born Miss Haultain, was the daughter of a colonel in the English army and had almost all her relatives officers in the army or in the royal navy, while on my father's side there were several who belonged to the Anglican Church as ministers – of course, all were Protestants. Shortly after their marriage, my father and mother set out for Constantinople where my father was Chaplain of the English Embassy in the time of Lord Strangford and Sir Stratford Canning. At Constantinople they had four children, that is to say, that the eldest, my brother Henry, was born at Odessa where my father had taken my mother for the birth of her first child on 16 October 1821 and then arrived three girls of whom I am the eldest. Born on 1 October 1823, I was called Sophie. The second was called Mary Ann and was also born at Constantinople on 24 June 1825 and the third, Emilie, on 19 January 1827. This last dear little one was born deaf and dumb and with a defective heart of which she died, as we shall see later, under circumstances of God's mercy. When I was three years old, the massacre of the Janissaries took place and then England declared war on Turkey which obliged all the English to leave the Mohammedan territory. My father put my mother with the three children Henry,



Sophie and Emilie on board a merchant vessel which was sailing for London, and himself remained with little Mary Ann to follow later in the English warship which was to bring back the Ambassador and his retinue. There were no steamers in those days. This was the first of the 26 voyages on the Mediterranean that I made during my life.

We arrived happily at London after a long voyage and we went to wait for the arrival of my father with little Mary Ann at the house of my paternal grandfather who was the Rector of a parish (Protestant) for 50 years in the south of England, in Somersetshire. I recall the joy I felt when I saw again my father and my little sister who was then 3 years old, and how the whole household assembled to hear her say her small prayer in Greek, on her knees in front of a chair, for she did not know to speak English having had a Tiniote Catholic nurse in Constantinople. The first language or one of the first languages that I spoke was also Greek.

We stayed in England till the birth of my youngest sister Catherine who came into the world in London on 15 June 1829. At that time I nearly killed myself by a fall. I saw my brother and my cousins riding on the balustrade of the staircase and sliding downwards to the bottom. I wanted also to do the same like a tomboy and I fell over the hand-rail on a landing, thirteen steps below, where I was picked up unconscious. Two of my front teeth remained on the landing and another clung only by a thread. My mouth was horribly cut; it was stitched and for a long time I could not eat anything solid.

It was also at this time that my father gave me my first correction. One Sunday evening he had taken my sister Mary Ann and me and explained to us how theft was against one of God's commandments and he enjoined us never to take

anything from anyone. When the little sermon was over, he sent us away to amuse ourselves. We both went to the dining room where the tea was laid out and there was the milk jug on the table. But nothing was more urgent for me than to go and take a spoonful of milk and for my sister to go and denounce me to Papa who came and said to me: "I have just told you that theft is a sin and should not be committed, and look, you are a thief, now I am going to whip you" which he did. I have never forgotten it, although I was more ashamed than hurt, but as I was always very proud, it was enough, so that I have never more stolen anything in my life, I believe. It was the same with falsehood. I was too proud to lie, but I was disobedient and proud to the point of not being able nor willing to ask pardon of my mother even when I had done something foolish.

Shortly after the birth of my sister Catherine, we all set out for Corfu where my father had to apply himself to translating the Bible into Greek, for he was singularly gifted with the knowledge of languages. He knew nine of them: Greek, Latin, Hebrew and some others too. Afterwards he was military chaplain to the English troops, for Corfu then belonged to England. My father, although a Protestant, was a man of great virtue; if he had received the grace of being a Catholic, he would have been a saint. I had never seen him do or say anything that could be called a sin. I was 21 years old when he died and I always saw him a good father, a good husband, good to his servants, excessively charitable to the poor, as my mother also was – practising conscientiously his religion. He prayed everyday with his family and alone in his room. Sometimes we used to go and look through the keyhole and we saw and heard him pray aloud on his knees with joined hands – and what is very rare among Protestants – he had a depth of humility which astonished me; for, as for

me, I was proud of my pride which I believed necessary to be a well-bred young lady, which I judged myself to be in the full meaning of the term. My father never failed in charity, even towards people whom he had overwhelmed with kindnesses and who paid him with ingratitude; he did not want us to talk against these persons. He had an extreme delicacy in his speech, nothing unseemly could be said or done in his presence. In society, one laughs or amuses oneself among young men and young persons with more or less of levity. In my father's presence nothing similar could take place, and yet he was amiable, gay and of the best society, and showed in his conversation a spirit so fine and so pleasant that no one could help loving and respecting him.

At the age of five, I was given a teacher who was placed in charge of my sister Mary Ann and me and she came with us to Corfu. My brother was placed in a school and remained in England. After two or three years, my parents who wanted him also with them, made him also come to Corfu, in the company of a young man, his tutor. And then my teacher, Miss Thornton, returned to England, and my sister Mary Ann and I continued our education with my brother under the guidance of his teacher. I was then ten years old. This teacher was very rude and treated us as he would have done the boys of a public school, where he had been a teacher, and struck us with a ruler, etc. so that my father and my mother were not happy and withdrew my sister and me from his charge. He stayed with us only a year or two, and some teachers came to give my sister Mary Ann and me French and Music lessons. The other two, Emilie and Catherine, were still quite small. It is only about this time that my mother understood that little Emilie was deaf, and consequently dumb, for we had thought that her weak health was the cause why she did not speak. She was three or four years old and could not yet walk. One

day, our teacher while giving us a lesson on the globe, laid little Emilie on the table on her back. She took in her hand a flask of vinegar from the four cruets which were found on the table and held it before her face trying to draw the cork. It seems that a little of this strong essence flowed on her hands with which she rubbed her eyes and began to weep for she must have felt the burning in it. Her eyes became swollen and the poor little one remained a fortnight without being able to see. It was then that we perceived that she could not hear either, for she remained motionless the whole day, deaf, dumb and blind. Finally the swelling left her eyes and their blue appeared again. It was a sign that the vinegar had not entered inside, but had only touched the lids. I remember the joy of the whole household when this dear child opened her eyes again, and the grief of my parents on perceiving that she was deaf and dumb.

However, they were not satisfied with my brother's tutor and as my father had to go to Greece where King Otho had now put himself under the protection of the three Powers, it was decided that we should make a trip to Switzerland to go and bring a teacher and a maid (both Protestants) to accustom us to speaking French. We set out therefore by way of Ancona and across Lombardy and Mount Simplon as far as Berne, where we found a well informed young man named Mr. Wenger who was engaged as a tutor and afterwards at Geneva my mother took a chambermaid or nurse who stayed twelve years in the family. Mr. Wenger lived with us five years and taught my brother, my sister Mary Ann and me. We never went to school or to a boarding house, for my mother never wanted to be separated from her daughters. She sacrificed herself to give us a good education. Nothing was too much for her when it was a question of her

children who it seemed ought to belong solely to her. So when the good Lord claimed them for his service she could not decide to give them to him.

My father especially wished that we should learn old Greek with our tutor and every morning my brother, my sister Mary Ann and I went to my father to read a part of the Greek New Testament and translate it into English; and my father explained it to us. The grace of being able to read the holy Gospels in their original language was one of the greatest helps to my conversion to Catholicism as I shall relate in due course. This is how we learned French, German, Italian later and then instrumental and vocal music, drawing etc. Music, above all, was a passion in our family; my father, my mother, my brother, my sisters, we were all passionately fond of music. Whole mornings were spent in practising and the evenings in singing. We would do without eating to enjoy music, and not the music of the theatre, which my father did not want, but good, solid music, in the best taste, religious music of Handel, Haydn, Beethoven etc. After a few months' stay in Switzerland, we returned to Greece by way of Mount Cenis, Genoa and Leghorn where we embarked for Syros. We stayed three years in this island, and during this time my father went to Athens, bought land there and had a house built which he intended to be occupied by his family, but the English minister, Sir Edmund Lyons, finding it to his taste begged my father to rent it to him for a certain number of years, and when we came to Athens, my father settled his family in a rented house, instead of living in his own. My father also bought a property in the north of Euboea, opposite the Gulf of Salonika. It was a village called Castaniotisa (which in Greek means a small chestnut) and every summer we went to spend a few months there, because the heat in Athens is excessive. We set out then every year after

Easter when my father was free of his duties as English Chaplain, because all the English families which formed his congregation went away to the country. We travelled on horse back for Castaniotisa was a few days' journey away from Athens and we formed a real caravan for there were no carriage roads nor carriages except in Athens and its vicinity. Sometimes, too, we went by sea in a sail-boat going round the island of Euboea or Negropont, and we landed at Oreos, a seaport about an hour from our village. Then all the peasants, each one leading his donkeys or his mules, arrived to take the Affendico and his family to the place where we had our country house.

I loved this sojourn in the country very much. The scenery was magnificent, the view splendid. From the balcony which ran along the front of the house, we saw a verdant plain broken by ravines and little undulations of the land which ran down to the sea that stretched blue in the gulf of Volo before us, with the mountains of Thessalonica which bordered the horizon, on which were outlined some villages in the distance. When the sunset came with its warm tints of rose, violet and orange to light up this picturesque landscape, one would have thought one was in an earthly Paradise. Sometimes even one could perceive Mount Athos, that famous Cenobium of the Greek Church, which was etched against the azure of the sky.

Our occupations during our sojourn in the country were to bring together all the children of our villagers and give instruction to them. Each one of us had her small group. We taught them to read, to write, to sew, etc., and afterwards we mounted our horses and rode into the woods and the forests of oak which climbed upwards behind the house, or else we went to pay a visit to some neighbouring landowners. Sometimes we received their visits in return, and my parents

loved to show hospitality to all. I recall one occasion when the hilarity of the young people almost exploded at table on seeing a stout Greek lady seizing the big wooden salad spoon and with that eating her soup.

My father had made repairs to the little village church which was served by a young priest named Pappa Stathi who was married and had a large family. His eldest son, then a child of 7 or 8, was one of those who formed part of my particular class. I loved this child very much. He was very intelligent and later he was promoted to the order of Anagnosti Reader and destined by his father to replace him in his priestly functions. Every year I taught this child with the greatest care. I taught him the old Greek grammar. He read and wrote almost as well as I, and then later he was one of the assassins of my poor brother, as I shall relate in due place!

When my brother was sixteen years old my father who wanted him to enter the University of Oxford, took him to England and then our Swiss tutor left us. While my father was absent, my mother with her four daughters went to spend the summer at Chimora, ancient Sparta, with an American Presbyterian missionary who was very skilled in the education of deaf mutes so that my younger sister Emilie could learn from him to read and to write as deaf mutes do by means of signs. She learned in this way the most essential things of religion. She read the Bible, she understood what sin was more or less; that God punishes the wicked and rewards the good, etc... but in the Protestant way. She was almost always ill so my mother loved her more than the others because she was afflicted with this misfortune, and I also loved her, and I was her little teacher, for I had also learnt the system of deaf mutes, and I took care of her. She was very intelligent and when she was very small, she used to get angry and lie, but by degrees as she learned more and grew up, she

became gentle, patient in her sufferings like a little lamb, and would not have told a lie for anything in the world.

She died some years later at Malta at the age of 20, but she was innocent like a child in the cradle, and very small in stature, for her illness had prevented her growth. A Maltese chambermaid that we had, seeing that she was ill and at the last extremity, found means to baptize her without any of us perceiving it, and the next morning on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, this dear little child took off without agony to go and listen to the celestial harmonies and to sing the canticles which she had never heard yet, before the throne of God and the Lamb. But let us not anticipate.

My father returned to Athens after some months having left my brother in England with an English minister to continue his studies, and we went to live in our own house. We saw a great deal of society at home and it was then that I began to be vain of my person, as on the following occasion. We had a fairly big evening party, and my mother liked to see us dressed in white muslin. I came out of the drawing room to go and take something from my room and I passed in front of my mirror throwing a look into it. I became animated and excited and I said to myself: "But I am not so ugly as I always thought I was – it seems to me that I am pretty!" and lo! the venom entered my heart. I was then 16 years old. I was however very innocent of evil for my mother had brought us up with great care. We were never permitted to talk to the servants nor to see anyone except in the presence of my mother herself or of someone trustworthy. Novels did not exist in our house, at least nothing dangerous. My father was careful that no improper book fell into our hands and I never heard any conversation however frivolous. My mother was very charitable to the poor, she accustomed us to work for them and there was one evening each week when

all the ladies of our acquaintance met together in our house to sew garments for the poor. Each one of us had adopted a small poor girl for whom we made clothes, and in order to procure for ourselves a little money we had thought of depriving ourselves of sugar in our tea, and then my father gave us a small white coin each week that we set aside and when there was a sufficient sum we bought some cloth to clothe our proteges. Never was it permitted to us to spend our small savings on sweets or on similar things.

In 1840, when I was in my 17th year, my mother set out with her three daughters for England leaving only the youngest Catherine with my father at Athens. My health began to fail. I had grown much suddenly and the cold climate of England did not suit me. It was time to make our First Communion according to the Anglican Church, and to receive Confirmation. We therefore went to Exeter where I was confirmed with my sister Mary Ann by the Protestant Bishop of Exeter in his cathedral and on the Sunday following, we made our First Communion. My health was bad enough, but I remember having accomplished these duties with great devotion, above all Communion for which each one prepares himself as he judges proper. I saw my mother withdraw on the eve of the day on which she was going to receive the Supper in order to read from a small book where there was a sort of examination of conscience. I accordingly procured a similar book for myself and for several evenings I read this examen and I confessed my sins to God weeping and praying as best I knew, and then I went on the following Sunday, with my mother and sister Mary Ann, to receive this morsel of bread and drink this wine which is all that the Protestants have to give. It seems to me that from that time I became more pious. My father and my mother had brought us up in the sentiments and doctrines of what was

called the Low Church, but now we made the acquaintance of some relatives who followed the High Church which was nearly like what later was Puseyism and we were enthused specially about the services as they are sung in the Anglican Cathedrals.

I was then 17 years old and my mother took me with her into society in London for it is at this age that young girls begin to go out. However, she took me neither to the balls nor to the theatre where I have never set foot because my father believed that it was unseemly that the wife and the daughters of a minister should go to such worldly amusements. I did not enjoy myself much because I was always ill and it put off my return to Athens, into that beautiful climate, near my father.

Before setting off again my mother made us go to a dancing school and also to a riding school in order to learn to ride well, which gave me much pleasure for I liked this exercise very much. In our last journey to England we passed by Trieste, the Tyrol and Basel, and we went down the Rhine by steamer passing by Cologne and then Brussels, etc. This time we took the Paris route and crossed the Alps to Florence where I fell so ill that my mother was obliged to stop. My brother was also with us and while he and my two sisters went to visit the beautiful places of the city, I was sadly in bed. Finally, I was in a fit condition to set out, but made to lie down in the carriage and my brother took me in his arms when it was necessary to get down at the hotels, for I could not walk, so feeble was I. We arrived in this way by short stages at Ancona where we took the steamer to Athens. It was a Sunday when we embarked, and we found on board Lady Lyons, the wife of the English Minister in Greece, who was also returning to her husband. She was in the ladies' cabin, and had a piece of embroidery in her hand, which attracted the attention of my

little sister Emilie who began to make a sign to my mother that it was Sunday and this lady was working. Lady Lyons seeing the little girl looking at her and making signs asked what she was saying and my mother replied that Emilie was quite astonished to see her working because it was a Sunday. This good lady quite confused and dismayed rose hastily and closed up her work saying: "But this dear little girl is quite right, what must she think? I am like a heathen to work on Sunday, but during my voyage, I completely forgot what day of the week it was." – It was explained to my small sister that it was an oversight, and then she was quite satisfied.

This lady had two sons and two daughters and as my father was Chaplain to the Embassy, we met often. She always said that never would she permit her daughters to marry a Catholic or a foreigner, that is to say, one who was not English, and yet both her daughters married Catholics and had the happiness of entering into the bosom of the Church. The elder, Miss Amy, married the Baron de Wurzburg, a Bavarian gentleman. Her son later entered the Society of Jesus and Reverend Father Edmund de Wurzburg, at the moment that I am writing this, is working in England for the greater glory of God. The younger daughter, Miss Minna, married Lord Arundel who became the Duke of Norfolk. The young Duchess finally surrendered to grace and on 2 June 1850 she made her First Communion in London in the Catholic Church on the very day when my sister and I abjured Protestantism in Malta and received Jesus for the first time! She had nine children, and she told me many years later, that her great consolation was that each one of the nine according to his or her age and his position loved God above everything. Her eldest daughter, Lady Victoria Howard, was baptized a Protestant and had the Queen of England for

Godmother but she did not long remain outside the Church. A second daughter entered the Carmel of Rue d'Enfer in Paris where I saw her under the name of Sister Marie Joseph. Another became a Sister of Charity and devoted herself in the city of London to taking care of the poor of Jesus Christ. They were all the spiritual children of Father Faber of saintly and sweet memory and when every Sunday the Duke and the Duchess, the nine children, their tutors and governesses went to the high Mass at Brompton Oratory, I heard it said that it was a truly edifying sight and an example for all London, the piety of this family of the first Duke of the Realm. But let us come back from our digression.

We found my dear father and my young sister Catherine who were awaiting us impatiently at Piraeus (the port of Athens), and to our great joy we found the whole family reunited, father, mother and the five children. The joy of seeing myself at home again and the fine climate of Greece soon restored my health!

During our absence my father had been busy with seeing to the building of an Anglican Church where the Sunday services could be held whereas until then my father used to officiate as Chaplain in the dining room of the English minister where the English residents of Athens assembled to fulfil their religious duties.

The church was almost finished, it only remained to prepare for the arrival of the Anglican Bishop of Gibraltar who was invited to consecrate it during his pastoral visit which was to take place shortly. This ceremony meant receiving many people in our house. I was 19 years old, my sister Mary Ann 17. We had a lot of music at home, and our house was always open. Our dress without being affected was always in good taste, for my mother always liked her

daughters to be well-dressed and vanity did not fail to intrude. Since our childhood, according to the custom in England, it was necessary to dress for dinner at 6 o'clock and we were always in low-necked but modest dresses, for my father would not have permitted the least indecency for anything in the world.

There was never a lack of visitors in the house and they began now to talk to me of marriage. As for me, I did not listen to any of this, and did not want to listen to anything. I wept at first, saying that I was too young to consider such proposals. Then, together with my sister Mary Ann, from whom I had hidden nothing, I read some books which initiated us into the doctrines and practices of the Puseyites. We sought God with all our heart but in the darkness as it were, and with no one to guide us. My ideal was to become a minister's wife and apply myself to singing the offices of the church, teaching poor children and visiting and looking after the poor and the sick. My sister Catherine who was then only a child had much more exalted ideas. She dreamed only of the religious life, of being a virgin, doing penance, fasting etc... She believed firmly in the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin and reasoned in a marvellous fashion with my father on this subject and on some others. He called her his little advocate. She gave herself the discipline with prickly rose branches which she plaited, and not knowing, I think, how to go about it she struck her legs above the knees in such a way as to lacerate and make them bleed. She took off her shoes and her stockings, and when she was not seen, went and walked on the gravel of the garden, and then she tried to fast, making it appear that she was not hungry. My sister Mary Ann's most beautiful dream was what she called a marriage like St. Ethelreda, virgin wife of St. Edward, King of England. She had intelligence above the ordinary and wrote

wonderfully well. She composed stories. She made verses and then for want of someone better she came and read to me her compositions and I pointed out to her what was faulty in them. In all our studies she was always the first. She understood algebra like a man and was a distinguished musician. She had a lovable character, playful, very lively and indefatigable. She finished well whatever she undertook. We were always united in the sweetest and tenderest sisterly affection and had nothing to hide from each other, and in our religious quests to find the truth we were perfectly in agreement.

It was Easter Sunday of 1840 which was fixed for the grand ceremony of the consecration of the English Church at Athens. Bishop Tomlinson arrived from Malta and we were extremely happy to think that we had a church now. On Easter Tuesday something happened to me which made a deep impression on me and which I kept carefully in my heart like a hidden treasure which it seemed to me might be lost if I spoke of it to anyone. It was very early in the morning; no one in the house had yet risen and even I was still in bed alone in my small room. Suddenly I was awakened by a sweet and clear voice that I heard with the ears of the soul as well as with those of the body. It said in English: "Peace I leave you, my peace I give unto you not as the world giveth give I unto you." I leave you peace, I give my peace, not as the world gives do I give unto you. I opened my eyes and remained motionless to listen to the celestial harmony of this voice which seemed to die away in the distance. I cannot express the effect that it had in my soul. I never knew what it was. Everything was silent in the house but it seemed to me like a voice which came from heaven. I knew who it was who had uttered these words and I kept them to myself like a treasure that I never wished to communicate except after long years when I had entered the Church.

It was about this time that the greatest sorrow that I had ever had yet in my life came to me – the death of my very dear father. He had desired for a long time to pay a visit to the Holy Land, and to take with him his two older daughters Mary Ann and I; but I recall that I do not know now what circumstances obliged him to be able to take one of them. It was given to me to choose being the eldest, but I preferred that my sister Mary Ann should have this pleasure and I said that I would remain with Mama. My father seemed to have a presentiment that he would not return, for he made his will. My mother also had his portrait made and in Easter week of 1845 he embarked at Piraeus with my sister Mary Ann for Smyrna and Beyrouth, and from there he had the intention of going by land to Jerusalem. While embracing me for the last time on the deck of the steamer which was to take him away, my dearly loved father said to me: "Sophie, I entrust your mother to you, take care of her and be her consolation." I was not to see him again in this world.

After my father's departure, the rest of the family set off for Castaniotisa where we had, as usual, to spend the summer; but hardly were we settled down than the fatal news arrived of my father's death at Beyrouth. I cannot express our grief and that of my poor mother. My God! It was the first crisis that came to strike our family so happy and so united. But my sister Mary Ann, aged only 19 years, had remained alone in that strange land, and my mother and I set out immediately to fetch her. My father had arrived at Mount Carmel where he fell ill with fever and erysipelas. Not being able to continue his journey the good religious took care of him, chiefly Brother Angelo who was a doctor; but it appears that the Protestant Missionaries in Beyrouth having learnt of his illness thought it expedient to come and fetch him. So one of them, therefore, came to Mount Carmel and took my father

and my sister to Beyrouth where a few days later my father died. When the minister warned him that he was in danger and there was no longer any hope for his life, he replied calmly: "I would have desired to live some more years for my wife and my children, but God's will be done." He wished to receive Communion according to his church and then he remained the whole day which preceded his death in a sort of coma. He seemed to see and hear invisible things and from time to time opened his eyes and made a majestic gesture with his hand as if to keep away someone and said: "Fire - devil -" and then looked at the other side and said: "I thought it was so." Towards sunset he expired peacefully. He was 56 years old and he is buried at Beyrouth.

My father's death was like the cross which began to settle down on our family. So long as he lived he was the centre around which we were all united with one heart and one soul. He was the master in his house, and each of us loved and obeyed him without reserve. We were proud to have such a father and when God took him from us the family seemed broken. We did not live in Athens any more, and shortly after, a young English officer of the navy asked for me in marriage and my mother consented so that I was affianced. The marriage was to take place only after two years, for he could not leave his service yet, and as my brother wished to go to Naples to study the art of breeding silk worms, we all set out to go and spend the winter in that beautiful Italian city. We lived first at Portici and several times I entered the Catholic churches with my brother and my sisters. I fell on my knees and prayed, for it is there that I began to feel that there was something in the Catholic churches that we had not in the Protestant temples. My heart seemed empty and languishing after I know not what. I fell ill and one day while I was walking in the public gardens of the Chiaga I was



suddenly seized with such strong convulsions that my sisters with whom I was, believed that it was an attack of epilepsy and my mother, very much alarmed, made me leave immediately for England with my brother to spend some time with my fiancé's parents. She herself with my three sisters went to Rome until the spring and it is there that Mary Ann and Catherine learned from certain Puseyite friends that there were some Anglican ministers who heard confessions in London and that they determined to go and find one to confess themselves as soon as they arrived in England. My sister Catherine was the most fervent and when she walked in the church of St. Peter and passed in front of the confessionals of the different languages, she looked at the English priest who was in attendance, according to custom, and said to her sister Mary Ann: "If I pass once more in front of this confessional, I shall enter it without fail." And Mary Ann drew her away far from there so that she did not do anything desperate.

Finally in spring my mother and my sisters returned to England and I joined them again in London. I had seen my fiancé again in his parents' house and he had left to rejoin his ship in the Mediterranean. He was very good and I loved him very much, but I felt nonetheless in the depths of my heart that something was lacking to me. I searched for God and it seemed to me that I had a weight which I wished to be rid of. I had heard of confession and when on arriving in London I found that my two sisters had introductions to the Puseyite minister of "Margaret Chapel", which was the place where this movement began in the Anglican church, I was delighted. They told me that this minister heard confessions and my sister Catherine who was the most eager went to find him first. He gave her an appointment in a small oratory, very small and quite dark, where he confessed and guided the persons who made such requests. Catherine first made her

general confession to this poor so-called priest who was called Mr. Richards – in parentheses he said that he was married and had children! Next my sister Mary Ann and I came in our turn. When he made me enter that small room and sat down on a chair near what seemed to be a sort of altar with a crucifix above, I think, I fell on my knees a short distance away before another chair, for there was no confessional, I did not know how to set about it and I think that he was hardly more knowledgeable than I in the art of confessing for he did not help me at all. However, I had so much goodwill to confess myself and to tell all my sins, that in spite of the shame that I felt in seeing myself opposite this stranger, I gave him the story of my whole life and of all that my conscience reproached me with. That was done in two meetings and when I had finished he got up and gave me absolution according to the formula that the Anglican Church uses for those who are in danger of death, which is almost like that of the Catholic Church. I believe that the good God had regard for my good faith, and the humiliation that I had imposed on myself, for from that moment I felt quite changed. I put myself, like my sisters, in the hands of this minister whom we called "Father" in order to lead a wholly pious and devout life. I no longer wanted to wear my beautiful dresses nor any jewels all of which I gave to this "Margaret Chapel". All the three of us began to wear the dress of the devotees of this congregation which was of such stark simplicity that my mother was offended by it and reproached us, but that was all the same to us. Our whole happiness was to go twice a day to this chapel which was far enough from our house and afterwards to visit the poor and the sick that our "Father" entrusted to us in his parish. A great change had taken place in my heart. It seemed that the good God had removed the affection that I bore the young officer to whom I was affianced, and had taken my heart for himself.

It seemed to me that God was calling me to be a religious and I did not love any creature any more. I had heard that there were Anglican religious who were Sisters of Mercy and I wished to be one. I made my aspirations known to Mr. Richards who did not approve at first and told me that it was a difficult thing to break off a betrothal for such a cause, but at last as he saw that I still persisted in my idea, he told me that I could write to my fiancé who was in Malta and tell him the situation, asking him to free me from my engagement and that I desired my liberty only to belong fully to God. I wrote therefore and the reply was that although distressed he did not wish to force me to be unhappy with him. I was therefore free. The "Father confessor" was struck when I took this letter to him, and he told me that it was indeed the will of God which was manifested because it was rare that a man was willing to yield so easily in such a case. As for me, I was quite happy to think that I could now join those Puseyite Sisters whom I saw sometimes – but then, my little sister Emilie fell very ill and my mother decided to leave to go to spend the winter in Malta.

We were desolate to leave our confessor and our life as devotees, for in Malta there were no Puseyites at all. My sister Mary Ann got permission to stay in England in Dr. Pusey's house to take care of his daughter, but we embarked for Malta and shortly after our arrival my dear little sister Emilie died, as I have already related, after having received baptism at the hands of a Maltese chambermaid.

I began then to do much penance according to my ideas. I tried to fast. I never went near the fire – then as I had read a story of a Catholic priest who wore a sharp-edged cross over his heart, I thought of binding a small cross on my chest in order to make a wound on it with the point, and I tied a string around my waist as tight as possible so as to make it enter the

flesh. All that in order to do like the Catholics whom I did not know as yet, nor could I enter the churches in Malta, although I desired very much to do so, because my Anglican confessor had forbidden it. It is about this time that I spent a very rigorous Lent taking only a cup of tea at breakfast and for dinner at one o'clock nothing but macaroni and potatoes and finally in the evening another cup of tea with a little bread. I spent the whole of Lent in this manner in spite of my mother's remonstrances and finally on Holy Saturday she sent me to our doctor in Valetta. He was a man of extreme fanaticism against all Catholic doctrine and practice and he often discussed religion with my sister and me. That day I had taken with me my Greek Testament in order to prove to him the Real Presence of Our Lord in Holy Communion which I firmly believed. This doctor who was also a Presbyterian minister undertook to persuade me that the words "Hic est Corpus meum" *Τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ Σῶμα μου* ought to be translated by "This represents my Body" and I answered him that I had read the Greek authors, but that never had I found that the verb "to be" *ἐστίν* was translated by represent but always by the word "is" and I felt indignant to see that Holy Scripture was thus falsified at will by each one who wished to understand his own doctrine in it. The doctor did not intend to give in so easily but began a long harangue which seemed to me in such bad faith that I could not listen to it and it seemed that Our Lord himself interrupted this discussion for suddenly my heart stopped beating and I fell into a swoon. My sister who was also there and the doctor made haste to lay me on a sofa and at that moment all the bells of the town began to peal the Gloria in Excelsis of Holy Saturday which rang from the Cathedral of St. John. At that moment I came back to myself with ineffable joy and I exclaimed: "Ah! it is the first Resurrection" and I got up to return home.

This fainting was attributed to the weakness caused by my Lenten fast and the fact is that I fell ill during the Easter week. I had always the desire to become a religious, but there was no means of succeeding. They tormented me to think again of the marriage which I had broken off. I was told that I was the cause of that young officer's unhappiness and God knows what I suffered in body and soul. Finally, I determined to put an end to it and one day I knelt down in front of a small Crucifix and I made a vow of perpetual virginity. From that day my health improved.

I had thought with my sister Catherine of making a small oratory in a very small recess under a staircase, and there we had erected a sort of altar on which, unknown to my mother, we had put a beautiful Crucifix. It appears that my mother suspected some mystery, for one day when we had gone for a walk she found the key to this small oratory, and having taken the Crucifix she broke it and went and threw it into the sea. On our return to the house, the maid who was a Catholic and knew our secret informed us that Mama had been into the little oratory. I ran immediately to it and I found only the foot of the broken Crucifix! With what grief was I filled! I began to weep and I ran to my mother to ask her how she could act in this manner, that she was an iconoclast and consequently like the heretics of olden times who broke all the holy images. She received me badly enough, telling me that she did not want any idolators in the house, and forbade me to have any Crucifix.

About that time my sister Catherine got married and went to England with her husband, and my sister Mary Ann left the house of Dr. Pusey and returned home. I found her still more imbued with the Puseyite doctrines than before. She had obtained permission to go into the Catholic churches and we profited from it to make the stations and to pray. Above all,

we wanted to find some minister who would be willing to hear our confessions, but the difficulty was to recognize among the strangers whom we saw, someone who was imbued with these doctrines. Finally, we saw one who seemed to us favourable to answer our purpose, and without knowing him, we wrote a letter to him to beg him to hear our confessions in the drawing room of a Catholic lady among our friends. I think that this honest man had never confessed anyone, for he was embarrassed, and ashamed more than I when I arrived. He remained on his knees as I did during my whole confession and I felt that he was aware that he did not at all possess the authority to administer the sacrament of Penance. It was necessary to do everything without the knowledge of my mother and my brother which was difficult enough, but at last we succeeded.

How happy I was to go and pray in the Cathedral of Valetta, an old church of the Knights of St. John. I did not know that the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in the Catholic churches, but an irresistible power drew me towards the chapel where Jesus lived in his tabernacle, and there I fell on my knees at the silver railing which guarded the Treasure and I wept thinking of my sins. The sacristan seeing a young girl on her knees weeping all alone in the darkness of this solitary chapel came and put a chair behind me, but I did not sit down. I spent hours there without knowing why. Later, I knew it was Jesus the Good Shepherd who drew towards him his poor lamb that was still outside the fold.

Meanwhile, the warship on which was the young officer to whom I had been affianced arrived at Malta and I saw him once more. I told him that my happiness did not depend on anyone or anything in this world, that I wished to belong wholly to God and to become a religious and I bade him my

last farewells. I was completely free. My mother and my brother also knew it, for in spite of their disapproval they let me alone, for in England one is free in such matters. It was God who was preparing everything to open the doors of the Holy Church to me. My sister Mary Ann and I had again taken up our old habits of visiting the poor, and my mother herself being very charitable, was very glad that we were thus occupied; she had even permitted us to join a society of ladies in which there were some Catholics and some Protestants whose aim was to give clothes to the poor, and my sister and I were named visitors for we did not give anything without being assured about the condition of poverty of the persons. The President of this society was a Spanish lady called Mrs. Demech and it was in her house that the meetings took place.

One Sunday evening – it was in the octave of Christmas 1849 - after having assisted at the 3 o'clock Protestant service in the English Cathedral, my sister and I went to Mrs. Demech's house to introduce to her my brother who wished to make her acquaintance. After having paid his visit my brother went away and left us with this lady with whom we were very much at ease, and we told him to inform Mama where we were so that she should not be anxious, for she had the habit of going to the service which was held at 6 o'clock in the evening. When my brother had left, Mrs. Demech said to us: "Do you know, young ladies, I am waiting for a Jesuit Priest who is coming to say goodbye to me before leaving for Rome – would you have the curiosity to see a Jesuit?" We were delighted – "Oh! yes", we answered, "and we can still remain to talk to him a little for Mama will return only after her service, at about 8 o'clock."

The Father kept us waiting, but finally arrived. He was called Padre Giuliani, an Italian and Mrs. Demech introduced

us to him as Englishwomen very desirous of making the acquaintance of a Jesuit!

We sat down around the big table. I was beside the Father and my sister opposite – Mrs. Demech and her children completed the circle. The Father began to talk on the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist. I listened eagerly, for it was a subject very dear to me. Suddenly I felt a sort of upheaval in my whole being – it seemed to me that my heart had melted, liquified, and leaning my head on my crossed arms on the table I began to sob irresistibly. Mrs. Demech alarmed, not knowing what to think, sent her children out of the room, and with my sister hastened towards me asking what the matter was with me. I could answer nothing and continued to sob until the good Father placing his hand on my arm said: "Lasciate la poverina, è la grazia che le ha toccata il cuore." "Leave the poor child alone; it is the grace of God which has touched her heart." I felt that he alone had understood what was happening and I was so thankful for it, that I raised my head and kissed his hand which was placed on my arm, which he at once withdrew.

When I was able to talk I said that until then I had believed I was in the true church, but that now I doubted it. My sister who heard me say that answered: "Well, we are both in the same state. Did you not notice that lately I was reading a book which I hid when you arrived?" This was true. I had seen for a few days, a small book in the hands of my sister which she did not show me and which I was not familiar with, which was an unheard of thing between us two for we had nothing to hide from each other – But I had such trust in her that I did not wish to appear conscious that she was hiding something from me, thinking that she would tell me about it herself. "Well, this little book was Milner's 'End of

Controversy', and while reading it I felt the same doubts that you have just expressed, but in order not to trouble your mind I wished to say nothing to you, but look how God himself gave you the same thoughts and we shall seek the truth together." Father Giuliani told us he would speak of us to Father Seagrave, his Superior, the Rector of the Jesuit College, begging us not to allow the spark that God had put in our hearts to be extinguished. We promised him to pray and to seek the truth, but during this scene the evening had advanced. It was night and we began to think of returning home as quickly as possible for we said: "If Mama comes in search of us and finds us with a priest, what will happen?" Mrs. Demech therefore sent her servant with the lantern and her son to accompany us. Hardly had we taken a few steps when we met Mama very angry and anxious that we were out so late. She scolded us all the length of the street, but I tried to calm her as best I could telling her that there had been in Mrs. Demech's house only a gentleman who was to leave the next day for Rome, but I took care not to tell her that it was a Jesuit Father. She thought that there had been a party at Mrs. Demech's and that we had met some priests there!

Since that memorable day we had no peace until the full truth had penetrated into our hearts. But how necessary it was to suffer anguish in this quest. We read some books that were lent to us and we begged the Reverend Father Seagrave to see us in order to instruct us on the Catholic doctrines. This Father was the brother-in-law of the wife of the governor of Malta. The eldest son of a noble family of Ireland, he had, like St. Louis of Gonzaga, given up his right of primogeniture to his younger brother in order to enter the Society of Jesus. He came every week to Valetta to instruct us, and we met in the house of one of the Catholic ladies who were in the secret, for it was necessary to hide carefully from

our mother what we were doing. My sister and I went out with the servant to accompany us to pay our visits to the poor and then we hastened to the house of the lady where the Father was to be found who was teaching us the catechism, and before returning, we entered one of the houses of the poor in order to tell our mother without falsehood that we had paid our visits. But how this dissimulation cost us! While walking in the streets my sister continually turned her head to look behind her and I said to her: "Do not do that, people will think that we are going to commit some crime". "But I am afraid that Henry (my brother) may be behind us to spy on us and see where we are going!" she said.

The good Father instructed us, consoled us, restored our courage, but as for me, when I thought of the terrible step that I was going to take into the unknown, it seemed to me like being in the agony of death. Chaos was going to intrude between me and all that I held dear in this world. I was going to leave the known, to plunge myself into the unknown. My mind was convinced, but my heart was broken. My God what anguish! It is necessary to have passed through it to understand it. So I have very often said that when a soul has passed through the tortures of conversion, God can indeed make it endure all the other anguishes. However, I said to my sister that I wanted to consult someone on our side on the question, to see if, for instance, the English Bishop would not give us some enlightenment. We therefore went to see Bishop Tomlinson who was an old friend of the family and who loved us much. I related to him in great secrecy what had happened and told him that we had the intention of entering the Catholic Church not finding the truth in the Anglican Church etc... He tried to turn us away from our project, but his reasons were hardly convincing and we left him as we had come. But what was

not my surprise and my indignation to receive the next morning a long letter from Mrs. Tomlinson in which she lectured me and rebuked me vigorously on the perversion, that I had the intention of committing, on the dishonour that I was doing to my parents... I was in the utmost indignation to think that I had entrusted my secret to a bishop who was reprimanding me through his wife! and I took the letter to Father Seagrave exclaiming against this flagrant failure to keep the secret. The good Father laughed heartily, above all when he heard our invectives against married bishops!!!

This adventure then only increased our ardour to enter the Catholic Church where one does not have to be afraid that the secret of the confessional may be revealed to wives!

We continued to follow the services of the Anglican Church with my mother and my brother, in order the better to keep our secret, but we suffered for it very much, above all the last communion that we were obliged to take was intolerable. Until then I was persuaded that according to the belief of the Puseyites I received the body of Our Lord, but when doubt entered into my heart and I saw that I received nothing but a morsel of bread – it was finished. Coming out of the church with my sister, we said with common accord: "It is for the last time."

However, we could no longer keep secret our steps and our intentions to leave Protestantism. It was necessary to take the decisive step and then to make it known to my mother. Otherwise she would have raised terrible obstacles. We spoke about it to our good Father Seagrave who found that we were sufficiently instructed to receive conditional Baptism and First Communion the same day.

He fixed 2 February, 1850, Feast of the Purification of the Most Holy Virgin, for the ever memorable day, but, as our

Baptism was only conditional, it was necessary to make our general Confessions beforehand and to receive absolution after Baptism. We had to find means to slip away one after the other from the house to go to the Church of the Gesu where Father Seagrave heard confessions and still my sister did not wish to enter a confessional, saying that she would be afraid all the time, that my brother might perhaps enter the church and find her there. "Moreover," she said, "perhaps absolution will not come to me through the grille," which made the good Father laugh wholeheartedly.

We, therefore, confessed ourselves in a small chapel of the Confraternity of Good Death, on our knees at a prie-dieu which was placed at the foot of a tall crucifix with a Madonna of the Dolours suspended below. I had written my whole confession, but in spite of my good intention to make a full confession, a moment came when I no longer felt the strength to continue. I sank down on the prie-dieu and I could not say a word more. I put my two hands on the knees of the Father who was seated near and I said to him: "I cannot continue any more." I felt faint. Then this father who was a mother also, joining his hands on mine addressed Our Lady of Dolours at the foot of the cross and conjured her in a touching prayer "to have pity on this poor child who desired to enter the fold and become her child, and to obtain for her the strength to conquer obstacles and to show herself a mother to her."

While he was praying I felt courage and strength return to me. The devil was chased out! I put myself on my knees and finished my confession without any trouble. Then the Father led me to the door of the chapel which opened on the street and recommending me to my guardian angel he told me to return home. It was a sultry night. The lamps were lit in the streets and I was alone. Our house was far from the Church,

about three or four streets away. I did not know what to do, but I went out more dead than alive and then I do not remember anything any more until I found myself at our door, safe and sound. I think that my good angel led me for I was not capable of it myself. I knocked at the door and going up to the drawing room I found my mother seated near the fire. She accosted me very affectionately for I had been out since morning under pretext of spending the day with a friend and I was obliged to tell her a story which without falsehood was not the full truth and then I made haste to go to my room to find my sister who had made her confession before me, and had already returned home. We had some visitors that evening. It was necessary to talk and be pleasant and have music – Oh God! what violence our hearts suffered. When the strangers had left and the evening prayer had been said in common, as usual, my sister and I could not tear ourselves away from the drawing-room where my mother and my brother remained. We thought of the desolation that was going to come on them the next day. The family was going to be broken up and we would be separated as by an abyss from all those whom we loved most in the world!

Finally, we went up to our bedrooms but my sister could not sleep. She came and lay in my bed and we wept together deep into the night.

It was the Feast of the Purification 1850. The ceremony was to take place at 7 o'clock in the morning, and after having made a sign to the Maltese servants in passing to keep silence, we went out early to go to the Church of the Gesù. Our godfather was to be a holy Italian priest called Abbot Marchetti, chaplain to the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, and our godmother, an English lady, a convert and widow of an Anglican minister, called Mrs. Bowden.

The Sisters of Saint Joseph with their boarders waited for us in the chapel of a Good Death where the ceremony was to take place. Dear Father Seagrave poured the holy water on my forehead with the formula: "If you are not baptized, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Then it was my sister's turn. He retired with each one of us privately into a very small sacristy at the side to finish the confession by giving us absolution and freeing us from the excommunication incurred by heresy after each had signed her abjuration contained in what is called the Creed of Pius IV which the Father read to us. At the moment when the Father pronounced the words: "*Absolvo te a vinculo excommunicationis in quem occuristi propter.*" I felt as if a weight was lifted from my soul. I was no longer a heretic, but a child of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.

Thereafter began the Holy Mass said by our Father Seagrave at which we had to make our First Communion. It is impossible to describe this. Jesus, he whom we had desired and sought so long, came to take possession of the hearts of his two poor lambs. The Good Shepherd had at last brought us on his shoulders into his fold and now he put the seal on our happiness by coming himself to dwell in us. Oh my God! I had so many things to say to Him that I think I said nothing. I remained engulfed in silence but I felt that I possessed my God. I had everything. The whole world was nothing to me anymore. However, it was necessary to return home and encounter the indignation of my mother and my brother, for we could no longer hide what we had done.

It was about 9 o'clock and my mother was waiting for us for breakfast thinking that we had gone for a morning walk for the sake of my health as the doctor had ordered. We found her seated with her big Bible beside her from which she made her

habitual reading. She looked at us with some surprise, for we were in our Sunday clothes, and she said to us: "Children, from where are you coming?" I drew near and falling on my knees beside her I said to her: "Mama, I must tell you something which is going to cause you pain, but it is better that you should know it. We are coming from the Catholic Church." "What!" she exclaimed, quite upset. "What have you done? You have become Papists?" "Yes, Mama, we have just been received into the Catholic Church," and I wanted to embrace her. She repulsed me and rising quickly she began to walk up and down in the drawing room. "Oh! Hereafter you are going to pray to that vile Virgin?" Pardon me, my sweet and tender Mother in Heaven, Immaculate Virgin, pardon me, that I add such an epithet to your blessed name. She did not know what she was saying, this poor mother, in the frenzy of her grief, and immediately she ventured to insult you! - You, the most sweet compassionate and perfect creature that came from the hands of God! But also I have confidence that you have avenged yourself on her as Mother of God, and Mother of sinners brought forth under the Cross of your son Jesus, and that you have obtained the salvation of my poor mother because she insulted you in her ignorance. You know that I always asked you for it, for it seemed to me that I could not go to heaven if my mother was to go to hell.

After having vented her exasperation for some moments my mother withdrew into her boudoir at the side, where she began to weep and to lament very loudly. My poor sister also, was weeping bitterly and I tried to console her and to encourage her as best I could. In a moment, I heard the voice of my brother who was coming down from his room:

<sup>1</sup> Page 44 is followed by page 49 in the Autobiography. The narrative however is continuous.

"Sophie, Sophie, where are you? Are we not going to have breakfast?" I hastened to go and meet him and to enter with him into the dining room where the table was laid. I poured his tea for him and he sat down asking where the others were. My mother was weeping very loudly in the side room and he said to me: "What is the matter with Mama this morning?" "She has some sorrow," I said to him, but not daring to look him in the face, I got up and placing myself behind his chair, I began to caress him and pass my hand over his head. "Do you know why Mama is lamenting? It is because we have just told her that we have been received into the Catholic Church this morning." My brother stopped eating and turned round to look me in the face in order to assure himself that I was speaking seriously, and then, with a sneer, half of astonishment, half of displeasure, he said, resuming his breakfast: "Well, at least we know now what you are. Before you were Papists at heart, and now you will be so openly."

Then my mother putting on, as a sign of mourning I think, her old hat with a long black veil, went to spend the day in the cemetery at the grave of my dear little sister Emilie. She did not suspect that this dear child had also received the Catholic Baptism before departing for her heavenly home!





## PART II

## LIFE IN THE BOSOM OF THE CHURCH

From the moment it was known in Malta that we had left the Anglican Church to enter the bosom of the Catholic Church, everyone cast stones at us and we were excluded from all society. My mother, like all mothers, was proud of her children, she found pleasure in taking us into society rather for our sakes than for her own, and from the moment that society was as it were shut against us, she wished to leave Malta for she did not want to go out alone.

We, however, stayed another four or five months, and during that time, in spite of domestic storms, I enjoyed a happiness which I had not known until then. My mind, my heart were at peace. I felt that my anchor was cast on the firm rock of St. Peter. I had no shadow of doubt now. I had the happiness of receiving Communion from the first day, three or four times a week, and then after a retreat that Father Seagrave had preached for the English, he had permitted me to receive it every day.

I had always the thought of becoming a religious, but I believed myself unworthy of such a holy life and I dared not speak of it to the Father. However, one day after having hesitated and stammered for a long time, I finished by asking him if he considered it permissible for me to think of the religious life. The good Father answered me that not only could I think of it, but that I ought to think of it. This reply filled me with joy and from that moment all my aspirations were to become the spouse of Jesus. We went sometimes to the Sisters of St. Joseph but only to the door to speak to the mistress of the novices who was English, for my mother had forbidden us to go to any convent, but I felt no attraction for this Congregation. I would rather have wished to become a

Sister of Mercy where there was enclosure, joined to exterior work, but there was none in Malta. My mother wished to leave Malta and return to Greece to spend the summer on my brother's property, but before setting out Father Seagrave begged the Bishop of Malta to give us Confirmation, which was done in his private chapel in the episcopal palace. I had received no name at the conditional Baptism and at Confirmation I took that of Mary Sophie, my sister that of Mary Ann and a few days later we set out for Greece.

My mother took a house at Piraeus, very near the Catholic Church which was served by an excellent Syrotic priest named Don Marino who had known us formerly as the daughters of the chaplain of the English embassy. He blessed God for the immense grace that we had received and helped us to bear the oppositions and the continual war that my mother made us undergo on account of our religion. She could not prevent us from going to church accompanied by our Maltese chambermaid whom we had taken with us, but she obliged us to be present at the reading from her Bible which she conducted for us, and afterwards at the prayer, when at times it was a question as in the explanations that she read to us from her Bible, of the abuses of the Church of Rome, of Babylon, of the Popes, etc. All this horrified me and when it was necessary to kneel down, I took my rosary and turned to the other side and shut my ears. My mother had the habit of making us read aloud in the evening some instructive book of history and often it was she who did the reading while we worked. Sometimes we heard the bell which announced that the holy Viaticum was passing to go to some sick person. Then not daring ostensibly to fall on our knees for fear that my mother would make some scene, one of us dropped her thimble on the ground, or her scissors or her reel of thread and pretending to look for it we prostrated ourselves under the table until Jesus had passed.

My brother had been struck by our conversion and at Malta he had wished to see Father Seagrave and to hear some sermons, even to read some Catholic books, but it was like the seed that fell on the highway. My mother had turned him away from it. She wanted to get him married and he left for his property in Euboea where he fell ill. My sister also caught fever which would not leave her and the doctor said that a change of air was necessary. My mother would have desired us to accompany her to Castaniotisa where my brother was ill and alone, but it was impossible to take Mary Ann with her fever there and I had to stay with her to look after her, and yet two young ladies could not live alone in the house.

My mother heard that there was a convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition at Syros and she thought that we could stay there for a few months paying our board like independent boarders. She, therefore, made me write to the Superior who was then Sister Elizabeth de Chamouin to ask her if she was willing to receive us in this capacity and she herself would then be free to go and look after my brother at Castaniotisa. Don Marino on his side wrote to Monsignor Alberti, Bishop of Syros, to tell him what the matter was and the situation in which we found ourselves. My sister and I were in the utmost astonishment at seeing my mother herself take all the initiative in this business. Visibly it was God who compelled her, in spite of herself, to place us in a religious house for which we had sighed so long. We allowed her to do it while rejoicing secretly at going out of this atmosphere of Protestantism which was a continual torture.

Finally everything was arranged. The Anglican minister who had succeeded my father offered to accompany us to Syros and to put us in the hands of Sister Elizabeth de Chamouin, the Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph and my

mother accompanied us as far as the seashore at Piraeus, where we had to take the steamer. Poor mother, my heart was wrung as we drew farther from the shore where we left her all alone. The next morning, we arrived in the port of Syros and soon after we went up the hill which led to the convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph who received us with all possible affection and cordiality. It was 13 November, feast of St. Stanislaus Kostka, 1850, and it was only nine months that we had been Catholics. When the minister Mr. Hill left, I exclaimed to myself quite relieved and joyful. "Now we are with Catholics!" I was with religious, I could practise my religion freely without that continual sort of persecution that we had to undergo in our house.

From the date of my entry into this convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph I devoted myself to prayer. I was trying much to pray and to meditate before, but I did not know how to set about it. No one taught me. I received Communion every day and I lived on this happiness, but I did not even know what prayer was, nor the interior life. One day, it was the feast of the Holy Innocents, 1850, a month and a half after my arrival at Syros I paid a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the church of St. Sebastian which was opposite the convent, and I begged Our Lord to make me know where he wanted me to be a religious, for that was all my ambition at the moment, when suddenly I heard this word pronounced clearly in my heart "Tomorrow". I had no knowledge of interior locutions and I was frightened, so clear and sudden was it.

I wanted to go to my confessor, a Jesuit Father, to give him an account of it and reassure myself, but it was raining so hard that I could not. Then I again began to pray. I said the rosary begging the Blessed Virgin to make me know whence came that voice and what it meant, and then I heard the same

voice which said to me: "Tomorrow I will tell you what I wish." I was consoled and reassured and I waited for the next day with assurance that Jesus was to let me know at Communion what he wished of me. After having received Communion the next day, it seemed to me, that there was silence all within me, all my senses were recollected and the voice said to me: "I want you here". Then I understood that Our Lord wanted me to be a religious of St. Joseph – but as I was not attracted by this I answered with some astonishment, "Lord do you wish that I remain here always?" I did not receive any direct answer to this question but it seemed to me as if Our Lord reproached me very gently for my curiosity and that I had only to trust myself to him. Afterwards He spoke to me again. I do not recall the words now but I felt a great desire to belong totally to God and to become a Sister of St. Joseph. I related everything to my confessor who gave me to read, in Italian, the Life of St. Teresa written by herself and her other works. All this was completely new to me, and I devoured rather than read these books. I knew then that God could speak to the soul and work still other wonders when he wished, and during these first months of my life in the convent it seemed as if Our Lord was pleased to teach me by experience what I read of the prayer of St. Teresa, making me pass through several of those states that I certainly could not obtain by myself.

I gave a very faithful account to my confessor of all that was taking place in me and the fruit of my prayer was an insatiable desire to make penance, to suffer something for Jesus, which I asked him with so much ardour that I almost fell into a swoon sometimes. However, I never did the smallest penance without the permission of my confessor who always moderated my demands for the discipline, for chains and many other things that I was ingenious enough to

invent. I cared no longer for anything on earth. I wished to die with so much ardour in order to see God that my confessor forbade me to think of death.

Now all my ambition was to become a Sister of St. Joseph and I wrote to my mother to tell her my intentions and my desires. She replied to me from Athens where she was, that never would she consent to my becoming a religious, and that even on her deathbed she would not wish to see me in that costume and even spoke to me of maledictions.

All this only increased my ardour and my urgency with my Superiors to receive the holy habit, for since 19 March 1851 my sister and I had been admitted to begin our postulancy. I, therefore, wrote again to my mother telling her that she could not prevent me from following my vocation since I was 27 years old and that God wanted me to be a religious, and as it was him whom I ought to obey rather than her, I put the whole affair to him to reconcile and dispose of according to his will, etc.

It was therefore decided that I should receive the holy habit on 14 September 1851 on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and I took the name of Sister Mary Veronica. My special devotion was the Passion of Our Lord on which I nourished myself without intermission. It was my attraction, and my confessor had given me to read the Life of St. Veronica Giuliani, the Capuchin Stigmatist, and wished that I took her name. I cannot express the joy and the consolation with which I was filled on this day of my taking the habit. I was in heaven rather than on earth.

Father Faber in a book entitled "Growth in Holiness" divides the spiritual life into three parts (chiefly, I think, that of a convert). He says that in the first beginnings which last only a short time, the soul is overwhelmed with graces and

favours like those of which one reads in the lives of the saints – that this period is very short, that it passes and never returns – but that it is very real, for then one needs all these delicious dishes in order to entice the soul from the world, to launch it into the service of God and to fortify it for the second period of sufferings, aridity, dangers and sorrows which is much longer and which constitutes the life of man in general, for the majority of souls devoted to piety die during this stage before having reached the third which is, I suppose, the seventh Mansion of the soul according to St. Teresa where the soul enjoys perfect peace and continual union with God.

During some months only I too was as if intoxicated with favours and celestial delights – I heard the music of the angels, I saw things that I would not know how to describe; prayer was my delight. When the Blessed Sacrament was exposed I could not tear myself away from the church. I noticed above all, that on the feast of St. Peter, I received an astonishing increase of faith. I seemed to see and touch all that the Church teaches and not only to believe. This happened to me several consecutive years after my conversion. I was as if drunk with faith that day.

After I received the habit, and even before, I was sent to the school room to teach first the boarders and then I was named headmistress of the free school, which gave me infinite pleasure, for the children were all Catholics and poor; but shortly after my clothing as I wanted to help to wash the linen with the other Sisters, I caught a cold and inflammation of the lungs followed. I was very ill and my sister Mary Ann wrote about it to my mother who was so touched, for a mother's heart is always there, that she sent my brother to fetch me when I was a little better for a change of air and to spend a few days with her in Athens. Poor mother! She had forgotten her anger and received me with great affection, and

then, looking at me in my religious dress, she said that she had never seen me so pretty!! I was only a novice and it was permitted in this Congregation to go home to one's parents. I stayed three weeks perhaps, but I was mortally weary as it delayed my return to my convent.

I returned therefore to Syros with my sister Mary Ann who soon after entered the "Ursulines de Casa". She was not called to be a Sister of St. Joseph. Later, she went to France where she entered the convent of the Ursulines of Montigny-sur-Vingeanne, Cote d'Or, and made her Profession there. Afterwards she returned to Greece with a small band of religious and founded with her money the convent of the Ursulines of the Sacred Heart at Tinos where she lived for 26 years, doing good to all.

I remained about five years at Syra and when the Superiors wished to make a foundation in Athens they sent me there. I was always employed to take classes for, in Greece, religious had never yet looked after the sick.

One day however, the king's chief doctor who had known me as a small child, sent to beg my Superiors to give him a Sister to take care of him in a very dangerous illness - pneumonia. I was chosen as sick-nurse, and from that time dates my special vocation to the sick to whom I devoted myself day and night with an affection that God gave me and that he sustained in me by giving me the strength and the health to bear extreme fatigue in spite of my ordinarily weak health. On several occasions the good God gave me the grace to be able to make some sick people to receive the sacraments, who would have died deprived of the helps provided by our religion. It was mostly among the members of the Diplomatic Corps in Athens that I was sent for when someone fell ill.

The French Minister, Viscount de Serre, had just arrived shortly before with his young wife, born Princess Marie Cantacuzène, a Greek schismatic from a Walaque family. Hardly three months had passed by when M. de Serre fell dangerously ill from dysentery and I was summoned to look after him. He was a man still young who had been brought up until the age of 12 by his English Protestant mother; afterwards Father Lacordaire had brought him back to the Church and until 18 he had led a very devout life, but then bad company had perverted him and for twenty years he lived without God, without any religion. He was impious. His pious aunt, Madame the Countess de Serre, in order to draw him out of his bad ways arranged his marriage with the charming young princess, Marie Cantacuzène, who had, moreover, a good fortune, but who was a schismatic, at least in name. She had, as she related to me herself, much sorrow at seeing her husband so impious, mocking at all holy things, and now he was in danger of dying! She sent huge alms all over asking for Masses and prayers for her husband. I watched over him every night. I had put round his neck a miraculous medal which he had accepted saying that it was a long time since he had seen a similar one, and surprisingly the next morning while I was arranging his bed, he said to me very gently: "Sister, pray." I began to recite the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin to which he made the responses with much piety, and afterwards he said to me: "Sister, I have not always been impious as you see me, soon I am going to appear before God, and it is not like this that I wish to do so. I wish to confess myself." You can imagine my joy, my consolation! I ran to tell his dear little wife who was like an angel of sweetness and virtue and we sent immediately to fetch the chaplain of the French frigate at Piraeus who arrived without delay.

M. de Serre received all the sacraments with admirable piety, and, after having edified all those present by his expressions of contrition for his past faults, his transports of love towards God, of whom he had been, he said, the enemy and who now was his best friend, he died the death of the just, the crucifix in one hand, and his wife's hand in the other. He had exhorted her to leave the schism and to enter the bosom of the Catholic church in order that they might be together again for all eternity, and five days after the death of M. de Serre, the Viscountess de Serre abjured Greek schism and made her first Catholic Communion in the small chapel of our convent.

I pass over silently many other episodes in my life as a Sister of charity which would be very interesting, but too long to relate. Suffice it to say that it was my happiness to look after the sick poor and rich and God blesses those who do so "with love".

The first months of consolation and of celestial sweetness in prayer had long since passed. I had entered the other period. Sometimes, however, I tasted a little of it and towards the year 1860, I saw a cross which was going to fall on me. Shortly after, I was sent as Superior to found an orphanage at Piraeus with two other Sisters. There, there were no crosses wanting to me, for beginnings are always painful. My mother who until then, although she lived in the same town, had never come to the convent to see me, now that I was mistress of the house, she said, came to pay me a visit; formerly it was I who went to her house. I cannot pass over in silence all the kindnesses, the charity that I received for ourselves and for our orphans from the Baron de la Ronciere le Noury, Admiral of the French frigate which was stationed at Piraeus. From his ship he sent me bread for the small community every morning and many other alms and

consequently this excellent Admiral as well as the young Baroness de la Ronciere showed themselves my very devoted friends.

In the month of June, 1860, I received an "obedience" from our Revered Mother Emilie, General of the Congregation, to go immediately to Rome where she was. The letter reached me on Thursday morning. The next day, Friday, I embarked on the steamer which was leaving for Civita Vecchia. What joy for me on entering the Holy City, to meet the venerable and well-loved Pontiff, Pius IX, and to receive his first blessing! I attributed it to the fact that I had at once responded to the call of obedience. It was 20 June, and the next day, 21 June, the feast of St. Louis de Gonzaga, was the anniversary of the coronation of the Holy Father. Our Mother General sent me to the Sistine Chapel where this feast was celebrated, for one of those sung masses that are heard only in Rome and at which the Holy Father was present. Never will I forget the emotion, the intense joy, the immense gratitude which penetrated my soul at the sight of the well-loved Pontiff-Ruler. My God, I wept with love and could not stop. I thought that for so many years I had been outside the fold, but now I had the unutterable joy of being his daughter, his child, daughter of the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. Pius IX was my beloved Father and the Church was my Mother! Who can describe the delights, the exquisite joy of these tears of blissful gratitude? It is necessary to be a convert to understand them perfectly. I looked at him, this holy and venerable Father in that white vestment which distinguishes him and then I hid my face again to weep for happiness. I was beside myself. Then we saw Monsignor Talbot, the English Prelate from the Vatican, who, himself a convert, hastened to satisfy my desire of kissing the foot of the Holy Father telling me that in a few

days His Holiness was to go and venerate the Chains of St. Peter at San Pietro in Vincoli and that if I was there, he would introduce me. I did not fail to be there in the first row of the persons who were placed in two lines at the departure of the Holy Father from the sacristy where the Chains are kept. Monsignor Talbot preceded Pius IX by a few paces – and he looked for me with his eyes. As soon as the excellent Prelate perceived me he took me by the arm and leading me into the middle in front of the Sovereign Pontiff, who was slowly going forward, he said to him: "*Ecco una convertita Inglese.*" "Here is an English convert!" Pius IX stopped saying "Ah!" and I fell on my knees whilst this Father, this representative par excellence of the Good Shepherd, gave me his august hand which I seized and covered with my kisses; then prostrating myself I did the same to his venerable foot which I held in both hands. This had stopped the procession for a few moments. I knew no longer where I was, and when I came back to myself I was still on my knees in the same place. The Holy Father and his train had passed and I made haste to find my companions again. I understood how St. Philip Neri went into ecstasy when he was received in audience by the Holy Father, so great was his faith in the presence of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

I saw the Holy Father once more on 29 June and I had the happiness of being present at the Solemn Mass which he sang at St. Peter's in the Vatican, for then he was free. Victor Emmanuel, that "*Vittoriaccio*", that royal brigand had not yet stolen his estates. The Vicar of Jesus Christ could officiate solemnly in his church of the Prince of the Apostles and give the blessing *Urbi et Orbi*. I saw him and watched him carried on the *Sedia Gestatoria* between the *Flabelli*. I heard that voice, deep-toned, rich, melodious, sing the Mass at the altar of the Confession of St. Peter and then at the Elevation,

present the Sacred Host to the four cardinal points while the silver trumpets above in the cupola flung their silvery sounds into the vast space where was prostrate a huge crowd in adoration! How beautiful it was! How divine! It seemed to me I was in heaven. The next day at "St. Paul's outside the Walls" again I had the happiness of seeing my newly-found father; of being introduced to him once more as a convert by my good Monsignor Talbot who enjoyed seeing my happiness, which was almost ecstatic, and of hearing these words falling from his august lips while I was on my knees at his feet in the sacristy of the Basilica: *Siate buona e santa*. "Be good and holy." Oh! If I had carried out this recommendation, this injunction which the Vicar of Jesus Christ gave me, I would have been a saint ... but alas!

I remained in Rome at this first visit nearly six months, and then the Mother General sent me to Tremorel, a village in Brittany where I was a Government Primary School teacher of the mixed school of the parish. I had sixty boys and as many girls, but the purity of the customs, the simplicity and the piety of these good people made the difficulty of teaching much less, and I was greatly attached to these dear good Bretons and to their venerable rector or parish priest who was a true father to us.

I remained only one year in Brittany for the cold and wet climate made me spit blood and I had a great deal of fatigue for it was necessary to look after all the sick of the parish and prepare medicines for them from our small pharmacy in such a way that I was doctor and pharmacist to all these good people who thought that I had an extraordinary gift to treat them when they were ill, and sometimes the good God rewarded their faith and their trust by the cure of their ills.

After a year at Tremorel which was about six hours away from Rennes, I received an order to go and found a new house of the Congregation at Calicut on the coast of Malabar in India. Before going to my destination, I had to pass by Marseilles where there was the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph in order to take a companion from there, and then proceed to Rome to receive instructions from our Mother General.

Before leaving France, I went and spent a few days at Montigny where my beloved sister Mary Ann, now Sister Mary of St. Ignatius, was to make her Profession on 6 August 1861, which I had the happiness of witnessing. She was happy and following the way of the holy will of God. A short time later she set out for Tinos in Greece. This well-loved sister who was my spiritual twin, since we were born the same day in the holy Church, together received first the sacrament of Penance, our First Communion, Confirmation and both the signal grace of the religious vocation; this dear sister was also marked with the sign of the cross, for all her life was a succession of sufferings of all kinds. She was an enthusiastic legitimist, as I myself am, but more peaceably. The Bourbons and the return of the White Flower on the ancient throne of St. Louis was her dream – she had offered herself as a victim for this end and God had taken her at her word. She was truly a victim and until her last moment she suffered in every way. I shall come back to speak of her again later.

I then returned to Rome in the month of September 1861 with the Sister who was to accompany me to India, but scarcely had I arrived than our Mother General fell on a staircase and broke her leg. I liked this Mother very much, who moreover was a great servant of God, and I looked after her day and night after this accident. However, before she was perfectly cured I had to leave for India, for the season of

voyages had begun. The Suez Canal was not yet built so I had to land at Alexandria and from there take the railroad to Cairo and across the desert as far as Suez. We embarked at Civita Vecchia and on Christmas day we were in the roadstead before Messina where we could get down and receive Communion, and afterwards continue our journey to Alexandria. There we went and stayed with the Sisters of Charity of Mercy. Two Carmelite Fathers who were to accompany us to India were already there. At Rome we had received from the French Embassy free passage as far as Pointe de Galle on a troop war-ship, the "Rhone" which was waiting at Suez for a French regiment destined for the war that was taking place then in Cochin-China. The two good Fathers who were to accompany us had not thought of asking for their passage and the last companies of the regiment were ready to embark. The "Rhone" certainly was not going to wait for them, and there was no time to write to Paris. Finally, by means of running from one consul to the other, of begging, of beseeching, I managed to get at least one of the Fathers accepted on board the "Rhone". He was Reverend Father Clement and we set out by the railroad for Cairo and Suez. Having arrived at Suez, we had to take a small steam tugboat which took us alongside the "Rhone", but the poor Father who had never gone out of his convent had forgotten all our baggage at Suez. We had only our overnight bags. What was to be done? The commandant of the "Rhone" could not wait any longer. All the troops had embarked. There was a General with his staff, some fifty officers and 900 soldiers. Among all these men we two religious were the only women except for two troopers' wives who stayed in the bow of the ship.

There were finally the chaplain of the ship, a good Breton, a holy priest, Father Surieux who, with Father

Clement said Mass everyday in his cabin and on Sundays on the bridge for the crew. I could not forget all the kindnesses of which we were the object on the part of all these good gentlemen. Knowing that our baggage had remained at Suez and consequently we had to be almost deprived of linen, one of these gentlemen sent word to me through the doctor on board that he was putting at our disposal a dozen quite new shirts that he had not worn, if we were willing to accept his offer that he made us with a good heart. I was touched by the charity and simplicity of this excellent young man whom I thanked effusively but I did not want to accept his offer as well as others which were made to us with the same cordiality. Besides, our luggage was to reach us for a payment of 300 fr. by the English steamer at Aden, where we had to stop to take coal.

After a long enough but happy voyage we arrived at Pointe de Galle where we had to leave the "Rhone". We took passage on a French merchant vessel which was going to Bombay and which promised to put us off in passing at Calicut where Reverend Father Marie Ephrem C.D. was, to whom we were particularly recommended.

The Missions on the coast of Malabar belonged to the Discalced Carmelites. There were three Apostolic Vicariates and we were destined for that of Mangalore where there were some Sisters of St. Joseph.

Monsignor Michael Antony desired to found another establishment of these Sisters at Calicut for the education of young girls and for taking in orphans. It was there that I had to go.

Reverend Father Marie Ephrem had been Prior of the Carmel of Bordeaux and two years before, having had the desire to devote himself to the foreign missions, he had asked



and obtained permission to leave for the Malabar coast. He was a very distinguished man in every way. He was a scholar and possessed the gift of eloquence to an eminent degree. So with a most attractive exterior, an indefatigable zeal for the salvation of souls, he was a very perfect religious, a distinguished preacher, a missionary after the heart of Jesus whose name he bore. On leaving Rome, an English prelate, his friend Monsignor Howard, of whom I shall speak later, had sent me a book written by Father Marie Ephrem entitled: "From Rome through the Holy Land to India." I had read it during the voyage with immense interest and I was quite prepared to find in him the father of my soul which our Mother General had promised me in order to guide me in this infidel country.

At the end of February 1862 Father Clement, Sister Marie Joseph and I left Point de Galle on a merchant ship to go up the coast of Malabar as far as Calicut, but we could not land because the vessel was chartered for Bombay.

Having arrived opposite Mont-Dilly which is between Calicut and Cannanore, the captain stopped a native *patimar*, a sort of small Indian boat, and after some parleying obliged them to take us on board with our baggage to reach the shore. There we were then in that Indian boat or *patimar* with some people who had no other clothes on but the usual loincloth around the waist. One of them mumbled a few words of English and so I could explain to him somewhat what we wanted. We passed the night there, and the next morning we entered the port of Mont-Dilly where we hoped to find means to go to Calicut to find Father Marie Ephrem. Attached to the *patimar* was a very small boat about one metre long and wide in proportion, big enough to hold one of these savages who pushed it by means of an instrument which appeared to me like a big spatula, for certainly it was not an oar, with which he

struck the water to right and left and made the skiff move forward. If absolutely necessary, another person could enter it by lying upon a wooden lath three fingers wide that was placed on the two sides of the skiff and still it would have been necessary to watch one's equilibrium so as not to capsize the boat. It was decided that I should go to the shore alone, for neither the Father, nor the Sister understood a word of English which is the only language in use in this country; besides, I think the boat hardly pleased them. As for me, I was not afraid of anything at that time. I was ardent, full of zeal to begin my work among these peoples whom St. Francis Xavier had evangelised. I got down therefore into the small boat with one of the Indians who in a short time with strokes of the spatula led me to the shore where a band of some fifty Indians like himself were waiting for us. Arriving on the beach, I turned aside one step in order to prostrate myself and kiss the earth sanctified by the great Apostle of the Indies. Then the savages surrounded me, looking at me, astonished. The one who knew a few words of English told me that there was a short distance away an individual who spoke English, and they took me to the house of someone who would have been the mayor, I think. He gave me a chair to sit down under the coconut trees and they offered me water melons and coconut milk which refreshed me a little for it was suffocatingly hot. This personage was more civilized than the others and came himself to take me in his boat to the *patimar* where Father Clement and the Sister were waiting impatiently for me. They thought that the savages had eaten me!!! I reassured them about their good dispositions and we set out for Cannanore where Father Marie Ephrem was to be found. However, unfortunately, on entering into the port of Cannanore, the vessel which was taking him to Mangalore passed in front of us, and we missed him.

A few days later, we also arrived at Mangalore where the good Father Marie Ephrem was waiting for us on the shore with the small bullock cart that was used in these places as transport, and he took us to the Sisters of St. Joseph who received us with all possible affection.

How happy I was to find myself again with my family, but it was necessary to rest from the fatigue of the journey and I wished to make a retreat to prepare myself for the work that God was going to entrust to me at Calicut. In these idolatrous regions, the devil has much more power than among us, at least one often sees things which can be attributed only to satanic power. There was a ravine near the convent where there was a pagoda and there during the night Satan and his worshippers held their orgies. I heard the tom-tom and their wild howlings and I was told that the devil appeared in visible form.

During my retreat which I made alone under the guidance of Father Marie Ephrem, he ordered me to ask Our Lord for the cessation of a schism which was causing much sorrow to the Missionaries and was a great scandal to the Christians. It concerned some Portuguese priests of Goa who were in opposition to the Vicars Apostolic. They drew away a part of the Christians of Malabar and formed a separate Church, which was nothing but a schism that was not submissive to Rome. They had even a Chaldean bishop whom I had seen during the journey.

Recommending this affair to Our Lord, it seemed to me that he told me that during three nights I would have to suffer obsessions of the devil in order to obtain this grace. I gave this reply to the Father who told me to offer myself for all that Our Lord wished or would permit. That same evening as night was falling, I began to see and to hear what I had

never seen or heard, above all when I was in bed. I was surrounded as it were by demons who had the power to do what they wanted with my body, only my will was free to resist and to detest all that they said and did. I spent these three nights in struggle, in praying, in suffering what I could not describe. I gave an exact account to the Father who sustained me and encouraged me while giving me absolution for I was crushed and without strength in the morning when I wished to get up. The absolution gave me the courage and the strength to fight again.

Now I wish to relate one thing which happened to me after this struggle was over. I am telling it only to Father Lazare who ordered me to write these notes, and with all reserve, for perhaps it comes only from my imagination. I affirm nothing.

Shortly after these struggles, I was alone one day working and praying, for at that time I was very close to God, when suddenly I was drawn into a state of profound recollection and I saw the Most Blessed Virgin holding in her hand a ring which she offered to me on behalf of her divine Son. I answered her that I could not receive it without having asked permission because I had made a vow of poverty. This reply did not appear to offend her. On the contrary, she told me to ask permission and on the next Friday, feast of the Seven Dolours, Jesus would come and give me this ring and make his espousals with my soul. Then everything disappeared.

I related everything to Father Marie Ephrem who gave me the required permission, and told me to prepare myself to receive this grace. On the Friday following, feast of the Seven Dolours of the Most Holy Virgin, to which I had always a special devotion, Father Marie Ephrem said Mass as

usual at which I received Communion. I cannot relate what I saw and felt during this Mass. I seemed to see Our Lord with his blessed Mother, Saint Teresa and St. Veronica. Our Lord held the ring in his hand and told me several things. Afterwards everything disappeared, and I found the ring on the ring finger of my left hand. There was a white stone and a red stone and on one of them was marked a cross. They were held on a circle of gold.

I was quite beside myself and I held my hand hidden fearing that someone might see something; but Father Marie Ephrem who was warned what was to take place reassured me on this point and I related to him all that had happened to me.

While waiting to go to Calicut Father Marie Ephrem gave me some lessons in Malayalam which he had learned very well after his arrival in India. He even preached in English and in Malayalam, for he had a special gift of speaking foreign languages.

In a few weeks Monsignor Michael Antony, the Vicar Apostolic of Mangalore, an Italian Discalced Carmelite, who had gone to Calicut sent for me with Sister Marie Joseph for the foundation which he desired to make in this town where he had already prepared a house.

In a short time we had all the children of Calicut in our school. We were four religious and the children were numerous. We had also small boys up to 7 and 8 years of age, and, in addition to the Catholics, several Protestants and Parsis sent us their children, who followed the catechism and came to the chapel like the others.

After a few months Monsignor Michael Antony returned to Mangalore and sent Father Marie Ephrem as

Parish Priest of Calicut. It is then that I was a witness to all the good that this excellent Father did among these people. He had a special gift for catching souls in his nets and giving them to Jesus. I had experienced it myself and I was happy to find myself again under his guidance, all the more because at the end of my retreat in Mangalore, on 25 March 1862 he had received me into the Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and from that moment I belonged to the Order. Before the arrival of the Father, even at Easter, there was almost no one who approached the sacraments. There were only 3 or 4 young girls who had made their First Communion, and scarcely a year had passed since the foundation of our school and the arrival of the Father, when the Easter Communions increased to the number of 600. Every month some thirty of my young girls approached the Holy Table; and every Sunday 8 or 10 had the happiness of receiving the Bread of Life.

This good Father had a special gift for winning over men, young people, poor coolies or Indians of the lowest caste. Sometimes while he was confessing our children, he saw poor coolies looking timidly at the door of the church. Then he got up and went towards them, spoke to them in Malayalam and bringing them into the sanctuary, he sat down with his arm around the black body of these poor men with no other clothes than their loin-cloths, and he made them confess with a kindness that touched everyone. No one could resist the charm of the attractive power which this man of God possessed.

All the young people specially surrounded him, loved him as their father. There was one, about 19 years old, the brother of two of my children, who had not yet made his First Communion. The Father tried by every means to catch him but Joe Boy escaped. He jumped through the window and

over the wall when he perceived the Father. His sisters were desolate at the reticence of their brother who, however, was a good child. One evening after the month of Mary, on returning from the Church, one of them came and warned me that Joe Boy was in the house and begged me to come and catch him to take to the Father. I was there in a moment and I found my man who would have liked very much to escape, but I accosted him immediately with all possible kindness, asking him if he was afraid of me and if he did not wish to accompany me to the church where the Father desired to see him. He dared not refuse and I led him to the church where we found the Father confessing another young man. I went and told him softly that I was bringing Joe Boy to him. "Stay there and guard him for me, I am coming at once," he said.

I kept watch then for some minutes and when the Father had taken away my poor boy who had indeed the look of wishing to escape again, I went away quite satisfied in order to rejoice with his sisters, for we knew very well that once in the hands of the Father, the cause was won. In fact, the following morning this dear Joe Boy made his First Communion in order to approach Easter with the best dispositions to the great joy of the Father and of us all.

I think that in all my life I have not tasted sweeter consolations than at Calicut. God was blessing our efforts. Good was being accomplished in a marvellous manner. I loved all these dear Christians big and small as my children and they treated me as their mother. It was touching to see with what respect, with what deference they came to ask me for advice and obeyed like children. Father Marie Ephrem had established the Third Order at Calicut. A young lady came on Friday evening to the convent and spent the night there to enjoy the privilege of taking the discipline with us after Matins. She told me that she enjoyed that evening more

than at all the parties and amusements which she could have in the world.

A young man, a good friend of the Father, seeing the piety and modesty of our young girls wanted to have one of them for a wife, but fearing that she was perhaps thinking of becoming a religious, he did not even wish to make known his inclination without being assured in the first place by the Father and by me, whether or not this young lady had any religious vocation. It is only after we asked her feelings on this subject that he took steps with her parents.

While I was in Calicut, the Commission sent by Rome, to try and settle the business of the schism, and some Vicars Apostolic arrived in India. Monsignor Howard was one of them and he came to Calicut to see his friend Father Marie Ephrem. He was delighted with the modesty and deportment of my young girls and came to see us. Monsignor Howard was a cousin of the young Duke of Norfolk who had married Miss Lyons, daughter of the English minister at Athens. This family is the premier ducal family of the Kingdom and the distinction of its members equals their attachment to the old faith of their ancestors among whom there were martyrs in the time of the so-called Reformation.

For some time I had begun to suffer many things from the demons who, I suppose, saw that many souls were being snatched from them. At the same time, I often heard an interior voice which said to me: "I want you in Carmel". At first I understood nothing of this and I felt a repugnance to leave a Congregation which I loved, in which I was loved, and where I was doing some good, to launch myself into the uncertainty that I did not know.

But little by little the light seemed to enter into my heart and without knowing in any way how that ought to be

accomplished, I attached myself to this thought as being the will of God.

I was told that Monsignor Howard would be the one to facilitate with my Superiors the steps that I had to take to enter this Holy Order. Father Marie Ephrem who was informed of everything told me to open myself to Monsignor Howard in confession and to ask him for counsel, which I did and from that moment this excellent prelate, having since become a cardinal, showed a special interest in me and treated me with a charity for which I could never be thankful enough.

The other Carmelite Vicars Apostolic at Verapoly and Quilon would have also desired some religious for the education of the girls in their vicariates, and Father Marie Ephrem thought that if a regular Third Order Regular could be founded, it would be a very useful thing for the Missions of the Reverend Carmelite Fathers. The difficulty however was to detach myself from the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Meanwhile, I received the order from our Mother General to go to Rangoon in Burma in order to replace the Superior there who had just left. I set out therefore with some anguish of heart on my side and on that of all these dear Christians who accompanied me as far as the waterside to begin my journey of a thousand leagues further. I was alone and it was the season of the monsoons which was beginning. I crossed the peninsula to Madras by railroad, and there I embarked for Calcutta and then for Rangoon.

Shortly after my arrival in Rangoon where we had already a boarding school and an orphanage, it happened that one Sunday I sent all the children for a walk and remained alone, being a little unwell. The Sisters went by the pagan

cemetery, a short distance out of the town. There it was the custom to burn the dead, whom they brought hoisted in the air on a sort of scaffolding, about ten or twelve feet high, that some twenty half-clad Burmese carried on their shoulders, singing or rather howling and dancing like mad men. This was done in cadence: all together stretched out one leg and gave a jump, then crouched on the ground. They then rose, balancing the corpse which was perched on the top of the scaffolding from which hung all sorts of scraps, ribbons, handkerchiefs, etc. Sometimes the dead man fell backwards and rolled in the dust when the dancers had drunk a little too much *raque*. Having arrived at the cemetery with all the procession of tom-toms and other barbarous music, they burned the cadaver and then feasted under the ad hoc sheds.

It was there that the Sisters had gone, and the children enjoyed themselves running this way and that, when suddenly they heard a plaintive voice coming out of one of the sheds. Frightened, they hastened to inform the Sisters who approached and found lying on a disgusting mat a man or rather a skeleton, for he had absolutely nothing but skin on his bones, with a small pot of water beside him and a little rice in a bowl. One of the Sisters who was Burmese asked him what he was doing there. He answered that the *poonghies* (the priests of the idols) had thrown him there to die, that he was a stranger, a poor coolie who had come from the interior of the country.

The Sister made haste to return to the convent in search of me and I asked this poor unfortunate man if he was willing to come with us, that we were going to look after him and keep him with us. He consented very willingly, and I had him put into a basket in which he stayed crouching, and two men carried him suspended in this way on a stick as far as the convent. I thought that the journey would cause his death, for

he fell into a fainting fit, so weak was he. But when we had put him to bed and refreshed him with a little food he could talk to Monsignor Bigandet and to the doctor whom I sent for. The doctor said that there was nothing to be done, he was at the last extremity and Monsignor gave me permission to baptize him after having instructed him on the most essential things of Christianity.

The poor man had never seen any Christians, he knew absolutely nothing of our religion, but to our requests if he wished to be a Christian to go to heaven, he replied: "I wish to be like you, you have been good and charitable to me when my *poonghies* threw me to the jackals, I want to go where you are going after death". And when Monsignor spoke to him, to test him, about the pagodas for which these poor peasants have a very great veneration, he only replied by turning his back. All that Sunday night we stayed near our poor patient, a native Sister translating to him what I taught him of our holy religion so as to be able to give him Baptism when I could see the end was near. He lent himself wonderfully to learn the principal mysteries which are necessary for salvation and he asked to receive the water which would purify him of all his sins which he said were very great.

The night passed in this way and towards 9 o'clock in the morning seeing that he was declining and falling into a coma, I poured the holy water on his head giving him the name of Joseph. He was a Christian. At the moment of pronouncing the mysterious words which gave to the Church one more member, he opened his eyes, his poor face lit up with an ecstatic look, which I shall never forget, and looking above, he exclaimed: "Oh! how beautiful it is!" Not understanding Burmese I asked for the explanation of these words and the Sister repeated them to me in English.

I understood well that my dear neophyte had seen what our eyes could not see, for there was nothing above him but the tiles and the beams of the shed where we had laid him down, and when he was a little better I gave him a picture of the holy Virgin telling him that she was the mother of Jesus. He took it and kissed it saying "Oh! she is so beautiful." "How do you know that she is beautiful?" we asked "Oh! I have seen her!" Then I asked him why he had said those words when I poured the water on his head and he answered, "Because I saw a number of beautiful things with wings." He had then seen the angels and their Queen at the moment of his Baptism. From that moment he seemed quite changed. If I went away, he asked for me and when I came near him, he took from me the crucifix that I was wearing on my chest, then my hand, kissed them one after the other, and when I said to him: "What do you want of me?" he said: "It is you who poured the water on my head, I like to see you." When the children who surrounded him were playing among themselves, he said to them: "You should talk to me of God, I was a great sinner, but now I am pure, I am going to heaven." Towards ten o'clock that same evening he died without agony. The Christians who lived around the convent wanted to see him, to make a beautiful coffin for him and to accompany him to the cemetery with us all. Monsignor himself officiated at the burial. Here was a poor man who the day before had been thrown to the jackals by the pagans, and now a Christian. He was honoured, looked after and buried like the first personage of the country. That is how Satan treats those who belong to him and how God honours his own after death.

I remained in Rangoon only a year and a half almost, for I had a very serious fall which so injured the left foot that the doctors said an operation would be necessary and

that I was too weak to bear it in this tropical country and that I ought to return to Europe for I could scarcely walk or put on my shoes.

Towards the end of 1865, I returned to England to my mother who wanted me to be looked after by the best surgeon in London. My health was completely shattered by the heat and the fatigue of taking classes. I thought always of my plan of being a Carmelite and little by little the good God prepared the way for me.

My health had been restored by care and rest and our Mother General desired that I return to her in Rome.

I had seen Father Marie Ephrem in Paris for he too had returned to France for a short while, and I could confer with him again on what was now the end of all my desires, to enter the Carmel. He believed that God was calling me to it, and more and more he saw the necessity of the Third Order Regular for their missions in India. Very Reverend Father General of the Discalced Carmelites was also told about it, and approved the project, but not one of these fathers wanted to decide on my vocation, as prudence demanded.

On arriving in Rome after Easter in 1866, before going to the Sisters of St. Joseph, I visited Monsignor Howard where I found Father Marie Ephrem who told me that I ought to put myself in the hands of Reverend Father de Villefort of the Society of Jesus who was the ordinary confessor of our community, to tell him everything and to abide by the decision he would make for me regarding my vocation to Carmel. Till the matter was decided I ought not to have any connection with Father Marie Ephrem.

I did what I was ordered and above all I prayed much. I spoke of it to our Reverend Mother General who already,

from the time I was in India, had been informed of my intentions; to Cardinal Barnabo, the Prefect of the Propaganda and Protector of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph; and above all, I gave a detailed account to Father de Villefort who for six months examined my vocation. Finally, there took place some events which determined him to pronounce in favour of the Carmel, and a fortnight later, God called him to give him the reward of a holy and worthy son of St. Ignatius. He had offered himself as a victim for the Church and the Holy Father, and the sacrifice was accepted. In him, I lost a friend, a father, the support of my vocation, for Cardinal Barnabo and all my Superiors were opposed to my entry into the Carmel, which, however had been quite arranged for by Father Marie Ephrem before my arrival in Rome.

He had spoken of me and of his desire to have a foundation of Carmelites of the Second Order as well as Tertiaries Regular in the Missions of India, to Reverend Mother Elias, Prioress of the Carmel of Pau, and she had told him that this plan would be eagerly welcomed by the community, and that she would be happy to receive me, to study my vocation and form me for the life of Carmel.

Fortunately, I had Monsignor Howard, who helped me and gave me good advice, as well as Monsignor Talbot, the Pope's Chamberlain, who both spoke for me to the Congregation of the Bishops and Regulars before whom my cause had to be laid. The necessary papers were ready and given to Cardinal Barnabo who had to present them, but His Eminence did not wish to give them up. When I went to him to plead my cause, to make my desires known to him, he invariably answered: "God does not change, you are a Sister of St. Joseph, stay there." It is only many years later that I knew what his intentions were and those of my Superiors.

It appears that they were thinking of giving me the charge of Superior General of the Congregation. My God! I had a narrow escape! Thank God! Certainly it was very far from my thoughts and desires.

However, Reverend Mother General had to go to Marseilles where the motherhouse of the Congregation was and she told me that I should accompany her. I would have wished very much to have received the decision of the Bishops and Regulars before leaving Rome and I shared my anxieties on this subject with Monsignor Howard who went to talk to Monsignor Svegliati, the Secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. He sent word to me to set out without fear because once in France, it would be much easier for me to leave for Carmel than if I remained in Rome.

Monsignor Howard gave me 500 fr. for the expenses of the journey and the breviaries of the order and wished to accompany us to the station. How can I sufficiently show my gratitude to this excellent prelate? Without his help I would never have been able to get out of the difficulties. As he had much influence in Rome because of his noble family, his knowledge and his piety, my Superiors could not prevent me from seeing him and it is in this way that I owe him a great deal for having been able to follow my vocation. He is now a cardinal.

A few words about his family. His mother was a Protestant, as well as his two sisters who were brought up in their mother's religion; but the son followed that of the father who was a nephew of the Duke of Norfolk. The young man entered the Royal Guard of the Queen of England where certainly a fine career was open before him. But he heard the voice of God and left everything to become a priest. When

I returned from India, I sometimes went to see his mother who often lamented over her son and showed me the picture of a handsome young man in the uniform of the Royal Bodyguard, weeping, that he had not followed that career. She was a sworn Protestant and her only son was her idol.

One morning, the old lady left very early in her carriage and went to the Brompton Oratory which was the church of Father Faber. On her return, she told her son that she had just been received into the church! She had made her abjuration! Monsignor Howard related to me that he was so greatly surprised that he did not want to believe in the sincerity of his mother's conversion. But God had heard his prayers and this dear lady died shortly afterwards with all the consolations of the church and even with all its sacraments. The joy of her son was inexpressible.

### THE NOVITIATE

Mother General left Rome during Holy Week of the year 1867 to go to Marseilles. She took with her Mother Melanie, second assistant of the Congregation, and me. We arrived at the motherhouse which was at La Capelette, a little outside the town on Easter Saturday, I think. The community was large. There were some fifty religious. The local Superior was Mother Battistine, the same who had been present at Malta at my Baptism. She was then Superior of the community at Valetta. She was a religious of great virtue, excellent above all in charity and humility. There were in the novitiate some twenty novices and postulants from different nations: French, English, Arabs. Their mistress was Mother Honorine. For a long time she had been ill, and when we arrived, she could not come out of her room any more. She was almost always in bed and the novitiate was left to itself or to the first comer.



Two or three days had hardly passed when Mother General sent for me to the parlour. She was there with our Superior, Canon Olive, a worthy priest of Marseilles. When I was seated he said to me: "Sister, you really wish to be a good religious and be obedient, don't you?" "Yes, Father," I replied, not knowing what the matter was.

"Well, Sister, we want to entrust to you the care of the novitiate and to name you mistress of the novices." I was astounded, for all my ambition was to become a novice myself and not Mistress, and I turned towards our Mother saying: "Father, Mother knows that there is a very great obstacle to my being mistress of novices."

"Sister Veronica has her cause in Rome before the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in order to enter Carmel," replied Mother General. "But", replied Father Olive, "this would be no obstacle. On the contrary, we would be very happy if a little of the spirit of Carmel could be inculcated into our Novitiate, that is to say, the spirit of prayer and mortification". After some more words, "You will then obey and accept the charge?"

What could I do? It was necessary to resign myself and bow my head. The following day, Mother had to leave for Paris and before starting, she took me to the Novitiate where all the novices and postulants were assembled and introduced me to these dear children as their new Mother.

The next day, Tuesday, Mother set out to go and spend a few days in Paris and I was left charged with the care of the novitiate. I said that there were several Arabs among the novices. The Sisters of St. Joseph have a sufficiently large number of houses in the Holy Land and from there they send candidates to be formed in the Novitiate where

they make their Profession and then return to the East to various establishments.

While entering the chapel on Wednesday, following the departure of our Mother, I was stopped by a small Arab postulant, to whom I had not yet paid attention, who said to me: "Mother I must do the washing today. Will you please give me some of the novices to help me because I am often ill on Thursdays and I would like to finish today."

She said this to me in bad French, for she did not know to speak this language well, but she made herself understood. I looked at her for a moment and in a flash an interior light made me perceive that this young girl participated in the Passion of Our Lord.

I answered her without further ado: "Yes, my child, go and begin and I shall send you some sisters to help you." This child had the appearance of being the trash of the novitiate. She was dressed in black like the other postulants, but her dress and her bonnet were dirty, worn out, as if the worst was good enough for her. She went away and I sent some sisters to the wash house. Then I went up to see Mother Honorine whom I had replaced at the Novitiate and whom I found in bed. She began immediately to ask me if I had seen Mary the Arab.

"Who is Mary the Arab?" Then she explained to me that she was the same one who had gone to the wash house. She related to me that on the day our Mother had arrived from Rome this child had come to find her and had said to her: "Mother, a Sister has arrived with our Mother General, I like her very much and thou wilt see that she will be the novice mistress." (She called people 'thee' and 'thou' according to the Arab custom.)

"I do not think that Sister Veronica will be named novice mistress", replied Mother Honorine for she knew that I wanted to go to the Carmel.

"Thou wilt see," was her reply.

Mother Honorine related to me several other things about this child and ended by telling me that every Friday she was ill, making the sign of the stigmata on her hands as if she dared not pronounce it loudly.

"I understood so." She looked at me somewhat surprised and continued to tell me how she had received for three or four Fridays before, the grace of the stigmata in the hands, the feet and the side, and around the head the crown of thorns, that the blood flowed from them, etc.

It appears that our Mother had been informed of it in Rome, but she had forbidden them to tell anything to me. At present there was no longer any reason to hide it from me, said Mother Honorine who loved and venerated this child as a gift that God had given to the Congregation.



Several of the sisters, specially some old ones, who had seen these extraordinary things, ecstasies and wounds in her hands and feet, said that all that came from the devil. Some even went so far as to strike this innocent lamb. They gave her hardly enough to eat, and nothing but the leftovers of the boarders, and to clothe her, the ugliest and the worst was good enough for Mary the Arab. She had been put in the kitchen, and it was she who had to do the washing and empty the garbage. Finally she was not allowed a moment's rest. And she slept in a sort of garret with five or six novices and a professed sister who ill treated her cruelly, and even had refused her a little water one Friday when her mouth was dry with the heat of the fever like Jesus on the Cross.

Good Mother Honorine told me that being ill herself she could not do what she would have liked for this dear child, nor observe her closely, in those extraordinary states, nor protect her against the Sisters who ill treated her. She added that Mary never complained of anything nor of anybody, that the other novices who loved her very much and saw the virtue that she showed in these occurrences, came to tell her everything but that Mary did not wish to name those who struck and insulted her. She begged me to have particular care of this child who was, she said, like the means by which all the graces of God to the Congregation were to flow. She compared her to Bernadette whom the Sisters of Nevers kept in their motherhouse as their greatest treasure.

It was understood between Mother Honorine and me that I would make Mary sleep in her room on the days when she had what she called "her malady", that is to say, from Wednesday evening to Friday, in order that she should be more tranquil and sheltered from the curious.

As for me I had no room, I slept in the community hall. Otherwise I would have taken her with me. All the corners were full in this house.

Afterwards I went to the wash house where I found Mary who was washing with the other novices. I told her that night, since she was ill, she was going to sleep in Mother Honorine's room and that I wanted to look after her myself. She had only a poor straw mattress which was soon installed and the next day, Thursday, when I came early to see what my little Mary was doing, I found her dressed and seated on a chair beside her bed suffering very much. She could not remain standing, because of the wounds which were beginning to form in her feet. They were like blisters on the outer side of the hands and feet.

I examined her carefully and I saw that the skin of her hands, in the middle, was raised like a sort of blister and not only the epidermis as in a burn – in this form  as far as I can recall. In the palm of the hand corresponding to the blister, a red and painful point had formed and gradually when the blood had flowed one could see the light through the hand. I examined also her left side and I saw that it was red and at that time showed three well impressed points, thus  I think that the redness was in the form of a cross. She was also suffering in the head, but nothing could be seen there.

I made her lie down on the bed again and she spent the day in this manner, her sufferings always increased towards evening. She prayed and sometimes moaned like a dove and was in an ecstatic state. I stayed near her almost the whole day, and Mother Honorine was also there in her bed a short distance away. Towards evening her sufferings became extreme, she had a burning thirst, and I gave her some water which she found bitter like gall. I spent the night beside her bed on a chair. From time to time I prayed with her and told her to offer what she suffered for the Church, for the Holy Father in union with the Passion of Our Lord. She said to me, "Mother, go and lie down, I pray you, do not stay so close to me, you will catch my malady." She believed that it was a malady which could be communicated, so simple and entirely ignorant was she of this sort of thing. I smiled within me and answered her, "Be quiet, my child, it is not probable that I shall catch your malady, and then, in any case it would be well to do the will of God." She made so many entreaties that I should go and rest a little that after midnight I went and lay on my bed. Towards five o'clock, I returned and I found her hands all stained with blood, the wounds had opened and the blood was flowing. A novice who was near her had washed and wrapped them in rags. As soon as the blood had flowed,

she was always relieved. Shortly afterwards, her feet also began to bleed, the blister disappeared and a hole was formed that pierced to the other side.

The moment when the blood flowed was so sudden that few persons or almost no one had been able to see it. However, God gave me this grace in order that I should bear witness to what he deigned to effect in this child, as I am going to relate.

That same day, towards 9 o'clock, I was in the room where she had slept in an ecstatic state. Mother Honorine had not risen and I spoke with her of these marvels that we saw happening before our eyes, when suddenly Mary lifted both hands quickly and covered her face and forehead uttering small moans. She had suffered much from her head and did not know what to do to lay it down on the pillow. I made haste to go to her and bent over her. I saw that her whole face was filled with blood which spurted also across her fingers. She withdrew her blood-stained hands and I examined carefully to see from where it came, but there was no trace of wounds or of scratches. I then took a compress which was in a basin with some water and I began to wash her forehead and face to remove the blood and while doing so I said within myself: "Lord, I pray you, make me see from where this blood is coming, so that I may give witness to this child," and at the very moment there was formed under my hand, a little above the right eye-brow, a hole which seemed to be made by a big thorn more wide and irregular along the edges and which narrowed down as it went deeper. From this hole spurted waves of blood. I continued to soak up the blood with the pad which I held in my hand, but I noticed that the edges of this hole did not yield like those of an ordinary wound. And then suddenly, it closed or rather disappeared leaving the skin perfectly smooth, without the

least appearance of a lesion! Only the blood which had flowed from it remained on her face and her forehead. Never in my life shall I forget what I felt at that moment. I touched with my hands, I saw with my eyes so astonishing a marvel. The omnipotence of God only could in a few moments, wound and heal without leaving the least trace, and I uttered some exclamation. I do not remember what I said. Mother Honorine who could not see what was taking place because I was turning my back to her, wished to get up also, but all that I have just related lasted only a few seconds, and already Mary had come out of her ecstasy and was seated on her bed looking at her hands in a distasteful way. "Oh! How filthy! Let me wash myself," and she took a towel and with both hands she began to rub her face and head as if it were nothing, while complaining of being so "dirty" as she said.

After midday the stigmata began to dry up and towards four o'clock Mary got up and was able to walk and even to take supper with the community. She ate nothing these two days, Thursday and Friday until evening. On the other days she worked more than anyone. She did not know how to read or write and Mother Honorine had never been able to make her learn during the two years that she was with the Sisters of St. Joseph, and she spoke French rather badly.

She told me one day, shortly after I had been given charge of the novitiate: "Mother, I shall die in your arms." I answered her, "That is not probable, my child", for I was thinking of leaving for Carmel as soon as it was possible for me to do so, and she was preparing to take the habit as a Sister of St. Joseph, with some other postulants as soon as our Mother returned from Paris; and yet it happened as she had predicted, more than eleven years later when she died at Bethlehem.

This dear child related to me all the wonderful events of her life which were a succession of extraordinary happenings, of trials of all kinds, and of interventions of Providence in her favour when she seemed reduced to the last extremity. I cannot give the details of it here, and this, moreover, has already been done by others. Only I wish to say how she related to me the story of her martyrdom at Alexandria and then her wonderful resurrection and recovery in the underground ruins – She showed me the scar that she had on her throat where the Turk had cut her neck, and which was much more visible and in relief at that time than subsequently, I suppose because it was more recent and also because she was thinner. She told me how the "Religious" had predicted to her that she would die in the arms of a novice mistress to whom she recommended humility, and then I asked her if this mistress was Mother Honorine or I. She said then that she did not know. Several years later at Bethlehem, she spoke to me of this novice mistress and she told me that it must have been the one who performed that office at her Profession. This was Mother of the Infant Jesus at Mangalore, who had lost the grace nevertheless. "However", she added, "the grace is not entirely lost, it will come back to another, you will see that at my death." Meanwhile, we prepared everything in the novitiate for a grand ceremony of Professions and receiving of the habit which was to take place when our Mother General would return from Paris. Mary was one of those who was to receive the habit and her dress was prepared. As for me, I was longing more and more to leave for Carmel. I had gone to meet our Superior, Father Olive, privately, and I had told him of my vocation and the decision that my directors and confessors had given on this subject. I had consulted in Rome and elsewhere several priests of virtue and knowledge, and they were agreed that I was called to Carmel. Our Mother General had finally said to me: "We have put you to the proof

in order to know the will of God, but now that it is manifested, we have no more to do than to help you." Father Olive also could not do otherwise than to approve, at least in theory, what he told me was permitted and approved by the Church, that is to say of "going higher in perfection", but I believe that he did not think I would take him at his word.

Above all, I prayed ardently that God manifest his will for I still heard the same voice in the depths of my soul: "I want you in Carmel." I asked for light also and the necessary grace to guide this precious soul that had been entrusted to me. Oh! my God! How I felt my unworthiness before the sublime wonders that I saw taking place before my eyes and which I was called so to say to guide. I called myself Veronica and I had read and re-read the life of my patroness, St. Veronica Giuliani, also a stigmatist, and I had seen how much her Superiors had put to the proof the spirit that guided her by means of obedience and humiliations. That is the touchstone of God's gifts. I saw that humiliations of all kinds had not been wanting to my little Mary, and that she accepted and bore everything with virtue, proof against everything. I humiliated her therefore always much more than the others, while keeping her near me and protecting her against those who regarded her unfavourably.

One day after Communion Our Lord said to me: "I wish this child go to Carmel with you." I answered him: "Lord, if you wish it, do everything yourself, for you understand that it is not for me to act in this matter." This happened to me twice and I always gave the same answer, without speaking about it to anyone. It is easily understood that I could not act otherwise, nor should I have done so.

However the Chapter had to be held to vote for the novices and postulants and to determine those who would make their Profession, and those who would receive the habit.

It was only the dignitaries of the community who had a voice on this occasion. They were five in number, in addition to Mother Melanie, Second Assistant, and I who had arrived quite lately, and who both refused to give our votes because we did not even know the subjects who were presented. We were however present as well as Father Olive who wanted to preside in order that everything should be in order.

They began with the postulants of whom the first was Mary the Arab as she was called. I called her Mary of Nazareth. She had two white and three black beans! It was I who presented the square bag to each capitular and when Father Olive had counted the beans, my heart leaped and I said within myself: "The finger of God is there. Lord, what you do is well done." It was necessary to hold this Chapter in the room of Mother Honorine who was in bed and could not move in any way because of very violent pain. When she saw that Mary had been rejected she began to make protestations but as Father Olive was present, he imposed silence saying that everything had taken place legitimately and that they should stand by it.

The day was Friday. Mary had spent it in bed as usual with her mysterious malady. I had put her back into her garret, for I was more free to speak with her there than in Mother Honorine's room. Immediately after the Chapter I went to find her. She was in her ordinary state, for it was about five o'clock in the evening, the stigmata was very visible and almost closed. I sat down beside her bed and I said to her: "My child, I must tell you that you have not been accepted at the Chapter and therefore you will not be able to take the habit; but since it is so, I am free to propose to you something I could not tell you before." I told her then that I counted on leaving to enter the Carmel of Pau as soon as it

would be possible for me and I asked her if she wished to come with me.

I was struck to see with what calm, I should say almost with what indifference, she received the news that she had been rejected; but when I spoke to her of Carmel and of coming with me, the dear child became quite animated and she answered me almost with the words of Ruth to her mother-in-law Naomi:

“Mother, where you go, I shall go, and where you are, I shall also be and where you die I shall die.”

“Well, dear child, I am going to write to Mother Prioress to ask her if she is willing to receive you.”

She did not know what Carmel was but only to have heard of it was enough for her to be drawn irresistibly to it. Then I added: “Now my dear little one, I want to see if you are willing to be very obedient. You are always ill on Thursdays and Fridays and you understand well that every week I cannot leave all the novices in order to be near you and look after you. I am quite willing that you should suffer all that Our Lord wishes, but you will ask him out of obedience to be able to get up and do like the others and I shall see if you are obedient.”

She received the order with joy and said to me: “Mother, I promise it to you.”

“And now you are going to get up at once and go down for supper with the community,” which she did instantly. The following morning, I was scarcely dressed when I saw our Mary enter my room and quite radiant, she prostrated on the ground at my feet. “What is it?” I asked and as she hesitated because it was the great silence, “You can speak” I said. Then she rose and said to me: “Mother, this night the Holy Virgin

came and she told me that I would not have this illness any more until next year during Lent for five weeks.”

“Very good. We shall see” I said.

This was perfectly accomplished. From that moment the stigmata no longer appeared on the outside. She suffered on Friday but she could still go on like everybody else.

Before writing to Reverend Mother Elias, Prioress of the Carmel of Pau, I spoke to Father Olive and to Mother Melanie who was in the place of our Mother General. Father Olive told me that since Mary had not been accepted, she was free to go where she liked. I told him that I was going to ask for a place for her at Pau as a lay sister. “Yes”, he said, “so that she may be busy and work well. That is what she needs.

Mother Melanie was also of the same opinion. I wrote therefore to Mother Elias, telling her that my heart was in the Carmel of Pau and that as soon as it was possible for me I would arrive, and I asked her for permission to bring with me a young Arab girl from Nazareth whom I had found at the novitiate and who had no vocation to be a Sister of St. Joseph. I added that this child was very virtuous and above all “that she was obedient even to a miracle” and nothing more.

While waiting for the reply to come, I took Mary with me one day and I went to Marseilles to pay a visit to Reverend Father Philip Abdon, the Parish Priest of the Greek United Church, who had known her since her arrival in France and while I related to him all that had passed at La Capelette on the subject of his former penitent, I sent her to talk in Arabic with the good priest’s old mother.

He was not so incredulous on hearing of the marvels that God had worked in this child, for he already knew her

antecedents, chiefly, he was delighted that she was going with me to Carmel which suited her much better, he said, than being a Sister of St. Joseph.

"She needs to be in a cloister and I thank God that she has found someone to protect her."

In a few days, I received the reply from Reverend Mother Elias. She told me to come as soon as I could, that I would find the door and their hearts open to receive me as well as my little Mary of Nazareth, the interesting postulant of whom I had told her.

I was overwhelmed with joy, seeing that God manifested his will so visibly. Mary was waiting for the moment to leave. I had already packed my things and I was only waiting for the favourable moment when I could escape to flee to Carmel, but I did not want to leave the house with her. It was arranged that she should go to the Arab priest's house and wait for me there.

Finally, on the 30 May, Feast of the Ascension, Mary said to me: "Mother, let me go for I feel that if I wait for the return of our Mother, I shall not be able to go. She will not allow me to go."

I spoke about it to the Superiors who were agreed that she could not be obliged to stay since she was not to be a religious. Mother Melanie was very good and charitable to this dear child, she gave her a black dress, quite new, and had her dressed suitably and I made her leave on the bus to Marseilles. The novices were making the retreat preparatory to the ceremony which was to take place soon after the return of our Mother General. It was the good old priest from St. Loup who was giving them instruction, during these days of retreat. He was our ordinary confessor. On the last day of

May, the day following Mary's departure, after having received Holy Communion, Our Lord said to me: "Now, my daughter, go. You have accomplished what you had to do here." I went at once to give an account to my confessor, as already I had told him all that had happened regarding Mary and the providential manner in which God had arranged everything. I said to him: "Father, I feel that the moment has come for me to leave for Carmel. God has always acted in this way with me when I had a step to take, and now I ask your permission and your blessing."

The good old white haired man put both his hands on my head as I knelt down before him and said to me effusively: "Go, my child, with God's blessing and mine, and may God accompany you."

From there I went to Mother Melanie whom I loved tenderly and who was the only one to whom I had spoken of my vocation to Carmel. She had always been a mother and a friend to me in Rome as in Marseilles. "Mother, the moment has come for me to accomplish God's will. I am going to leave for Carmel." The poor dear Mother was stupefied and prostrated. She begged me not to go yet, to wait for the return of our Mother, not to leave these dear novices whom I loved so much and by whom I was so tenderly loved.

My heart ached, but my courage and my resolution were unshakable. "Mother, nothing can stop me, God wishes it. He will provide for these dear children, but I must go where he calls me. I pray you, send for a carriage to take me with my luggage."

This dear Mother had been the only one except for our Mother General, to whom I had spoken of my vocation, of my aspirations to Carmel. She knew all the opposition I had to fight in Rome, all the difficulties that I had

surmounted. She did not want to thwart me and she sent a Sister to the town. As for me, I had my bags carried to the entrance gate which was at the end of a long alley of chestnut trees, and without saying anything to my dear novices, nor taking leave of them, nor of any one, I went to the gate while the community was at dinner, to wait for the Sister who was to bring the carriage for me.

She came back, in fact, but instead of the carriage she brought me a letter from Father Olive, our Superior, to whose house she had been to inform him on the part of Mother Melanie about what was happening. I took the letter to the gate, and I read it. Father Olive prayed me not to leave so precipitately, not to take literally what he had said to me on the change from the less perfect to the more perfect, but to wait until he could come again to speak with me on this subject etc. "It is too late now. Nothing can prevent me from leaving. Where is the carriage, Sister?" She had not brought one. Just then an omnibus was passing, going to Marseilles. I made a sign to stop it: "Can you take me with my bags?" "Yes, Sister". And in a moment, my trunks were hoisted on the top of the omnibus and I was inside. I left La Capelle, never more even to see a Sister of St. Joseph until the day when my Sister of Jesus Crucified and I, both Professed Carmelites, going by Marseilles for the foundation of Bethlehem, eight years later, went to visit our former Sisters at La Capelette.

I went straight to the house of Father Philip Abdon where I found my dear little Mary who embraced me tenderly. I told her that I still needed ten days before setting out for Pau, for I was obliged to go to Annecy to meet Monsignor Howard who could be found there on his way to Rome, and with whom I had to discuss as well as with Monsignor Magnin, Bishop of Annecy, about the foundation of the Third Order

Regular, so much desired by our Very Reverend Father General Dominique of St. Joseph, and the Reverend Father Marie Ephrem.

I therefore left Mary with Father Abdon's mother and I set out for Annecy, where I found Monsignor Howard. It was agreed that I should go to Pau to make my novitiate and then that I should return to Savoy for the foundation.

I was absent for ten days, and then I made haste to return to Marseilles to take Mary who was beginning to think I was lost. It was she who opened the door for me at Father Abdon's house and her joy was very great when she saw me. We could leave only the next day and I took her with me to the house of a lady who was willing to give us hospitality. She was Madame de Parceval, sister of Mlle. Du Chesne, foundress of the apostolic works, whom I had known for several years, and who, because of her affection for me, had begged her sister and her niece, the young Mme de Parceval, to receive me when I came out of La Capelette.

These ladies received us with great charity and showed great tenderness to Mary. The young Mme de Parceval had only one child, a small girl, and she desired a son very much. Mary told her that God would give her one soon, which happened in fact some time later. Father Philip Abdon had asked a few charitable persons for a small sum for Mary's journey, and had given me 100 fr. for her. I had the 500 fr. from Monsignor Howard that he had forbidden me to use for anything else but my journey, etc.

I set out therefore with Mary from Marseilles on Friday morning, 14 June 1867. It was the day before the eve of the feast of the Holy Trinity. Mary was suffering from her feet and hands, but nothing appeared. We slept at Toulouse in a hotel near the station, and the next day, Saturday, while



the Carmelites were chanting the First Vespers of the Holy Trinity, we arrived in the outer yard of the Carmel of Pau.

It was three o'clock when the venerable Mother Elias accompanied by two other religious came to open the great door of the cloister to us. I fell on my knees to kiss her hand and she embraced us warmly bidding us welcome.

I was in Carmel at last! ... Thank God!



### PART III CHAPTER I

#### LIFE IN CARMEL

Finally I was in Carmel, the Paradise on earth for which I had sighed so long. I still wore the religious habit of the Sisters of St. Joseph but from the following day, the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, our Mother Elias wished that I be clothed as a Carmelite. A Sister who had been given to me as 'angel' came as soon as the clapper (rising bell) was sounded, to dress me, putting on me the white veil. Mary, whom I shall call henceforward Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, wore a black postulant's dress. This dear child was happy, delighted to find herself among all these holy religious. She was in her element. I was like her: all that we saw, all that we heard, was delicious to us. In this manner passed the first eight days and then we were admitted, according to the custom at Carmel, to join the novitiate. We were many—twelve in all. There was a Spanish postulant, two white-veiled novices, the others were professed novices, or young religious who had asked to return to the novitiate. Mother Elias gave us for Mistress a holy religious, Sister Teresa Marie, who, when she was put in charge, made all possible resistance. She thought herself incapable of this office, and in truth she was too humble, at least for a proud person like me, as I told Mother Elias. When I knelt down before her to talk to her or to ask her for some permission, she also fell on her knees at once. Dear Mother Elias, seeing that that shocked me, said: "Well, be calm, I shall be your mistress myself." And she was so in fact. What a mother, what a mistress, was this incomparable Mother Elias! "Holy Mother Elias" as she was called by Monsignor La Croix, Bishop of Bayonne. She possessed not only all the virtues but also all the qualities required to make a person perfect. She had a distinguished education, together

with an intelligence above the ordinary. But what won all hearts to her was that perfect evenness of disposition in all circumstances, that gentleness, that inalterable patience joined to a firmness, which did not come in the way of her kindness and maternal tenderness.

She was one of those rare persons whom authority does not deteriorate, whom being in charge does not hurt, and there are so few of this stamp. On the contrary, Mother Elias seemed made to govern. It was then that all the gifts with which God had adorned her, and the virtues that she had acquired by struggling against her lively and ardent nature, stood out. And yet, I never saw her lose her patience in anything, nor lose that perfect equanimity which she possessed to such an eminent degree. She was of a rare humility, but it in no way harmed the dignity of her speech and of her whole bearing. All that she did, she did perfectly. She had great discernment of spirits, a pleasant way of talking, an enchanting smile, which one looked at to see again when it had once lit up one's heart. Her voice alone sufficed to inspire people from outside who came to speak with her without seeing her. She was not only a perfect Carmelite, but a perfect Prioress. When she came every evening after matins to make a visit of the cells and to bless me, I kissed the hand which had blessed me and I lifted my eyes towards that maternal face, illuminated by her incomparable smile and I laid myself down, happy, under the influence of the joy that I had felt from it.

I saw this Mother, with one of her usual migraines, seated on the ground, because she could not remain standing, in a little office near the ante-choir, before the choir, to receive one after the other, the Sisters who had to speak with her, the last as the first: with the same gentleness, the same patience, all, as if she had nothing else to do and was in perfect health.

Once only I saw her angry. It was in choir during Compline. A Sister had left a stall open a little, out of naughtiness, I think. The one who had to sit in it, being very thin, sank into it to the very bottom, and, in spite of her efforts, could not get up again. One can imagine that nothing more was necessary to excite the hilarity of all those who saw the Sister waving her feet and hands, and the choir began to be distracted, when Mother Elias who could not tolerate any irreverence in a holy place, came forward quickly from her place, frowning, and taking the Sister who was laughing the most, by the arm, shook her, and I believe that she would have put her outside if order had not been restored immediately. It is the only time that I saw her angry.

And yet, in Chapter, she knew to criticise faults and correct them without weakness, but also without the least harshness, and then afterwards, if she thought she had caused pain, she came in search of the Sister to do her a small kindness, to speak a word to her, which restored peace to the heart and one wondered: "What a Mother the good God has given me. Thank you, my God!" Never would I be able to say what our Mother Elias was. Her memory is still alive among all those who knew her as an incomparable Mother.

So this is the Mother whom God gave me on my arrival in Carmel. I did not need a Director besides Mother Elias. I told her everything. On arriving, I wished to speak of my private life to the confessor as I was accustomed to do, but Our Lord told me to give an account of everything to Mother Elias. I did so and I found it good.

A little more than a fortnight after my arrival, on the 2nd July, the feast of the Visitation, our Father St. Giuly, the parish priest of St. Martin, our confessor and our Superior, came to officiate at the ceremony of giving me the holy habit.

That day I resumed my dress as a Sister of St. Joseph and the ceremony was held in secret, without outward pomp, but I received great graces. I was, as it were, beside myself with joy and for several days afterwards I kept the intellectual presence of Our Lord beside me, who spoke to me and directed me in everything, as if I saw Him. Our Mother, St. Teresa, speaks of this grace as one of the greatest that a soul may receive. I had already received it in the first days after my entry into St. Joseph's and now again Our Lord heaped me with delight. Prayer was my joy. I had almost no distraction. Sweet tears flooded me. The holy Office was my happiness. My attraction for penances became stronger than ever. It was like a second spiritual childhood. Mother Elias had my whole confidence, and what I had never been able to say to any woman, I had the grace of telling her fully everything without difficulty.

I was in another element. It was the garden of Carmel and Mother Elias was accustomed to those flowers and fruits. My health, had always been delicate, such that by order of the doctor, I never fasted, and he even forbade me from abstaining from meat, in spite of my repugnance for meat. Now that I was in Carmel, my health grew stronger, after I received the habit and I was able to observe the whole rule without difficulty: fasts, abstinence, remaining on my knees like the others etc. Finally, Our Lord gave me all the possible proofs of the reality of my vocation. I was happy, more than happy. It seemed to me I was in Paradise.

If I was sure of my vocation, the dear child whom I had brought with me, was even more so. I had related to Mother Elias the extraordinary state of Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified but not to any one else. But the Carmelites have a sort of intuition on these matters, and the Sisters surrounded her with a holy curiosity, watched her, examined her and made too

much of her for my liking. There was one specially whom I had seen prostrate on her knees before this child and it seemed to me, at the very least, a great imprudence, for although she was humble and simple, she was of flesh and blood, and it needed but one moment for the devil to insinuate a thought of pride and spoil God's work, and then she was not accustomed to being treated with so much honour. I therefore, complained to Mother Elias, who understood my mind perfectly and at the Chapter forbade the Sisters to busy themselves so much with Sister of Jesus Crucified, and above all, not to make her see their admiration and their veneration which could be much more harmful to her than the contempt and the opposition of which she had been the object among the Sisters of St. Joseph. I would only say, to show the inconstancy of human nature, that precisely the one who had put herself, as if in adoration before this child, was the most opposed to her later, and declared that the spirit which guided her, came from the devil.

She was longing to see herself clothed with the livery of Carmel and asked for it specially from our Father, St. Elias, to whom as his countrywoman, she had a great devotion. On the day of his feast, which was also that of our beloved Mother Elias, as we were having great rejoicing in the refectory and everywhere, she asked permission to offer dinner to St. Elias and herself carried her share before a statue of the saint, which was placed on the table of our Mother. Afterwards she returned to her place, and a moment later I saw her bend her head and lean as if in a swoon, on the shoulder of the Sister who was beside her. They hastened around her. The infirmarian ran up, and helped by other Sisters they carried Sister of Jesus Crucified into a small office near the refectory.

Our Mother also came there. Everyone thought that she had fallen into a swoon, but I who saw well what it was, said

softly to our Mother: "She is in ecstasy, but you have only to tell her to come back to herself out of obedience, she will do it instantly." Our Mother then sent all the Sisters out and addressing the ecstatic child, she said to her: "Child, out of obedience, get up and come back to the refectory." At the same moment, she seemed to awake with a start and began to walk to the refectory. Mother Elias asked her what was the matter with her and she said: "I saw our Father St. Elias who was making a round of the refectory and blessing the portions of the Sisters." He had told her, that soon she would wear the holy habit of Carmel. She returned in fact to the refectory but the ecstasy took hold of her again. It was the first time that, that happened to her in public, since we had arrived in Carmel.

It was decided that on the day of the octave of our Father St. Elias, 27 July, Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified would take the holy habit, but privately, without outward ceremony. It was Father St. Giuly who came to give it to her at 5.30 in the morning because Sister Marie of the Dolours, the Spanish postulant, also had to take the veil that same day, but later, and the ceremony had to be solemn. A Brazilian Bishop gave her the habit.

Mother Elias permitted me to go and help to dress Sister of Jesus Crucified with her white gown and her bridal wreath, and also to be present at the clothing with the holy habit for which she had yearned so long. She was in an ecstatic state, but that did not show too much. She told me that Sister Marie of the Dolours would not remain, and in fact it happened so. She left the Carmel of Pau to go to that of St. Joseph of Avila, shortly after, where she is at present.

Our Mother and the Sisters, seeing that Sister of Jesus Crucified was a soul favoured with such great graces,

believed that as a choir Sister she would draw many blessings on the community, and consequently, Mother Sub-Prioress who was then Sister of the Sacred Heart of Mary, gave her a breviary and strove every day to teach her to read. She made every effort to succeed and on the day of her taking the habit she had to read a lesson at Matins. Impossible to come to the end! She had studied it so much, but at the moment, when she had to read it, she saw nothing but black – Another Sister had to replace her and she came and threw her breviary fully open at the feet of the statue of St. Elias on the choir altar, and drawing her veil over her face, she knelt in front of the choir grille with the Sisters of the white veil.

However, they wanted her to continue to come to the Office and say the versicles and she came to the end more or less tolerably. She was at my side and I made her follow with her finger the lines of the breviary. She had so much good will, but she could not succeed in reading properly. God did not wish her to be a choir Sister and He showed it afterwards very clearly.

Mother Elias and several others of the community wished very much for a foundation of the Carmel at Mangalore and those who were most ardent wanted me to give them lessons in English. Mother Elias also wrote to our very Reverend Father General, Dominic of St. Joseph, to tell him that I was in the novitiate of the Carmel of Pau and to ask him what he wished to do for the foundation of the Third Order Regular.

Our Father General replied to let me undergo a shortened novitiate (for it was several years now that I belonged to the Third Order) and then to send for the Father Prior of the Carmelites at Bagnères or another in his name to receive my Profession. This letter of our very Reverend Father General to Mother Elias and several other

letters that he later wrote to me on the subject of the foundation of the Third Order Regular, were preserved by me with the greatest care. I stuck them in order on the pages of an exercise book, expressly kept for this purpose, bearing the title of what it contained, and I left it in the store-room of the Carmel of Pau, when I left for the foundation of Bethlehem, together with many other letters from Mother Elias and others.

Now I claimed this exercise book which was very precious to me in order to write this narration but Mother Agnes, the Depository, told me that she had never seen it, and after many enquiries we came to know that Mother Mary of the Immaculate Conception with Sister Marie Ange, who was then depository, had burned everything! I must say that I was quite astonished that one could destroy papers which would be very necessary to authenticate a work of God which was only undertaken by Obedience, to the highest Superiors of the Order. There are others also who are of the same opinion.

As for me, I clung more and more to my holy vocation. My health had quite come back to normal. The austerities of Carmel were a delight to me. Silence, solitude, fasts, abstinence, vigils – all were easy to me. Still more I took delight in them. I said to Mother Elias, “Mother, do you believe that I have the spirit of Carmel?” “Yes, my daughter, I believe.” And yet I had been so happy doing works of charity as a Sister of St. Joseph, and now the life of Carmel had replaced it completely! I myself was astonished at the two vocations so markedly different, and when I thought that soon I would have to uproot myself from this paradise and return to the world to work at the foundation of the Third Order, my heart was torn.

After having received this letter of Very Reverend Father General, Mother Elias made me begin my retreat in

preparation for my Profession in the Third Order Regular, which I had to found. She wrote also to the Father Prior of Bagnères who replied to her that he could not come himself to receive my Profession, but that he delegated Rev. Father Robert, who, shortly, was to go to Pau and who would perform this ceremony, according to the desire of our Very Reverend Father General.

In fact, Rev. Father Robert arrived at Pau, about the time of the feast of our Lady of Dolours in September. My retreat was over and I made my Profession in his hands, at the choir grille, which was open, and afterwards, he gave me the black veil, with all the ceremonies we used in the Carmel of the Great Order. Then, according to the custom, I prostrated myself in the form of a cross on the carpet in the middle of the choir. Sister of Jesus Crucified who was present saw a great cross which hovered over me while I was prostrate. Here I shall relate one thing that Mother Elias alone knew. During my retreat I had imprinted over my heart, with a cross heated in the fire, the sign of the cross, which, since then, I often renewed. Henceforward, the holy cross was to be my portion.

After my Profession, Mother Elias told me that I had the grace of state to apply myself to drawing up the Constitutions for the new Third Order Regular for the missions. I did it on the model of those of St. Teresa while modifying and curtailing what was not proper to external works. We would have to say the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin instead of the Divine Office. Fasts and abstinences were also modified.

Our first intention was to make this foundation at Annecy in Savoy because there I knew a priest, a relative of Monsignor Magnin, Bishop of Annecy, on whom I counted to help me in this work, but God ordained otherwise. I wrote to this priest and he replied to me to come as soon as possible

and that everything would be done. I thought, as did Mother Elias, that that meant that Monsignor Magnin accepted the foundation at Annecy, and although we were in the month of December and everything was covered with snow, Mother Elias, in spite of the great affection she bore me, pressed me to leave because she feared that I should fail in obedience, which I owed to our very Reverend Father General who desired that this foundation be made without delay.

I begged her to permit me to spend the feast of Christmas at Pau and set out afterwards, for to leave this dear Carmel when I had scarcely tasted the happiness of this heavenly life which was my delight, pierced me to the heart. But it was necessary to obey and come back into the midst of the world and all alone, for God showed sensibly to Sister of Jesus Crucified who wanted to follow me, that it was not His will. She was to remain hidden in the cloister. I therefore left my dear Carmel on the 15th December 1867 alone. I wore my holy habit under a black skirt and big mantle. A lady had given me an old hat, with a long black veil, which completed my attire. Later, it was thought that I was some adventuress, which was not surprising, but that was all the same to me, provided I did not give up my holy Carmelite habit, which was my only consolation in the midst of this miserable world, into which I was obliged to descend. My attraction, my vocation was all for the dear cloister of the Carmel, and God knows the immense sacrifice that I made while leaving it, but only for a time, for I had Mother Elias's promise that when I had done the work that obedience to my Superiors of the Order demanded from me, I would be again received into the Carmel of Pau.

I liked our Fathers, I was attached to them from the depths of my soul. I had known them intimately in India and also in Rome. I did not even know that there were some

Carmelites separated from the trunk of the tree of Carmel, let me call them in one word schismatic Carmelites. I thought that all the Carmelites were, from the time of our Mother St. Teresa, under obedience to the General of the Order, that they were united to the Reverend Fathers of Carmel as to their Fathers and Brothers, and I was greatly astonished and scandalised at seeing with what scorn certain Carmelite Sisters treated those who are our natural Superiors, as for instance when I learnt from the very mouth of our Very Reverend Father Dominic that he went to pay a visit to the Carmelite Sisters of Toulouse and that they did not even deign to open the grille for him!

This was not the case at the Carmel of Pau. Our Mother Elias loved and revered our Fathers. She received them with quite a fraternal cordiality, and did her best for them. The grille was always open, even for the Father Provincial, and for several years a Carmelite Father came from Bagnères as extraordinary confessor four times a year.

I therefore sacrificed my attraction and my vocation for a time to fill an emptiness that existed in our holy order and which was shown to me during my retreat before making my Profession under the form of a globe which was not complete. It lacked a big slice and I was told that this was the Third Order Regular which did not exist in Carmel. The Franciscans, the Dominicans, have their Third Order Regular and we had none which was approved and under the government of the Order.

Mother Elias had directed me to Father Gratian, Prior of the Carmelite Fathers of Montpellier and on leaving Pau to go to Savoy I stopped there for a few days. Our Fathers at Montpellier were very kind to me and promised to do everything in their power to come to my help. Afterwards I continued my journey and I arrived at Annecy just in time

to meet there Monsignor Magnin, at the first visitation which he was making as a regular visit. When I had explained to His Grace the aim of my journey, thinking that he had already been informed of everything, I was very surprised to find that he did not know anything of my arrival, nor of our plan to establish the Third Order Regular of the Carmel at Annecy. He told me that he could not give the authorization for making this foundation at Annecy where there were already enough convents. When I answered that if I had known that this was the case, I would not have come, and that I would return very willingly to my Carmel at Pau, Monsignor told me that if I wished to try to found at La Roche, a small town hidden in one of the valleys of Savoy about six hours from Annecy, he would give me every permission to make this attempt there. I was very embarrassed, for, having come to Savoy out of obedience, I could not leave it at once, without having the authorization of our Very Reverend Father General. I left Annecy, and I went and spent the feast of Christmas with a very heavy heart in a village near La Roche. On Christmas day, as I was praying in the church which was deserted at nightfall, I found myself as it were in a desert, quite barren, with a big cross set up in front of me, to which I clung as my only support. It was indeed the bare cross which was waiting for me during my sojourn in Savoy.

Having arrived at La Roche, I rented a small apartment where I would have been able to receive some candidates, if they had presented themselves, but only one poor girl was found to keep me company and she was disfigured and a little silly.

To give an idea of her culinary talents I shall only say that she did not even know to boil an egg, and as I was hardly any better, I would have been often condemned to bread and cheese, but for the charity of some good souls

who sent me dinner all cooked. One of these ladies was Mme. de Polinge whose family was closely allied to that of St. Francis de Sales.

At La Roche I wore my Carmelite dress. I used to go and hear Mass with the Capuchin Fathers, whose Guardian, an Italian, was my confessor. I observed the whole rule of Carmel as much as possible and I stayed there for five months, without being able to obtain anything for the foundation. I had written to our Very Reverend Father General to give him an account of my situation, but I received no reply at all. My only consolation in the complete solitude in which I lived, was to write to my beloved Mother Elias who encouraged and sustained me by her affection and advice. She kept me informed about what was happening to Sister of Jesus Crucified, who, as she had announced, had again received the grace of the stigmata during Lent of 1868.

While I was at La Roche, my mother, who, I suppose, imagined that I was not lodged respectably, arrived, accompanied by her maid, to see what I was doing. I could not receive her in the apartment that I inhabited with my poor disfigured girl and I begged Mme. de Polinge to be kind enough to give her hospitality for a few days, in her castle, which was close to me, and I went and spent the day with her. My mother was very displeased with my poverty and the complete destitution in which she found me and went away very quickly to Geneva.

I still waited for a reply from our Very Reverend Father General to tell me what I ought to do. Monsignor Magnin had given me some letters patent to make a foundation in Savoy but La Roche was too buried in the mountains for me to be able to succeed in what I desired. Finally, after five months of trying without any result, I received a letter from Very Reverend Father Dominic, who told me that he had not

received my letters because he had been ill in Germany and that he was very sorry that I had wasted so much time at La Roche, that now I ought to set out immediately and pass through the Carmels of Lyons, Montpellier, Carcassonne, Agen and Bordeaux, where he prayed the Reverend Father Priors to do their best to help me to start the Third Order Regular for our missions, for which it was urgent to work as promptly as possible. This letter I had to present to the Carmelite Fathers wherever I stopped. It was proof of the authenticity of my mission, written entirely by hand, by our Reverend Father Dominic of St. Joseph and signed by him. His Reverence had unfortunately not affixed the seal of the Order, and that is why certain Fathers thought that I was an adventuress! I am only desolate that it may have been destroyed with all the others.

Finally a decision had been taken about me and I made haste to pack my bags and leave as soon as possible for Lyons passing through Geneva where my mother was and to whose house I went. I had learned at La Roche that the Carmelites newly established at Geneva by Monsignor Mermillod had been informed that a Carmelite escaped from the Carmel of Pau was stationed in that place. I even think that they had begged His Grace to try and remedy the matter, believing that I was giving scandal.

Arrived at Geneva, I went to Monsignor Mermillod and I explained to him the whole business while showing him the letter from our Very Reverend Father General. He received me with much kindness and told me to go and see the Carmelites, which I did and they were reassured of the reason for my sojourn at La Roche.

On leaving La Roche I had got a sharp pain in my side which made me suffer much, chiefly at night. My mother

made me put a vesicant but I could not sleep at night when I lay down in a good bed. When I was in church, on the contrary, on my knees, without support, I did not suffer at all.

I stayed only two or three days at Geneva and then I set out for Lyons where I found Reverend Father Abel who was Prior of the Carmelites. He told me that at Lyons there were no facilities for a foundation of the Third Order and advised me to continue my journey as far as Montpellier. I was always treated with great charity at Montpellier. Reverend Father Gratian and all the Fathers did all that was possible to help me. A good lady Tertiary received me in her house where several young persons came to present themselves as aspirants for the new Third Order as soon as I was able to start the foundation. I always suffered much from the pain in my side for which the vesicant had done nothing. At night I could not find any easy position. I told this to Father Gratian who answered: "Try to lie down on the ground, putting a coverlet on the floor." That night I did as he had told me and I slept perfectly without any pain and since that day for five years, I always lay on a hard surface and found myself very well. It is only when I returned to the Carmel of Pau that I was able to do like the others and sleep on a straw-mattress.

At Montpellier a widowed lady called Mme Barbieri, who was of the Third Order wished to set out with me, in order to accompany me and help me, but having arrived at Toulouse she left me to return to Frontignan where she had an estate, for her health did not permit her to live the kind of life that we offered. However, she did not stop being our benefactress. She often sent me money and wine, etc. I owe her much gratitude.

I passed on to Carcassonne where I saw Reverend Father Alexis and then to Agen where I lodged with a Tertiary near



the hermitage. I spent the feast of Pentecost there waiting the return of Rev. Father Basil who was the Prior then and was away. When he came back he gave me kind words but nothing else and I continued my journey to Bordeaux.

Everywhere I showed my letter from our Reverend Father General but I knew that in Bordeaux the Fathers thought that I was an adventuress because the seal of the Order was lacking. The Reverend Father Peter, Prior of the Carmel of Bordeaux, received me rather coldly. Even before I could see any of the Fathers, I waited so long in the parlour that I resolved to leave the next morning, and, with this intention I returned very sad and discouraged to the chair-maker's house where I lodged. I was longing to return to Pau where at least I was sure of finding friendly people again for I was tired of rushing about and finding deceptions everywhere. While I was making my small preparations to leave early the next morning, having a very heavy heart at not finding any sympathy among our Fathers whom I loved so much and for whom I had sacrificed my vocation, the happiness of my life, the chair-maker came to tell me that a Father desired to see me and at the same time ushered in Reverend Father Athanasius of the Immaculate Conception, with his socius, a lay brother.

This good Father had heard of me. Perhaps he had read the Reverend Father General's letter and he had asked to come and see me. He showed the greatest interest in me, as well as in the work for the missions, that I was charged to found, and when he saw that I was so cast down by the reception that I had received and that I wanted to go away without another word, he begged me not to do so, and that he was going to take up the affair and speak for me. He also told me that there would be vocations to the Third Order Regular and that as soon as I had a house, he would send me some candidates.

I forgot to say that at Montpellier, Father René had given me one of his penitents, a young servant, pleasing enough, to take with me. She came as far as Pau, and there, being discouraged by the turn of affairs, she went back to Montpellier. I remained two or three days longer at Bordeaux and Father Athanasius made me acquainted with some persons who were helpful to me later on.

But it delayed me from returning to my dear Carmel of Pau where I hoped to be received again into the community, but dear Mother Elias, after having heard the story of all my adventures, told me that since I had not found any opening for the establishment of the Third Order anywhere, I would do well to go to Bayonne, to confer on the business with Monsignor La Croix, that there was quite close to the Carmel of Bayonne, a house, which had served our Sisters provisionally, and that I would do well to go and see if the work could be established there.

While waiting to take up my journeys again she told me to take a little rest for some days in the apartments by the side of those of the Tourriers. She did not wish me to enter the enclosure as yet, because she said I should do everything possible for the success of the work that had been confided to me. My God! I think that I wept all my tears during the few days I remained outside the turn of the Carmel of Pau. I could hear our Sisters say the Office in choir, I followed all the exercises of the community which I loved passionately and I was locked out. During recreation they came to see me in the parlour and I did nothing but weep all the time.

Reverend Father Robert who was our extraordinary confessor had come on his usual visit. I went to him to get a little courage and consolation. But alas, I left the confessional with a heavier heart than when I entered it. There was

only dear Mother Elias who comforted me. She gave me all the possible recommendations for the Carmelites of Bayonne and made me leave for that town at the beginning of June 1868. I cannot express the oppression of heart that I felt in leaving once again my Carmel of Pau and what is very remarkable is, that as I was approaching Bayonne, a heavy weight seemed to be lifted from me. I could not understand anything and I went straight to the Carmel where the good and saintly Mother Dosithea received me with all affection possible and made the whole community assemble to receive me. I felt at home and they told me that I could have their temporary house for 500 francs per year, in about a month's time, because it was occupied by tenants at the moment. Mother Prioress asked me to go and see this house, adjacent to the Carmel, to see if it suited me. I did so and on entering the courtyard I felt that it was there that I had to start the work.




Joy and peace filled my desolate heart and a new courage to work for the glory of God and the good of our holy Order in the missions of India, gave me the strength which for some time I had lacked totally.

Then I went to pay my respects to Monsignor La Croix, Bishop of Bayonne. His Grace, who was not ordinarily well-disposed to new foundations, received me with a most paternal kindness. He gave me all that I could desire: the permission to establish a Third Order in the temporary house of the Carmelites, to receive candidates, to make the necessary repairs to settle a new community which would have the episcopal enclosure, etc. He gave me permission to enter the enclosure of my dear Carmel of Pau while waiting for the tenants who lived in the house to leave the place. Laden with all my permissions and very happy, I hastened to return to Pau where Mother Elias received me with open

arms. She was so happy to see again her poor daughter and to console her after all her sorrows. It seemed as though she could not do enough to show her affection and her charity.

I found Sister of Jesus Crucified going through terrible trials. The devil had received the power to torment her, to obsess her and even to take possession of her body. This monster tried to kill her and put in her food bits of pointed glass, bent pins etc. that she may be choked when eating her soup.

Seated at table by her side, I looked into her bowl feeling with a spoon, so that there was nothing harmful in it. An instant later, when the poor child had just started eating, she stopped and turned purple. She was obliged to leave the table, choked by something, that could not go down her throat. They took her to the infirmary almost in convulsions. It looked as though she was going to breathe her last sigh.

We prayed around her while placing relics on her throat and sometimes the priest's stole. Once I saw the lunette of the monstrance which immediately made her spit out a bit of glass in this shape  sharp as a razor. She took it from her mouth perfectly dry. Sometimes there were also pins bent in this fashion   like serpents.

Sometimes this villain, Satan, took her form to deceive the Sisters. On one of those occasions, after Vespers, I thought it was Sister of Jesus Crucified who made a sign to me to accompany her to the little terrace on the roof of the monastery. There she asked me to sit down and she sat beside me. She began to tell me several things about the proposed foundation, showed me great affection, took my hand and kissed it. Then she started showing me a number of little bottles which contained various distilled waters, essence of orange flowers etc. She boasted she had made them

herself and insisted that I taste them by pouring a little in the hollow of my hand. I refused saying that we could not eat nor drink without permission between meals. She still insisted saying "But it is just a little." Then I replied "I am astonished that you wish me to break the rule but I do not want to do it." The sham Sister of Jesus Crucified put back the bottle in its place and saying she had something to do, went in blindly. I followed her looking this side and that but I saw no one and I thought within myself. "But where has this child gone? She has been very brisk!" We did not know then, that the devil had the power to take her form to deceive the Sisters and to give them a bad impression of her. But this old liar was obliged later to confess his infernal prowess and one day during the forty days' possession he said, among other things, that he had deceived "that wicked Sister Veronica, taking the form of the 'little nothing' and leading her to the terrace on the roof."

This dear child had received the holy name of Jesus marked on her heart. It was on the 24th of May that this grace was accorded to her in the hermitage of our Lady of Mount Carmel, a little before my return from La Roche. But on the Fridays that followed, her heart bled and the letters were impressed on the linen that was applied to the place.

I am witness of this marvel, for one Friday, knowing that she was suffering in her cell, I went (I had the permission to see her) and found her seated on the floor at the foot of her bed, with her hand resting on her heart, which was paining very much.

"Well my child, how are you?"

"Mother, look, what does this mean?" She took from under her cot a packet of little pieces of cloth, like

compresses, on each one of which were marked somewhat with her blood, the following letters.


 The image shows three handwritten characters, 'O', 'J', and 'Z', arranged horizontally. The characters are dark, possibly ink or blood, and have a slightly irregular, textured appearance. The 'O' is a simple circle, the 'J' is a vertical stroke with a hook at the bottom, and the 'Z' is a series of three connected diagonal and horizontal strokes.

The letters did not have a regular form and on most of the pieces of cloth which were left for long against her side, the blood had spread and the letters were not clear but one could still see the same form everywhere.

She showed me the cloth she held against her heart, while I entered. It was very clearly marked. I was taken aback, as can be understood, seeing what God had deigned to do in this child of grace. But one had always to appear to be indifferent, otherwise her humility was threatened and she always kept away from those who venerated her. I examined the linen and I replied "I think that means the name of Jesus. There is an O and a J which stands for Jesus and then an Z which I do not quite understand." I would have wished to bring away those precious bits of linen but I could not do it in her presence. She put by the packet under her cot and said to me "Mother, help me to go somewhere." She could hardly walk, so much did she suffer. I led her to where she wanted to go and rushed back to her cell to take at least a few of the linen bits, for otherwise she would have understood if she did not find the packet under her bed.

I chose as quickly as possible two or three that were more clearly marked and I went back to bring her but I found her already returning to her cell. She suspected what I was doing and immediately took the packet of compresses saying she wanted to wash them all herself.

I preserved the two linen bits marked with the letters OJZ very carefully. I took them with me to Bayonne. One of

the bits was folded in two and the blood passing through formed the letters on the second fold, but these were not very clear. I gave this second fold to a young English priest called Father Kenelm Vaughan. He had a weak chest and lived in Biarritz. Some years later he made a novena while at the same time placing the linen on his chest and the day that he finished the novena, that is on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in 1870, he was healed. The Carmelites of Pau, where Sister of Jesus Crucified lived, joined him in this novena. He had been to the Carmel to see her and say Mass there, during which Our Lord gave her a message for Father Vaughan. After Mass she called him aside and gave him the message.

Another of these linen cloths, better preserved, was given by me to l'Abbé Inchauspé who was the Superior of our Little Carmel at Bayonne. I had placed it very carefully in a reliquary of Russian leather lined with silk or velvet. And as I owed much gratitude to l'Abbé Inchauspé and he was convinced then of the veracity of the marvels that took place in Sister of Jesus Crucified, I wanted to offer him the most precious thing I had.

Later, unfortunately, his opinion changed and I do not know what he did with the precious linen. I wrote and asked him for it but I got no reply.

The third linen bit was left in one of the drawers of the chest in the store-room of the Carmel of Pau, when I left for the foundation of Bethlehem. I do not know what Mother Marie of the Immaculate Conception has done with it. In the same place, I had left labelled many other objects stained with the blood of Sister of Jesus Crucified during the stigmata, pins and bits of glass which had choked her throat etc. etc. I claimed those objects, at the same time as the letters,

of which I have made mention earlier, but everything had disappeared.

I remained in my dear community of Pau for about a month only. My beloved Mother Elias prepared all that she could give away from the sacristy, from the hermitages etc. and gave them to me for the new foundation at Bayonne. Two postulants from Nimes, whom I had seen while passing, were to arrive on the eve of the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and I had to be at Bayonne to receive them.



## CHAPTER II

## THE LITTLE APOSTOLIC CARMEL

On the 14 July 1868 I left again my dear Carmel of Pau, to begin the much desired foundation of the Third Order Apostolic, at Bayonne. Our Sisters, the Carmelites, received me with the greatest cordiality, and the first two nights I slept in the Carmel with the Tourrieres in order to arrange what was most necessary in our new house, from which only some of the tenants had left. The day following my arrival, which was the eve of the feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel, the two Postulants arrived at 10 o'clock at night. They were from Nimes. One of them was Sister Agnes, who later went to India and was Prioress of the Tertiaries, at Mangalore. The other was a young Nimoise who did not persevere. We were three to take possession of our new house, after the High Mass at Carmel, the day of the feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Monsignor La Croix gave us for Superior and Confessor, the Abbé Inchauspé, a worthy and holy Basque priest, who was already the Superior of the Carmel of Bayonne. He has been for me a real father. His charity, his devotion to us and to the work entrusted to my care, were without limit. Sometimes he would tell me that he would willingly give away his whole salary to us if he did not have his old parents to help and to support. All that he could spare was given to his poor daughters of the Little Carmel. He came every day from Bayonne, which was far, to supervise the labourers who worked at the necessary repairs in order to make the house liveable for a community of Little Carmelites.

All the places were arranged as at Carmel, as much as it was possible, in a house which was not built to be a convent. The chapel was charming and one day while we were at

dinner Monsignor La Croix arrived in the refectory without notice; for at the moment he was at the Major Seminary where the priests' retreat was going on, and as the labourers were working at repairs everything was open. With his paternal goodness Monsignor did not want us to be disturbed at our poor dinner but he began to walk here and there in the Refectory and said to us "I just visited the chapel which you are repairing; as soon as it is finished we shall place the Blessed Sacrament there". I would have jumped up to fall at his feet to thank him, but as I was at table I replied, thrilled with joy, "Oh Monsignor, how I thank you! That was my only ambition, and if I were not at table I would have kissed your feet to show my gratitude." Monsignor kept to his word and when the repairs were finished he came to say Mass in our pretty little chapel and to place the Most Blessed Sacrament there and demarcated the episcopal cloister in the little convent.

Before we had our own chapel we went for Mass to the Carmelites next door. A priest of the Third Order who lived at Pau who was called Abbé Sempe, sent me as postulant a person who had been already a religious in another Congregation; she was from Orthez, and even before she came to the little Carmel was or believed to have been led by extraordinary ways. She said to Abbé Sempe that her guardian angel made her rise from her bed on Friday nights and took her aside, if she was with other persons, gave her the discipline then sent her back to bed!

When this person came to us it was exactly at a time when the devil took possession for forty days of the body of Sister of Jesus Crucified and as Satan is only one who apes God he wanted to fake something of the same kind at the Little Carmel which moreover he detested as well as "the wicked Sister Veronica" as he called me.

One Friday after the arrival of this person, she fell into an ecstasy and in this state she said to me that Our Lord told her to ask me for permission to be tormented by the devil during 15 Fridays. In consultation with our Superior, the Abbé Inchauspé, to whom I told everything, I replied that I wanted all that Our Lord wanted and permitted.

She began then each Friday to be in extraordinary states. Seated quietly in her chair, suddenly I could see her fall to the ground, face downwards torn by convulsions, beating herself, sometimes her head struck violently against the wall; one had to hold her in order that she may not hurt herself. Then came a rapture and she uttered all sorts of beautiful things. She seemed to see Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, the Saints. These states began on the evening of Thursday and ended on Friday afternoon and continued for several weeks. It was quite embarrassing for me. I had to be alone with this Sister (to whom, as well as to Sister Agnes, we had given the holy habit in the chapel of Carmel) during the whole day, because I did not want the other postulants and novices to see these extraordinary states. The l'Abbé Inchauspé himself came to say the prayers of exorcism, but to no effect.

Nevertheless, I examined the novice and I saw that she became neither more humble, nor more obedient, nor more charitable towards her companions after her so called extraordinary graces and I began to doubt her authenticity. At Pau the marvels continued in that dear Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, but what a difference in the Spirit which guided her! Satan once said, at a moment when he spoke through her mouth, "that he would go to the Little Carmel and would make that wicked Sister Veronica dance". This time the great liar kept to his word.

It was a night between Thursday and Friday, and as usual I was shut up in a room apart, with the novice. She was

in bed and I watched, lying on the floor, before a little altar where there was the Holy Face with a night lamp burning. Suddenly the novice began to writhe in her usual contortions and she would have thrown herself on the ground if I had not hastened to hold her down. Her discipline made of thick iron wire was suspended at the head of the bed. Suddenly an inspiration came to me to use it to make her remain quiet and obey. I took the discipline in hand standing as I was by the side of her bed and raised my arm to strike her, but at the same time the whole discipline fell at my feet, leaving in my hand only the end which I was holding. The novice with a satanic appearance sat on her haunches and cried like a possessed person, "What! Do you want to beat me?" "Yes, and I want you to keep silent and remain quiet" and I gave her a slap on the face. Then she got up, jumped down from her bed and seizing me by the shoulders began to jump right round the room dragging me along with her, while I continued to strike her as best as I could. Returning at last near her bed after this satanic dance, I gathered together all my strength and threw her on her mattress, and while covering her with her blankets, I said, "In the name of the Father, I order you to keep quiet and to remain calm." She gave a kind of a grunt and did not move any more, while I went before the Holy Face where I prostrated myself face to the ground to pray, and then I understood clearly that this novice was only an instrument of Satan who in this way wanted to put disorder and confusion into the beginning of the Foundation.

Next morning I packed up her belongings, took the holy habit from her, and sent her away as fast as I could with the approval of my Superior.

At this time our Very Reverend Father General was in Spain, and he wrote to me that he had to pass by Bayonne and

Pau and that he would come to see us and to bless our little nascent foundation. His Reverence arrived indeed on the 1st September 1868. He stayed at the Major Seminary and came to spend the afternoon with us. I told him all the detailed events of our poor little Third Order and he revised with me the Constitutions that I had drafted. He approved them and was interested in everything. With most paternal goodness he visited the entire little convent and blessed the four or five first novices and postulants whom I had already gathered. His Reverence spoke to us and recommended to us what should be the perfection aspired to by those who are the foundation stones of an edifice, and then he said to me, "Now you have the episcopal enclosure; later on we shall see about giving you the canonical enclosure". I could not wish for anything better and my feeling is, that if we had been able to fulfil this desire of our very holy and excellent Father General, the little Carmel would still exist. The next day His Reverence said Mass in the chapel of the Carmel – ours was not yet ready – he gave Communion to all of us, blessed us again, and left for Pau where he went to the Carmel to visit our Mothers and Sisters. His Reverence was not able to see Sister of Jesus Crucified who was in a state under the power of Satan, who had permission to torment her until the 4th September, day of her triumphant delivery which has already been described in detail elsewhere. A Sister who was not enlightened with regard to this saintly child said something unfavourable about her to our Very Reverend Father General, when he passed through the Carmel of Pau. She had a supernatural knowledge of it and said in ecstasy: "Let it be; the time will come; he has a right heart." And in truth he was a true religious, a true son of St. Teresa. He was always a father to me, until some persons came in between him and me, which was the cause for His Reverence to stop writing to me.

I spoke to our Father General about the interest that Reverend Father Athanasius had shown in our nascent work and I asked him for permission to have him as our extraordinary confessor. His Reverence gave me the permission very willingly provided I had the consent of Monsignor La Croix, who later approved of my request, and the Reverend Father Athanasius came from Bordeaux on Ember days of the year to spend three days with us at the Major Seminary, where Abbé Manaudas gave him hospitality. The father heard our confessions, gave us instruction and sent us several postulants, some of whom made their profession, and two left later for the missions of India. One of them, Sister Mary Joseph, died at Cannanore. During one of those visits of Father Athanasius our good Superior, Abbé Inchauspé wanted to be received into the Third order of Mount Carmel. In the beginning, after Monsignor came as he had promised to bless the chapel and reserve the Blessed Sacrament there, Father Inchauspé, who was also Canon of the Cathedral, took the trouble of coming every morning from Bayonne, which is half an hour's distance away, to say Mass in our little chapel. After that we had one of the professors of the Major Seminary as chaplain.

The dear Mother Elias had provided us with what was essential to have Holy Mass. The chapel was dedicated to St. Joseph and a beautiful statue of him holding the Infant Jesus placed in a niche behind the Tabernacle, dominated the altar. The Sanctuary was separated from our choir, where we said the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin by a wooden carved grille, in the middle of which was a little grille for Communion. There were stalls on both sides and a big curtain which could be drawn hid us when we did not wish to be seen. The priest came in by an outer door which led into the sanctuary and the outer sacristy was just opposite. Our

enclosure was perfectly organised and we had Tourrieres who went out on business. They formed part of the community.

In the beginning we wore the same habit as the Sisters of Great Carmel except for the black woollen veil which we wore instead of one made of yarn and we also wore brown stockings and shoes; besides the material of our habits was not so heavy. When our Very Reverend Father General visited us, he asked me what the difference was between our habit and that of the Carmelites of the Second Order, I told him what it was, and he replied, "It's good, that's enough." We slept on hard mattresses except myself who could only sleep on planks. My children had bed sheets and pillows made of linen or cotton and each one had her own little cell. In the beginning we always abstained. Our Sisters from the Great Carmel were very good and charitable. As our garden was very small they sent us vegetables and fruit and many other things, but our poverty was very great; nevertheless joy and peace were not lacking in our little community. Later on when we were better off we ate meat three days in the week.

Our Fathers sent me some postulants from Montpellier and from Bordeaux; some remained; others, the greater number, did not suit us and I sent them away. One, for example arrived from Montpellier, who was a widow and a butcher by profession. She was a person who could not live in community. She was used to an independent life and did not know how to obey. I told her that she would have to go home. She could not make up her mind to leave. She pretended to be sick and remained in her cell. One evening while the Community was reciting Compline one of the white veiled sisters heard some noise in the ante-choir. She came out to see what it was, and saw this person in her night-gown leaving the kitchen and hastily climbing the staircase to return to the dormitory. The Sister got frightened and returned

promptly to the choir. The next morning the butcher widow who had remained in bed in her cell called a Sister who passed by and told her to bring something which was wrapped in a rag and left in her bunket. The Sister looked for it in fact, and found a long object which she opened out, but what was not her horror in finding that it was the big kitchen knife! She came immediately to warn me and brought me the knife and I went to that woman. When I asked her what she intended to do with that big knife she replied with a satanic sneer: "I could not do what I wanted." Probably being a butcher and being used to handle similar instruments, she wanted to try her ancient trade on one of us. God had preserved us. As we were not safe I was obliged to order her to get up and leave as soon as possible. She left after a terrible scene, heaping insults on me. I was happy to be rid of her for all that.

Another aspirant, after only a few days' stay, lost her head. I was obliged to send her to the hospital where the Sisters of Charity put a chemise on her by force. During the five years that I remained at the Little Carmel of Bayonne, I had to send away 24 or 25 subjects of whom four or five were novices.

Some good subjects, however, did present themselves. The first postulant from Nimes, who was later Mother Agnes in India, was a very good religious. Then a young Irish girl of a good family but whose parents had lost all their wealth during the religious persecution in Ireland, and who had been given the post of a teacher at Bayonne, also asked to be received. Her name was Miss Teresa Devine and I was all the more happy to receive her, because in India, English is the only useful language, and as Sister Elias of St. Teresa was well educated, I employed her to give lessons in English to the other novices.



After her year of novitiate she made her profession together with another young girl from Bordeaux, called Sister Marie des Anges, whom Father Athanasius had sent me.

While I worked at forming subjects for the missions of our Carmelite Fathers in India, Monsignor Marie Ephrem was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Mangalore and consecrated Bishop. He wished to visit our little community and sent Reverend Father Lazare his Vicar General as his messenger to announce his visit. This good Father said Mass for us and heard our confessions in preparation for the Profession of the first novice, whose Vows Monsignor Marie Ephrem himself wanted to receive. It was that of Sister Agnes. I was so happy to see again this old father of my soul and introduce to him, my dear children who would be his in his mission. I still had a debt of 7000 francs on the repairs of the little convent. Monsignor paid the contractor who had already waited for quite some time.

His Grace visited the whole convent but he was not happy with our enclosure and made me change several things. It was always on this point that I did not agree with him.

Meanwhile, the preparations were going on at the Carmel of Pau for the foundation of a Carmel in Mangalore. Mother Elias was to be at the head of the new group. Abbé Inchauspé who had gone to Rome with Monsignor La Croix for the Vatican Council where Monsignor Marie Ephrem was also present, had spoken to him and wrote to me to prepare three of my children to leave with the Carmelites of Pau, as soon as Monsignor Marie Ephrem returned to France. Abbé Inchauspé indicated by name the Irish Sister Elias of Saint Teresa. The other two were to be of my choice. I chose Sister Marie des Anges and a white-veiled Sister, Sister Mary of

Joseph, whom we asked to make her Profession since the time of her novitiate had come to an end. Sister Agnes of Jesus would have loved to go but I had my reasons for not sending her yet. Three had been asked of me and two were to be chosen at my discretion.

The Council having been interrupted, the Bishops returned to their respective dioceses. Monsignor Marie Ephrem, Father Lazare and Father Gratian had come to Pau to take the Carmelites who were going to found the convents at Mangalore. They only waited for the three religious of the Third Order Apostolic to start their journey.

At the last moment, Father Inchauspé who had just returned from Rome with his bishop came to tell me, that Monsignor Marie Ephrem wanted four religious and that one of them should be Sister Agnes of Jesus. The trunks were packed, the habits for the three who were leaving made from a lighter material, very different from those we used in France, were already stitched. There was no time to make more; we had to leave.

So I took my three daughters and went towards the railway station to take the train for Pau. On the way we met Father Gratian who came to fetch us. He told me that Monsignor Marie Ephrem awaited four religious and I told him that I came to know too late to be able to bring the fourth one this time and that she would leave the next time.

We arrived at the Carmel of Pau where I met the fiery indignation of Monsignor Marie Ephrem who wanted Sister Agnes definitely. I explained the whole affair to him but nothing could pacify him. I offered to go immediately and bring her myself, but all to no avail. My God! My God, what a night I spent! For until one o'clock in the morning I remained with Monsignor in the outer parlour. One could

hear his voice in the whole convent. Happily Mother Elias was there inside and very gently interrupted that terrible scene and came to open the door of the enclosure to bring me in and put me to bed.

She was at the door to receive me in her arms. I fell on my knees and she did the same. We remained in that embrace for some time without a word, for it was the great silence – Hot tears rolled down on both sides. I was broken and crushed by the scene that had just occurred. I did not recognise any more my Father Marie Ephrem, and I said to myself: “If he is so changed towards me, who was his child of predilection, what will happen to my poor children, young and inexperienced in India, alone and without a mother.”

Next morning, dear Mother Elias made me go early for Communion and after Mass I went to look for Monsignor Marie Ephrem at the confessional to try to be reconciled with him by explaining the situation. He at last asked me why I had not obeyed the letter he had written to me about the four Sisters that he wanted. “I didn’t receive any letter from you, Monsignor.” Then the misunderstanding was clear to me. That letter was lost, I do not know how, and I had to bear the consequences. In the afternoon, Monsignor Marie Ephrem entered with Father Gratian to read the letters of obedience in Chapter of the Sisters who were leaving. They renewed their vows in the hands of Monsignor promising him obedience.

There were six from the Carmel of Pau. The Reverend Mother Elias, Prioress, Mother Marie of Jesus Sub-Prioress, Sister Marie of the Saviour and Sister Stephanie, choir Sisters, and two white-veiled Sisters, Sister Euphrasia and Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, still a novice. There were also three Carmelites of the Third Order Apostolic, Sister Elias

of St. Teresa, Sister Marie des Anges and Sister Mary Joseph, lay Sister.

The Reverend Fathers Lazare and Gratian had to travel with the religious. Monsignor accompanied them up to Marseilles. The description of this disastrous voyage has been written elsewhere: how two Carmelites, Sister Euphrasia and Sister Stephanie died on the way and were buried at Aden, where Mother Elias was so sick that she could not continue the voyage and waited for the next ship with Reverend Father Gratian while my three poor children continued their voyage to India with Reverend Father Lazare.

They had left Pau on the 19th of August 1870 and on 5 November of the same year, holy and beloved Mother Elias left this land of exile to go and receive her crown, at Calicut in the convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph; in the same house which I had founded about nine years before when I was myself a Sister of St. Joseph. She was surrounded by her children, helped by the dear Father Lazare, and it was in the arms of Sister of Jesus Crucified that she gave the last sigh.

Some months later I sent to Mangalore, where the first three Tertiaries were established, Sister Agnes of Jesus with Sister Cecile of Infant Jesus, a white-veiled sister. As soon as they arrived Monsignor Marie Ephrem nominated Mother Agnes Prioress of the little community. The Reverend Father Lazare was their Superior. With such a Superior, little Mother Agnes, who was perfectly submissive to him, succeeded marvellously in her government. They began to teach in school, there was peace and union among them and I was quite consoled to hear even from Monsignor himself that he was very happy with all my children.

Unfortunately that did not last long. Monsignor wished to amalgamate the Sisters of St. Joseph who were already in

the mission with the Religious of the Third Order Regular. He made them change their habit and then without a novitiate, without forming them to the life and the spirit, to which my poor children had been used to, he gave them authority over them, and even made these intruders supervise Mother Agnes and her religious.

The poor Third Order was sapped to its foundations. Could it be otherwise? Fortunately Father Lazare was there. He had been nominated Superior by Monsignor and he made Mother Agnes write a letter to him which he dictated himself, in which the little Mother represented to Monsignor that in those conditions the Third Order Regular could not exist and gave her resignation. Monsignor accepted it and immediately nominated Sister Marie des Anges to replace her. Soon after, he sent Mother Agnes back to France and relieved the Reverend Father Lazare of his office of Vicar General and sent him to Mahe. All this was only the result of what happened with regard to Sister of Jesus Crucified. She had finished her solemn profession. She had received again the grace of stigmata. One of the two Carmelites of Bayonne, who had made the voyage to India with little Mother Agnes and whose name was Sister of the Infant Jesus, was her mistress of novices at the time of the profession of Sister of Jesus Crucified, and great graces had been promised to her if she remained faithful; but alas these poor religious were jealous of the confidence that this child of grace gave to Father Lazare who was her confessor and to whom Our Lord wanted her to be submissive in all that concerned her interior life. They revolted against her and against Father Lazare and after having influenced Monsignor Marie Ephrem and having persuaded him that Sister of Jesus Crucified was guided by the spirit of Satan they treated her in the most undeserving manner, and the most cruel. At last, because this

holy child could suffer no more the continued infractions of the enclosure, that took place everyday, on the part of ..., she rushed out one day through the door of the enclosure which was always open, to take refuge with the Tertiaries. Her religious Superiors sent her back ignominiously to Pau in company of Sister Marie Alphonse and a good little Tertiary called Sister Cecile.

There are unfortunately certain men, even priests, even higher than the priests who have the itch to enter continually into the enclosure. One would say that the parlours were not sufficient for their interminable conversations with the religious. They have always very special pretexts to cross the enclosure of those who are cloistered and to roam freely in even the most private apartments of those who are not. They are then well assured of their virtue – these men – are they? They do not remember that the devil goes about like a roaring lion seeking to devour them – Oh I would like to cry from the house tops: “Beware you who believe you are standing – you are about to fall.” And it is always those who want perfect freedom in their own relationships that suspect others. Sister of Jesus Crucified escaped outside the enclosure to go to the Tertiaries who lived in the same compound, because she had seen..., who was himself seated holding a Sister leaning on his chest. She did not have a cell to herself and even the screen which they had placed in front of her bed was taken off. She was obliged to see these disorders and to escape them she had crossed the enclosure which really did not exist, for, the door remained always open under the pretext of labourers. Everybody cried out for excommunication against the poor child, and Father Gratian uttered against her one of the most vulgar insults that a man can address to a woman. I would be ashamed to repeat it, my pen and this writing would be defiled by it; but I affirm, that

Sister of Jesus Crucified, and she herself said it very solemnly and she is incapable of lying, this infamy related to Reverend Father Lazare and herself. May God pardon Father Gratian for having dared to calumniate his brother in religion who, however, never complained about him.

Father Lazare knows all these things better than I and he knows that I only say a very small part of the truth. When Monsignor Marie Ephrem sent Sister of Jesus Crucified back to France, she told him that soon he would die miserably, which is what really happened. Before six months had passed, on Maundy Thursday, Monsignor died on Holy Thursday in Mangalore almost suddenly and alone. He had already sent away Reverend Father Lazare disgraced and dishonoured. Here are the words that Sister of Jesus Crucified said to Monsignor before leaving: "Monsignor, you are planning to send back Father Lazare. Well, within six months you will die in anguish and you will remain in purgatory until the first Mass that will be said in the Carmel of Bethlehem". This happened in the month of September and during the following Maundy Thursday Mass, at which all the priests were present, Monsignor breathed his last sigh in a room of the presbytery adjacent to the Cathedral of Mangalore. One of the Tertiaries, Sister Marie des Anges, arrived at the moment and saw him turning his eyes, but before a priest could be called all was over!

Before leaving for India, while still at the Carmel at Pau, the Sisters heard Monsignor cry out: "O Lord, what have I done that you give me such a child!" He was speaking of Sister of Jesus Crucified, but later he relied on the stories that Mother of the Saviour and the Mistress of Novices, Mother of Infant Jesus, Sister Agnes and others told him about this holy child and let himself be deceived. Women have been from the time of our Mother Eve and are still, always at the bottom

of all deceptions and as our Holy Father Pius IX used to say in speaking of Father Hyacinth "When a man goes astray look for the cause and you will find at the bottom a woman!"

Sister of Jesus Crucified then left Mangalore with Sister Marie Alphonse and Sister Cecile. This last one was a "hidden gem" according to what Monsignor himself wrote to me. And she saved the life of Sister of Jesus Crucified by the care she gave her during the voyage. She was already quite ill before leaving, but during the voyage her illness became so much worse that she could swallow nothing but a little chilled broth and Sister Cecile looked after her with an unlimited devotedness. I saw a letter from the ship's doctor where he speaks of the gravity of her illness and the bad treatment she had had to endure in Mangalore. They arrived at last in France, but the poor Sister of Jesus Crucified did not know if they would want her at the Carmel of Pau, and that caused her much anguish. However, they awaited her with impatience. She arrived on 5 November 1872. I had come from Bayonne to take Sister Cecile and I shall never forget the expression of pain depicted on her face, and the heavy tears that fell from her eyes, whilst she pressed me against her heart. She had suffered so much, poor child, but the good Mother Marie and all the sisters tried to make up by their affection for all the undeserved treatment she had borne in Mangalore.

It is about this time or a little before that I made the acquaintance of a Spanish lady called Madame Gil Moreno de Mora – She had lost her husband, one of the first bankers of Paris, and soon after also her eldest son, Louis. Her mother and her brother Jean Baptista de Mora were taken away from her by death, and she remained alone with her youngest son, Pedro, a child of eleven years. She had come to spend some

time at Bayonne because of her son whose health was not too good, and having come to know, that there was a very poor little community by the side of the Carmel she came and left 25 francs as her first gift. I was at this time away at Pau, but on my return she came again to see me with her son, Pedro, and I shall never forget the impression made on me by this lady in great mourning. She was perfectly distinguished, and could not speak without melting into tears so much was she overcome with grief at all the losses she had suffered recently. From the first interview a friendship started between our two hearts which God alone brings to birth and which never ceases. She told me her sorrows and I wept with her. She was a timorous soul full of piety. Charity was her predominant virtue. She gave and always gave, that was her happiness, and in giving, it was always she who was obliged and not those who received her bounty. Little Pedro came to see me with his mamma and he passed his little hand across the grille to find mine – He was brought up in charming innocence, his mother was everything to him; he had never left her and he loved her above everything. This dear lady never came to see me without leaving some alms, which was at least 25 francs. She perceived that we had very little room to take some fresh air. Our garden was only 10 meters wide. Adjacent to our little convent, there was a big and beautiful field which belonged to the Carmel and which was rented out to a farmer. I would have liked very much to acquire it and enclose it so that my poor children might walk outside, but I had nothing. One day, my good Madame Gil arrived and gave me some jewelry boxes containing a magnificent crucifix and diamond rings. She said to me that since for sometime she received nothing from her property in Spain, because of the war there, she was going to sell her diamonds and give me the means to buy the field and build the wall of the enclosure!

She did so in fact and soon after the field was bought and the workers built the wall. At one end Madame Gil got built a hermitage in honour of the Sacred Heart, a dainty little Gothic chapel with stained glass windows and a beautiful statue of the Sacred Heart in a niche above the altar. The garden was planted with a number of fruit trees and vines, vegetables in abundance and last of all this dear lady got a well dug for irrigation for we had hardly any water.

As she had become our outstanding benefactress Madame Gil had acquired the right of entering our enclosure and she came often to spend hours with me, while Pedro amused himself with a little negress whom Reverend Father Blaise gave me on my request. This saintly priest bought poor negro slave girls whom some monstrous Muslims had kidnapped from their parents and ill-treated horribly. He then distributed them to some communities, who found great joy in baptizing them and raising them up as Christians. The one whom Father Blaise had given me was sickly, like most of them, because of the bad treatment she had borne and was called Maria Soccorso, Mary of Good Succour. Madame Gil and Pedro were very much interested in this child and in the work of Father Blaise. Pedro, hearing of the purchase of these poor little negresses who very often died soon after, wished also to buy one. And one day he asked his mother how much money was needed for it, and added, "It does not matter if she does not live long, provided she receives baptism and goes to heaven where she will pray for me". His mother told him that these poor slaves would cost at least 80 to 100 francs. Pedro possessed a little sum of money which his mother kept for him and he asked how much he had. His mother replied that his purse contained 80 francs. He hesitated a moment. "But Mama I would have loved to buy a knife but I want to make a sacrifice; send the 80 francs to Father Blaise". His

mother enchanted by the good dispositions of her dear son hastened to send the whole little amount to Father Blaise. A little girl was bought and baptised with the name of Petronilla. A few days later she flew to heaven where certainly she does not forget him who has been instrumental in getting it for her and whose name she bears.

Madame Gil wanted also to do up our sacristy, and gave us several chasubles embroidered by her hands and a beautiful white cope, with a silver clasp, also embroidered by her. She gave us beautiful bouquets for the altar and finally after a voyage to England which I was obliged to make to see my very aged mother who died soon after, I found that Madam Gil during my absence had bought a beautiful cow and had installed it in a little stable at the corner of our new property. She wanted to give me this pleasant surprise on my return.

The affairs of the Third Order Regular in India were going on very badly. Two of my children, Mother Agnes and Sister Cecile, had returned to Bayonne; one, Sister Mary Joseph, died at Cannanore. The poor Sister Elias, also at Cannanore, was under obedience to a Sister of St. Joseph who was dressed up in their holy habit without a novitiate, and suffered unspeakably. Mother Marie des Anges remained in Mangalore, the only European. Monsignor Marie Ephrem was dead, and I was firmly resolved not to send any more subjects to that mission where my poor children suffered so cruelly.

One night after Matins I went to sleep in my cell when suddenly I believed I saw a shadow. It was Monsignor Marie Ephrem. He had a sad appearance and suffered horribly. He asked for my pardon for the manner in which he had treated me and said he had done the same to Sister of Jesus Crucified, and also that he would be in purgatory until

the work which he had destroyed was repaired. Until then I was very indignant with him because of all he had made Sister of Jesus Crucified and my poor children suffer, but from this moment seeing him so humiliated as to come – him a Prince of the Church – to ask pardon so humbly from my poor miserable self, I could only find pity and affection in my heart for the soul of this Bishop in anguish who was detained in purgatory. The next morning the Abbé Manaudas who was then our confessor, came to see me and brought me a letter which they had written to him from Pau saying that Monsignor Marie Ephrem had appeared to Sister of Jesus Crucified, had asked for pardon for the manner in which he had treated her and several other things which are written elsewhere. I told him what happened to me on the eve. He was very much struck by it and I not less so.

Meanwhile, Sister of Jesus Crucified had made someone write to me "that all would be swept off". Soon after, I made my annual retreat before Pentecost, and at my first meditation I saw like a dream passing before me. I was at the choir but I was not sleeping. It seemed to me that I was in a place where I had to pass on a little road cutting across in the middle of all kinds of dangers – beasts, serpents, precipices were on both sides of this road – I arrived at last at the end of this dangerous passage and I found myself before a kind of a hole or underground passage where I entered, but there was no outlet on the other side – it was an impasse. This part of my journey was much shorter than the first one, and at last I found myself at the foot of a black, rocky mountain, which I had to climb and descend on the other side. With great difficulty I crawled up the very difficult little path up to the summit and at the foot of the mountain on the other side, I saw a black and deep river. The descent was soon done but at the bank of the river there was no boat nor other means of transport and

nevertheless I had to pass to the other side of the river. I could see the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary like a bright resplendent star. That was heaven. I advanced to put my foot in the water and in an instant without any effort I found myself on the other side in the heavenly country. I came back to myself in the joy of having arrived at the end of my exile. At the moment I understood nothing of this dream or vision but later I cannot recall how this explanation was given to me.

This journey was my life since (I suppose) my entrance into the bosom of the Church; for before starting the journey I found myself mounted on an unshakable rock in the middle of billows. This was explained to me as the Will of God – the rock of Peter, I think. The first part on the narrow road in the middle of so many dangers was my life as a Sister of St. Joseph and God knows the immense dangers I went through. The impasse at the foot of the mountain represents my five years at the Little Carmel of Bayonne where in reality there was neither outlet nor going forward. The mountain at last was the mountain of Carmel which I had to climb over rocks and thorns and unheard of sorrows, but, arrived at the summit, oh what a view spread before me! The Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, my pole star! It is true that I had to cross the black river which represented death but I did not feel its bitterness. I had only to put my foot forward and the stream was crossed without my being aware of it. I do not know what it will be, but for many years now I consecrated myself solemnly to the Heart of Jesus through that of Mary and I carry on me always this consecration stitched to my little scapular. Every Sunday I make the exercises for a good death to which I added, from the time of my conversion, the prayers of the recommendation of the soul to obtain a good and holy death as St. Gertrude used to do. I ask for this grace

everyday at the sixth station of the Way of the Cross and also for that of final perseverance and to be Veronica of Jesus to console His Heart.

Meanwhile, I felt that we did not have the same grace any more in our little community as in the first years. There wasn't that union, that gaiety in our poverty, that cordial affection and that charity which reigned formerly and I must say, to my great regret, I treated my poor children very harshly which estranged them from me, at least some of them. I have not still spoken about a young girl from Oloron who had joined us and taken the holy habit, after many struggles on her part against grace which was urging her on. She was called Miss Clementine Cazenane and in religion Sister Marie of Jesus. She had an aunt at the Carmel of Pau, Sister Marie Teresa of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus. This young girl had received great graces. She had a vocation for the Missions and had need of devoting herself but the devil raged a fierce war to prevent her from following her vocation. She overcame the first difficulties and I received her at the Little Carmel where she took the holy habit. During her year of novitiate I have seen her doing heroic acts to overcome the temptations of all kinds which tormented her. One day, she went to the basin at the fountain where we washed our faces. There she saw some thick spittle of a sister who had a cold. Sister Marie of Jesus took it and put it in her mouth, but remembering that she had no permission she did not dare to swallow it. Another time, she had asked me for permission to mark the holy name of Jesus on her breast, and for this purpose she asked her mother to get done by a smith an iron mould like those used in churches to mark the chairs by the application of fire. This iron mould had the monogram *IHS* and as I did not want to resist what she assured me God wanted from her I permitted her to use it. She went,

therefore, at the great silence to bring the fire, made the iron red-hot and applied it to her heart, but as it seemed to her that the letters were not clearly outlined she put back the iron into the fire and applied it a second time. Then I went to see her. She told me that her flesh had sizzled under the pressure of the red hot iron and in truth the Holy Name of Jesus was indelibly marked on her chest. I was obliged to look after this burn for several days and the mark remained quite visible in relief. However, this dear child whom I loved uniquely did not persevere. She had for years a terrible interior illness on account of which she returned home. She underwent numberless surgical operations. Hoping she would be cured by the intercession of Sister of Jesus Crucified, she carried on her always one of the bits of linen marked with the letters *O J Z*. Often when at Bethlehem I used to say to Sister of Jesus Crucified, "Pray then that this poor child may be cured," she used to reply, "If she is cured it will not be good for her." And now on my return to France I wrote to Mlle. Clementine Cazenave at Oloron believing that she was still with her grandmother, Madame Bombalère, and at last after having vainly waited for a reply, I learnt that she was married, that she had received my letters, but that her husband, an employee of the Telegraphs at Tarbes, had forbidden her from replying to them. From what I heard this poor child had been cured, it seemed by a miracle, but instead of being faithful to her God and her vow, she got married and soon after, she fell again into her first state not being able even to stand. Alas! how unhappy she must be, for God is a jealous God.

At last I must come to the dissolution of the poor little Apostolic Carmel which took place in October 1873. The situation worsened day by day. We did not have any resources except what Madame Gil gave us. The community was reduced to eight, two of whom were Tourrieres.

Mother Agnes was ill and I was afraid she would lose her head, and on the advice of the doctor I sent her to Nimes. I accompanied her up to Lourdes and then I went for a little consolation and advice to the Carmel of Pau.

Mother Marie and her community received me with their usual affection and it was decided that when I could dispose of my poor children, whether by placing them in communities, or sending them to their homes, I could return definitely to my dear Carmel, not to leave it again.

These last days at Bayonne were really an agony for me and for the poor children who were left to me. I disposed of them as best I could. One went to the Ursulines at Pau, three returned to their families, of whom one, the poor little Sister Aimee of Jesus died later, mentally ill: One of the Tourrieres remained at the Carmel of Bayonne and Sister Cecile came with me to the Carmel of Pau, but she could not keep to the rule, was ill, and later she also returned to her family. At Bayonne everybody turned against me. The Carmelites who had been always so charitable towards our little community turned against us, as well as Abbé Inchauspé, who did not want to have anything to do with us any more. In the last days we had Abbé Manaudas for confessor and he advised me to finish up as best I could. Monsignor La Croix was of the same opinion. Our only friend who remained faithful in all these vexations was Madame Gil. Oh no! Never will I be able to express all that I owe this saintly, charitable lady.

She had already given me quite considerable sums of money and when I had to leave for the Carmel of Pau, with everything that I could carry from our poor little convent, it was she who took charge of all the expenditure of the shifting. She sent me some packers and all that was necessary, to spare



me the fatigue and the sorrow, for I was broken in body and soul. This dear lady came herself everyday to supervise the workers during the last days, she paid the railway freight, and at last when almost everything was sent away and when all that remained was to say the last Mass and consume the sacred species, she came with Pedro, and his tutor who celebrated this last Mass, served by Pedro in the novitiate where latterly we had shifted the chapel. After having given us all Holy Communion he consumed the remaining sacred Hosts and from that time the little convent remained empty. Jesus was not there any more and I could not remain there any longer.

That same evening as night fell this dear lady came with her carriage to take me with the three sisters who were left to me, one of whom was to leave the next morning for Bordeaux to spend the night with her, so that we may not be seen when we left the abandoned convent, for I did not wish nor could I say good-bye to anyone not even to Monsignor nor to Abbé Manaudas who were at the Major Seminary where a priests' retreat was being preached.

I could never express the tenderness, the delicate charity of Madame Gil in these heart-breaking moments. Some days before, I was obliged to take away the holy habit from the poor children who were still left to me and to send them to their families. Monsignor had relieved them of their vows; I could see this community which had cost me so much, being destroyed. Those who were leaving were desolate. My heart suffered so much that it seemed to become insensate. One had to have a very special grace not to succumb under it, and God gave that grace to me. I still had my little negress whom Sister Cecile carried for she could no longer stand because of the damage to the dorsal spine that this dear child

had suffered due to the ill treatment of those who had stolen her from her parents in Africa.

All of us went to spend the night with Madame Gil in Bayonne and the next morning she took us to the railway station to take the train to Pau where at last I was going to re-enter for good, my dear Carmel. It was the 10th October 1873. I had been in Bayonne a little over five years where all "was now swept off" according to the expression of Sister of Jesus Crucified.



## CHAPTER III

MY SECOND NOVITIATE AT  
THE CARMEL OF PAU

I had crossed my 50th year when I re-entered to begin my second novitiate, but it was under very different conditions from the first time. The first time my health improved in the measure I observed all the austerities of Carmel and my soul flew to the perfection prescribed by our Holy Rule without my feeling the least weight. God had given me these signs of my vocation once, and He did not renew them. Our dear Mother Marie of the Immaculate Conception received me with open arms, and the whole community did not know how to show enough affection and sympathy to console me in my sufferings and the heart-break which I had borne in the last days at Bayonne. The dear Sister of Jesus Crucified did not tire of giving me every sign of affection, and God, through her, when she was in ecstasy, made known His holy will with regard to me.

The day after my arrival, this holy child sent for me. She was in rapture and seated on her bed. She said to me, "The Lord wishes that you be called Sister Marie Therese of Jesus and no more Veronica of the Passion" (I already had the first two names but Veronica was the one by which I was known). "Be always very little, very little for there is always place for the very little ones". From that day they called me Sister Marie Therese.

My health was quite ruined. I was very feeble and because of the humidity of our house in Bayonne I had contracted rheumatism in all my bones. Above all, the right side and specially the knee, were so painful, that I could not even bend the knee in any way without feeling intolerable

shooting pains. During the holy office I had to sit on a stool with my leg stretched out, and at the Chapter I had to make my culpa standing!

A few days after my arrival, they had the ceremony for taking the habit in order to give me again the white veil. As for the holy habit, I had never given it up even for a moment. I had received graces and joy at its reception on 2nd July 1867 and this time it was only a ceremony. One does not receive the same graces twice. It is understood that all was done in secret.

On another occasion, Our Lord made known His will to me through Sister of Jesus Crucified. From my childhood, as it is the custom in England, I always had tea and I loved it much; especially when I was suffering and disgusted with all nourishment, as often happened to me. I had a good cup of tea in the English way and that revived me. Since I returned from Bayonne, Mother Marie made me have tea everyday for the afternoon collation and also exempted me from abstinence, for, according to the promise made to me by Mother Elias of holy memory, I was received as a benefactress because now I was incapable of keeping to the rule. I saw, however, after some days that Sister of Jesus Crucified avoided me, did not wish to speak to me as formerly, and I did not know to what to attribute it. At last I stopped her one day and I took her aside to ask her what the matter was. She said to me, "Our Lord said to me that you should not have tea any more and I avoided you because I did not want to tell it to you." "Is it only for this my poor little one? But why didn't you tell it to me immediately! I would have given my eyes if Jesus had asked me for them."

"But you are ill, and I feared that it would give you pain to deprive you of tea."

"Jesus will give me the grace to take anything else and I promise you that I will never have it again."

This dear child was so happy that she got up and dragged me with her to Mother Marie to relate to her the affair and peace was made. Since then I did not have tea any more except two or three times when I was suffering much and in great need and very much later than this.

I have remarked many times that Sister of Jesus Crucified had knowledge of what I did and said, and even of what I thought, through lights which could only be supernatural. One day, on the feast of the Good Shepherd, I was in the hermitage of our Lady of Mount Carmel with Sister of the Infant Jesus who was our Mistress of Novices and I spoke to her of my sister, an Ursuline Religious, in Greece, who was very poor and to whom I had formerly sent some little help which I could dispose of. I said to my Mistress of Novices, that if no one could make use of certain fine material which I had brought from Bayonne and which was destined for India, I would be very happy if it were sent to my sister who would be very grateful to have it for her orphans etc. During recreation, Sister of Jesus Crucified was in ecstasy and told all kinds of delightful things to us that one would say she was an angel. Recreation over, she withdrew and made a sign to me to follow her to her cell with our Mother and there she told me that I should not think of disposing of anything of what I had brought, for all belonged to God and not to me, and that I should remain in complete indifference and poverty. I turned towards our Mother to explain to her to what I thought this little sermon she addressed to me applied, quite astonished, moreover, as to how she had knowledge of my conversation with our Mistress who surely had not told her anything. Then she said still in ecstasy, "I was also with you and I heard

everything." She finished by kissing me on my forehead and saying to me "Peace". This was her ordinary salutation when she was in ecstasy.

Since my return, there was always talk of the foundation of a Carmel of Bethlehem where she had already predicted she would die. The first time that I heard it spoken of was at Bayonne, from our Father St. Giuly, Curé of St. Martin, who had come for the ecclesiastical retreat. He came to see me at the Little Carmel and spoke to me of this foundation, proposed by Sister of Jesus Crucified, I told him that I would offer for the Carmel of Bethlehem all the inheritance I expected and all that I could bring from Bayonne when I had disposed of the Little Carmel. This had been already settled with Sister of Jesus Crucified because I was chosen to be one of those who were to leave for this foundation with her. There were, however, numberless difficulties and this child asked God for a sign of His will. One day, she took a simple leaf of a pink geranium and went and poked it in an earthen pot, where there was another plant in the little hot-house, asking that it sprout as a sign that God desired the foundation. Some days later, it seems to me that it was the first Friday of the month and the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, an interior voice told her to go and see her leaf. She took with her Mother Marie and went to the hot-house where they found the leaf which had begun to give out a little shoot. Then she sent for me and I saw a little shoot separated from the leaf which came out of the earth by the side of it. I went to look for another little pot and I transplanted very carefully the mother-leaf with the shoot which began to grow. Some plant-lice attacked the little plant and Mother Marie with the consent of Sister of Jesus Crucified thought she could exterminate them by spraying oil which made the poor little "Jeremie" (Geranium) wither. Then Sister of Jesus Crucified consulted

me to know what had to be done to bring back to health her precious plant. As I was accustomed to look after flowers I told her that she was going to kill it with her oil and that it should be washed gently with a tobacco infusion to take away the lice. She then entrusted to me the care of the little "Jeremie" which I took to our cell in order that no one might touch it, for, besides the lice, a novice (who has left) had turned over the pot and let the plant lie trailing on the ground. She had done it deliberately. Delivered from lice and sheltered from jealousies, the little Jeremie grew and became a beautiful geranium. One day as it was against the window of our little cell, the wind pushed the shutter and let it fall in the courtyard. They came to inform me and I found it without the least damage: not a leaf was crumpled, the pot intact without the least damage. I put it back in the pot and took it away. Meanwhile, the plant grew quite tall and beautiful, all covered with flowers, so that it was necessary to make a box to contain it, and then it remained in the courtyard at the foot of the Cross. The box was like those made for orange trees, a heavy square one supported on little legs. I could hardly move it. Now on the first Friday of the month we had the Blessed Sacrament exposed at the oratory where Sister of Jesus Crucified was in ecstasy. Suddenly she got up and like an arrow, she went down to the courtyard, and seizing the box of 'Jeremie' by the two handles she lifted it without any difficulty, all alone without the help of anyone. I ran to help as well as several other Sisters, and we saw her holding the heavy box, full of mud which contained the magnificent geranium, up to the height of her chest, and with a light foot effortlessly climb the stairs and come to place it on the platform of the altar at the oratory in front of the Blessed Sacrament! One would have said that she carried a feather. It was the "children who helped her" she said (the angels).

This intervention of the angels was given to her often, sometimes in the kitchen, or even when she cleaned and put order in the house.

She loved Madame Gil very much and her son Pedro, whom she always called her brother. This little boy was brought up in the house by a tutor who was a priest, for his mother did not want to have him out of her sight. She would have loved him to be a priest, but it was not his vocation, and once when we were speaking about it in the parlour of the Carmel of Pau, Sister of Jesus Crucified said, 'No, he will not be a priest, he must get married and be the father of a family.' Then addressing Pedro, "The good God destines for you a charming young girl; she is more charming than you."

Pedro who was then perhaps thirteen years old, laughed and turning towards his mother asked "Where is she, this young girl?"

In returning to the Carmel of Pau, I had brought with me from Bayonne a sum of about 25,000 francs, the greater part of it was from the gifts which Madame Gil gave me and were destined for the foundation of Bethlehem. Madame Gil had lost a brother called Mr. Jean Baptiste de Mora who had left his sister heiress of all his fortune. This young man died when he was about 30 years old. His sister had been like a mother to him, for he was the youngest of the family. One day this young man appeared to Sister of Jesus Crucified and told her to ask his sister Madame Gil for half of what he had left to her, so that he could be delivered from Purgatory at the first Mass which would be said in the new foundation of Bethlehem, to which he desired that this money should be given. Sister of Jesus Crucified replied that she was not willing to carry out this commission because it was better that Madame Gil acted in a spirit of faith in the charities she gave

and not be guided by extraordinary ways. She came to tell me what had happened to her and I replied to her that I would undertake to speak to Madame Gil who was expected at the Carmel, some days later, to see me. She came in fact and I related to her about the visit of her brother to Sister of Jesus Crucified and the desire he had expressed, without mentioning "half" of her fortune. I said "a part" only, and I asked Madame Gil if she wished to help the foundation of the Carmel of Bethlehem and lend her name for the proceedings that had to be gone through at Rome to obtain the authorisation. She accepted very willingly, and immediately gave 12,000 francs with which Mother Marie paid the necessary travelling expenses of l'Abbé<sup>1</sup> Bordachar to Rome who left immediately to see to the affairs of the foundation and also to give some amount to Propaganda that would help to get that Sacred Congregation interested in our favour. Madam Gil was the first benefactress of the Carmel of Bethlehem for Mlle. Dartigaux had not yet given anything for this work and it was only after Madame Gil had made her donation that she accepted the title of foundress. She did not even know that Abbé Bordachar had left to deal with the business in Rome, for at the beginning Mother Marie had great difficulty in obtaining the necessary funds. It was only when Father Estrate took charge of managing her affairs that Mlle. Dartigaux did not raise any more difficulties.

Meanwhile, my second year of novitiate was coming to an end; I was not able to keep to the rule one single day but I was admitted to profession by omitting the words "which is without mitigation" in the formula of the vows. I had asked our Mother St. Teresa for a sign if she wanted me as her daughter, to be able to kneel down when I made my

<sup>1</sup> The title of Abbe is given to a secular Priest.

profession, which she gave me visibly. I made then my solemn profession on 21 November 1874 in Chapter in the hands of Reverend Mother Marie of the Immaculate Conception. After the ceremony I went up to the choir and on my knees near the little Communion grille, it seemed to me that I could see my dear and holy Mother Elias accompanied by Sister of the Holy Heart of Mary, Sister Euphrasia and Sister Stephanie. Mother Elias embraced me saying, "Happy suffering which produces so much joy." During the preparatory retreat for my profession I had had all kinds of interior sufferings, but that evening I was filled with graces and joy. I could remain on my knees without trouble for a long time before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. My request was granted.

My mother who was very old, more than eighty years, was then in England and some days after my profession my sister Catherine wrote to me that she was very ill. Catherine's husband was ill at the same time and as they did not live in the same house, my mother often found herself alone with a Protestant Sister of Mercy who looked after her. On 12 December, a little before 5 o'clock in the evening I went to the cell of the Mistress of Novices and spoke to her about my mother's illness, when Sister of Jesus Crucified happened to arrive. She said to me "Your Mother is dead, but her faith has saved her." The bell rang for prayer and all of us went to the Choir.

During the prayer I recommended my poor mother to God and I felt an interior assurance that she was in purgatory. The last time that I had seen her I told her that I wished she could reach purgatory. She, very indignant, exclaimed against what she called "my cruelty!" in wishing to see her suffer in the fire, and now it seemed to me that she was

grateful to the mercy of God for having given her this means of expiating that long life in the errors of Protestantism.

Two days later I received a letter from Catherine telling me that my mother had died on 12 December, a little before 5 o'clock in the evening.

I was in great sorrow because my mother died outside the Church. My sister Mary Ann and myself had prayed so much and made others pray for her. Masses, novenas without number had been offered for the conversion of this soul. In Rome I had asked for public prayers at the 'Gesu' which had been made aloud by the immense crowd that filled that church during the lenten sermons: "For the conversion from Protestantism of a mother whose daughter has been asking for it for the last twenty years." With what ardour I had solicited this grace! I pleaded with my heavenly Mother that she give it to my earthly mother.

I told her like Father Hermann that it seemed to me that my happiness would not be complete in heaven if my mother did not share it. I recommended her to the prayers of all the holy souls whom I knew. I wrote everywhere asking for prayers for her and now she had died a Protestant! I did not despair of her salvation, but I asked Our Lord to give me some assurance for my consolation and I also said many prayers for this soul, which, however, I did not tell anyone about. I was in very great sorrow, always asking Our Lord to make known to me if she were really saved. Some days after her death, it was 21 December, I had retired to my cell after Matins and began to undress when the Mother Sub-Prioress knocked at my door to tell me, that our Mother had sent word that Sister of Jesus Crucified asked for me. I went immediately to her cell where I found our Mother and some other Sisters. They had heard that dear child who sang of love and had come to enjoy the

ravishing spectacle of seeing her in ecstasy. She was there seated on the mattress, her back against the wall, beautiful with an angelic beauty, her face radiant, her eyes shining like two stars. It was more than an ecstasy, it was the Angel. When she saw me coming in, she made a sign to all to go out, and I knelt by her side. She said to me, "Your mother had just come here. She had been very close to the door of hell, because she always wanted to do her own will but she was saved by the prayers of her children," and then as if in parenthesis, "The little nothing has prayed for her. She has asked me to tell you not to do your own will, to be very grateful for all that God has done for you. You are not grateful enough for being here. She asks your pardon for not having left anything to you (in her will). If she had known, she would have left everything to you and would have come on her knees to kiss the dust on the threshold of the door." I asked her if my sister was where God wanted her to be. "Yes, both of you are where God wants you, but you are more favoured than your sister, but God is with her. Your mother prays that the other sister (Catherine) follow your example. She has made your father suffer very much." I asked if my father was saved but she only replied by raising her eyes, and began to sing "Heaven" in an enchanting manner. During this whole scene my tears did not stop flowing like two fountains and I looked at this ecstatic angelic figure without being surfeited, contemplating this celestial beauty. I was like one drunk. At last our Mother opened the door gently and the child made her a sign to enter. She came and knelt down by my side and I repeated to her what I had just heard. She thanked God with me for the assurance that I had received about my mother's salvation. She said, "I know nothing about my mother who died two years ago" and the angel replied, "Your mother flew to heaven this morning. She was always very charitable and

this has merited her that grace." Then she said to me again, "Don't say private prayers for your mother. They are of no use to her; it is the prayers of the community that she awaits for her release and she hopes to be delivered." Then she told me to go and lie down and I retired full of joy and gratitude.

My sister Catherine later gave me details about the last moments of my mother. For several days she was waiting to die and asked Catherine often when she came to see her. "When should I die then? Isn't it time to depart?" And Catherine quieted her and made her lie down again. The day that she died, Catherine had been near her, and she asked her the same question while repeating "Your Kingdom come", but she didn't look worse than usual, and as her husband was also very ill, Catherine left her mother to be by his side. Hardly had she gone down the stairs when they came to call her back in great haste. My poor mother had just expired. It was towards five o'clock in the evening of 12 December 1874.

When they opened her will they found that she had not left anything to my sister Mary Ann and me except that which she could not prevent us from having, that is to say what we inherited from my father. But the wealth that belonged to her, which was considerable, my mother had left to her niece Miss Maria Haultain, after the death of my sister Catherine, who could use it during her life-time.

I had, therefore, nearly 40,000 francs which I got sent from England and which I put in the hands of Mother Marie. What I desired was to devote my little possession to build the church of the Carmel of Bethlehem, to make some reparation for all the churches and convents that the Protestants had stolen in my country and had desecrated in turning them away from the Catholic cult to which they had been consecrated.

Sister of Jesus Crucified agreed with me, about the use of this money but I wanted it to remain secret. I spoke of it only to her and to Mother Marie.

Everything was getting ready for the foundation of the Carmel of Bethlehem. Rome had given its authorisation. Pius IX had approved it. Nine professed religious were chosen and one novice, Sister Elias from Montpellier, who arrived at the last moment and received the holy habit in time to leave with us. Some time before, Sister of Jesus Crucified, was undecided on the subject of who was God's chosen one to be the prioress of the new community. She hesitated between Mother Anne and the Sister of Infant Jesus. She asked me what I thought of it. I replied that it would be same to me to obey one or the other, that I loved both of them but that Sister of the Infant Jesus was still too young to lead the band. At last Our Lord declared that Mother Anne should be the Prioress and Sister Teresa of Jesus Sub-Prioress, Sister Emmanuel the depository and Sister of Infant Jesus Mistress of Novices.

The l'Abbé Bordachar, Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux the foundress, were to accompany the ten Carmelites up to Bethlehem in order to help them settle down. L'Abbé Bordachar was Basque, and an honorary Canon of the Cathedral of Bayonne. He was Superior and confessor of the cloistered Dominicans of Mauléon; he was a man of middle age, with great experience and prudence. He had, together with a deep religious spirit, a remarkable goodness of heart. He was gifted with an extraordinary talent for relating interesting and instructive stories which made his conversation extremely attractive and amusing. Father Estrate was a young priest of the Sacred Heart of Betharram. Confessor to Madame Dartigaux at her death, she had entrusted her daughter, Bertha to this Father, who

was distinguished by his piety and his great talent for preaching. He became her Director in everything, as much for spiritual as for temporal affairs. He was born on the 3rd June 1840, so that when we left for Bethlehem he was thirty-five years old.

Mlle. Dartigaux was born on the 20th November 1835 and she was 40 years old at the time of the foundation of Bethlehem, but she looked much younger and was excessively short-sighted. She had been brought up by her mother with great care but also with extreme severity. Her father was separated from her mother because of public scandal and she was the only child and heiress of her mother who had left to her all her great fortune which she spent in good works. She had an unlimited confidence in Father Estrate who introduced her to Sister of Jesus Crucified to whom she vowed an affection and veneration which lasted until her death. By nature Mlle. Dartigaux had an excessively haughty character, proud and obstinate of will, but Sister of Jesus Crucified had so much control over her that she got her to make great acts of great renunciation. I remember one of which I had heard at Bethlehem. When Father Estrate returned from the Holy Land with Mlle. Dartigaux after the foundation, they met each other very often at the sacristy of the Carmel of Pau and remained for long periods of time to talk about their affairs etc. Sister of Jesus Crucified having knowledge of it in Bethlehem and fearing that those frequent conversations might cause others to speak of them, wrote to Mlle. Dartigaux, (whom she called her "Soeurette") that she should speak to Father Estrate in private only once a week and for one hour only. With great difficulty she submitted to this prudent advice of the dear child. Would to God that she had never neglected it.



## CHAPTER IV THE FOUNDATION OF THE CARMEL OF BETHLEHEM

On 20 August 1875 the little band of Carmelites, who were to start the foundation at Bethlehem, left the Carmel of Pau at 4 o'clock in the morning to hear Mass and to receive Communion at Lourdes. The Abbé Bordachar said the Mass at the crypt; Father Estrate also. Then we left to spend the night at Toulouse. At Montpellier we stopped for three days and we had the joy of seeing Father Lazare again. It was the first time after the sad events in India. He could not get over the joy of seeing his dear child, Sister of Jesus Crucified, for whom he had suffered so much. He had an expression of sadness on his face but now at least he was perfectly reinstated in the community and in the whole Order. His Superiors, who could judge the tree by its fruits, had seen that his ignominious return from India was a crying injustice. Soon after, this good Father, was elected Prior at Montpellier.

At Marseilles, we spent some days with Madame Salome and her daughter Madame Menard, two ladies of remarkable virtue and piety. Madame Menard did not have children. She lost them one after the other, when they were very small. Sister of Jesus Crucified predicted that the one that was to arrive next, should be called Peter, and that he would live. And it came to be true.

At last the day for the embarkment on the ship that would take us to Jaffa arrived and we left Marseilles, after recommending ourselves to Notre Dame de la Garde.

Here I am obliged to write certain things which are meant for Father Lazare, so that he understands what happened later, during my stay at Bethlehem.



Monsignor La Croix had entrusted the Carmelites to Canon Bordachar and to Father Estrate and both of them were appointed our confessors during the voyage.

Abbé Bordachar managed everything, arranged everything, was interested in the spiritual as well as temporal welfare of each and all. He was used to religious, and we felt that he was a father, and what a good father. He also had experience of the world, and the prudence necessary in observing decorum without any familiarity during a voyage, which the people of the world are so ready to interpret badly, when it is a question of priests and nuns.

Father Estrate did not resemble him at all. I think he had never travelled nor seen the world, for he did not busy himself with anything nor anyone, except Mlle. Dartigaux, by whose side he remained always. In the carriage, at table, on the road, on the ship's deck, they were one by the side of the other. At table when the waiter offered a dish, it was Father Estrate who served Mademoiselle. On deck they installed themselves in two easy chairs, one beside the other, the whole day, while the greater part of the Sisters took their place on the floor around them. It is true Father Estrate suffered somewhat from seasickness. But he never budged nor shifted himself for anything, which seemed to me so strange, that I sometimes thought that he had the air of a Pasha. This conduct even seemed to me so impolite and above all so imprudent before the crew and the passengers, among whom were persons of doubtful character, that I was ashamed and I never sat among the Sisters who surrounded the two arm-chairs on which Father and Mademoiselle were stretched out. Abbé Bordachar, on the contrary went about always ready to render a service to anyone. He sat on the corner of a bench or on a coil of rope, and he spoke to the other passengers. In fine, he

acted like a well-behaved man of the world and a prudent priest. This does not mean that I wish to say that there was any levity in the conduct of Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux, still less an offence to God, but I believe that there was something of nature in it, and the proofs of this will be found in the course of this writing.

All these things which I could not help seeing, took away from me the confidence which I had in Father Estrate so that I did not like to make my confession during the voyage to him as the greater number of Sisters did. And I went to Father Bordachar whom I told all the thoughts or temptations that came to my mind fearing lack of charity. But I perceived that he shared my sentiments and often teased Mlle. Dartigaux and tried her in many ways. However, she never got angry and accepted his remarks, sometimes somewhat biting, with much humility and gentleness. He did not like Mlle. Dartigaux to interfere between him and Father Estrate with regard to the hour and order of their Masses, for she tried to see that it was Father Estrate who always said the first one in order to receive Communion from his hands and he called her the abbess. Even when we arrived at Jerusalem, he made her sign the telegram to Pau about our happy arrival "Berthe Abbess". Yet she did not show any bad humour but accepted this pleasantry smiling and with perfect poise.

The voyage was a very happy one. At Marseilles, we went to pay a visit to the Sisters of St. Joseph at "La Capelette" where I met again good Mother Emily, General of the Congregation. She said to Sister of Jesus Crucified: "Ah my little Mary, you left while I was absent in Paris. If I had been here I would not have let you go". These good Sisters showed us great affection and charity as they have always done on every occasion. When passing Alexandria, Sister of Jesus Crucified and a part of the community went on land and

she took them to the place where the religious (The Holy Virgin) had hidden her after her martyrdom.

We arrived at Jaffa on Sunday, 5 September 1875 in the evening. The next morning Reverend Father Guido, Director of the Casa Nova came to look for us to help us to disembark, and to take us to the Hospice of the Reverend Franciscan Fathers where we were received with much honour. We went first to the Church where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, the Te Deum was sung followed by Benediction.

Our emotion was deep. We were in the Holy Land and our hearts were full of gratitude and joy which made tears flow from all eyes. The same evening towards three o'clock we started our journey to go for the night to Ramleh. The next day, 7 September we started at dawn in order not to be on the road during the great heat; that was the only day during our journey when we did not have Mass and Holy Communion, for on the ship we had two Masses everyday which the Fathers said in one of our cabins.

What a frightful route from Ramleh to Jerusalem! The carriages or rather charabancs without springs in which we travelled shook us so violently that it seemed to me that my entrails were about to fall out. We climbed hills and descended into valleys, over rocks and rolling stones of which the driver made nothing. When we came to the summit of one of those steep hills he began to race with his horses at the risk of turning turtle at every moment. We came down to the other side at a gallop, and in order not to be thrown out of the carriage, we had to cling to one another and the iron rail of the seats!

But at each moment we were approaching Jerusalem – Jerusalem! Our hearts beat and our eyes got wet with tears

only at the thought that very soon we would see the cupola of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre – the first and the holiest in the world! Like the Crusaders, we asked if it were not going to appear at every crest that we climbed, and at last Reverend Father Guido who accompanied us on horseback stopped and pointing with his hand to a cupola and some towers etched against the blue sky before us said, "There is Jerusalem". Everybody hastily got down and prostrated in the dust to kiss the thrice holy ground, as the Crusaders had done on the same spot, and then we rose to sing "Laetatus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi," which Father Guido intoned in his beautiful voice. I shall never forget this moment when I saw Jerusalem for the first time. Oh how well I understood the indescribable emotion of the Crusaders, their enthusiasm, their ardent exclamations of "God wishes it!"

Father Guido made us get into the carriage again and soon after we stopped before one of the gates of the town called "Gate of Jaffa". There all of us got down to form a procession in order to make our solemn entry into Jerusalem. In front marched proudly the "Cavas" of the Franciscan Fathers with a silver-headed baton to denote his office with which he struck the pavement on the way at each step, as if to show the importance of the personages who followed him!

We followed in order, two by two, up to Casa Nova, the hospice, where the Franciscan Fathers receive the pilgrims and where the excellent Father Guido fixed us up, each one in a little room, as in a convent. We went to pay our respects to the Most Reverend Father Custodian of the Holy Land. The next day was the feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Virgin and we went to hear Mass and receive Communion at the Church of St. Anne. To go there we had to pass through the Way of the Cross. I was with Father Bordachar and some other Sisters. A Brother, who accompanied us, showed us

the Stations in passing. We walked in the footsteps of Jesus carrying His Cross. Each step was sanctified by one of his sufferings.

Arriving at the Church of St. Anne, we found Father Estrate who had begun his Mass at which we received Holy Communion. It was in the crypt where little Mary was born on the same day, that Masses were being celebrated; then Abbé Bordachar said the Mass of thanksgiving – It was the anniversary of the martyrdom of Sister of Jesus Crucified and as she was suffering much, she could not wait till the end. I had to make her get out to take a little fresh air and on returning to Casa Nova, she fell into an ecstasy and remained thus almost the whole day long. After Mass we went to the Patriarchate to receive the blessing of His Excellency, the Patriarch, who received us with great kindness, and in the afternoon we were taken to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where the Franciscan Fathers have a procession every day, to all the holy places within that holy enclosure.

Oh! this church of the Holy Sepulchre! It seems to me that my soul remained there. Never shall I be able to express the emotions that overpowered me when prostrating in these places, watered by the precious Blood of Jesus. They gave each one of us a candle and a little book of hymns and prayers which are said at each Station and we followed the procession which had just started at the prison where Jesus was held before going up to Calvary. What touched me to the depth of my soul was the word "*Hic*" which was found in the prayer of each Station. At Calvary where the Cross had been planted the "*Respice quaesumus*" etc "*et Hic crucis subire tormentum*" - Here he submitted to the torment of the Cross. "*Hic*" "Here he was stripped of his garments and nailed on the wood of the cross". "*Hic*" "Here he was placed in the

arms of His Most holy Mother, when they took Him down from the Cross." He was put here in the Sepulchre, and on the door of the little monument which contains this glorious Sepulchre there is a Latin inscription "*Et sepulchrum ejus erit gloriosum*". At each Station we kissed the ground. There are emotions which words are incapable of expressing, such were those that overflowed from my heart, my soul, and made tears flow from my eyes. Oh my God! All that I can say is that my soul could not separate itself from this sepulchre, from this Calvary, and it is there still. I have always had the feeling that when I die my soul will pass through this Church of the Holy Sepulchre before it can go elsewhere! My whole life, all that I had seen of the beautiful and holy, seemed to have disappeared, even Rome was eclipsed before the ineffable mysteries which happened in this church which encloses the most holy places in the world. There everything is divine. One feels God in such a manner that the whole world is nothing. Jesus, His sufferings, His infinite love, His self abasement, His humiliations and the need to be lost in Him, to forget all for Him, makes one's soul rise above itself – it is full of Jesus and cannot offend Him – at least I felt as if I could not commit any sin while I stayed in Jerusalem, and I believe that all the sins of my life, as well as the penalty due to them, was remitted, during the four days that I spent there. Besides, the Church gives so many plenary indulgences to the pilgrims who visit the holy places that as Abbé Bordachar told me, even if one did not get the plenary one entirely, the partial ones gained would surely add up to one full plenary indulgence. Oh! Dear and holy Church of the Holy Sepulchre! I would rather forget my right hand, than forget it. Everyday I go there in spirit. On Calvary I put my head into the hole where the Cross was planted and my tears flowed down into it. It seemed to me that the Precious Blood

of Jesus dripped on me and purified me of all my stains and then there one does not worry about anything nor anyone. One can weep and pray without drawing attention to oneself, one is used to seeing the devotion of the pilgrims. Very close to the Holy Sepulchre there is a little altar before which there is a round marble block buried in the pavement with lamps that are kept burning. It is there that the Risen Jesus appeared to Magdalen and said to her "Mary". Oh! how one gladly prostrates oneself in this spot and one seems to hear still that sweet voice that pierces the depth of the soul.

After having followed the procession at all the Stations of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, we returned to the choir of the Franciscans where they sang the Litany of the Blessed Virgin and gave Benediction. The next morning we returned to hear Mass and to receive Holy Communion at the Holy Sepulchre at which our two priests said the Mass one after the other. In the afternoon we went to the Cenacle and went round a part of the town to see the valley of Josephat.

The next day, Friday, very early in the morning we went to Gethsemane. Our two priests said Mass in the Grotto of the Agony where we received Communion, and then we climbed up to the Carmel of Pater Noster to visit our Mothers and Sisters. At a little distance from the Carmel there is a mosque which is built on the spot where Our Lord went up to heaven. We kissed the traces of his sacred feet and I thought of the pious pilgrim who after having followed Our Lord in all the footsteps of his life and death could remain no more in this world, and after having visited the place where He had risen in order to return to His Father, he followed Him to heaven. We also saw the place called "Viri Galilee" where the angels spoke to the apostles. How I would have wished to do the same as that pious pilgrim, but I had still to remain to suffer more and to give thanks to God. From the height of the

Mount of Olives we could perceive the Dead Sea lying like a stagnant lake at the foot of the mountains of Arabia Petraea in the distance and on the other side the town of Jerusalem spread out before us with its many cupolas, towers and crenellated walls. The mosque of Omar, built on the site of the temple, glittered brightly in the glint of the sun. Nearby Our Lord had stopped to weep over Jerusalem, His motherland on earth. She had rejected Him and the curse had fallen on her, and these places, the holiest in all the world are in the hands of infidels who profane them! "*Quomodo, sedet sola civitas plena populo*" – "*Princeps provinciarum factus est sub tributo*" – *Viae "Sion lugent quia non sint qui veniant ad solemnitatem."* "*Peccatum, peccavit Jerusalem, propterea instabilis facta est*". Oh how these prophecies were accomplished to the letter. When I hear these lamentations during Holy Week, I weep thinking of the state of Jerusalem in the hands of the Turks, the Holy places invaded by the Schismatics who continually encroach on the rights of the Sons of St. Francis, who, for the last 600 years have maintained them alone in the face of numberless invasions from Saracens, Greeks and Armenians. These noble and generous sons of St. Francis have watered the Holy Land with their blood and given hundreds of martyrs to preserve the Holy Places for Christianity. But little by little, with the force of money behind them and through intrigues, the Greek Schismatics have seized the greater part of it. //

I would not end if I wanted to express all my emotions at Jerusalem, where unfortunately we remained hardly four days from Tuesday evening to Saturday. I would have loved so much to spend one night in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as so many pilgrims do; receive Holy Communion on Calvary, there weep and pray quietly, to go to visit the mosque of Omar where formerly the temple stood, and so

many other places sanctified by such precious memories, to make the Way of the Cross on the *Via Dolorosa*; and we did nothing of all that. We had only, so to say, touched upon the Holy Places hurriedly in passing, because Abbé Bordachar was in a hurry to get back to France and he wished to see us settle down at Bethlehem before leaving us.

It was then decided that on Saturday morning we would go to hear Mass and receive Communion in the little Church of the Flagellation and that in the afternoon we would leave for Bethlehem. All the Sisters wished to make their confession before Mass, but as for myself I had nothing to say. I was so full of Jerusalem that there was no place for anything else. Ah! I would have loved to remain there always. In passing the *Via Dolorosa* which we had to do each time we went out, specially when we had to climb it, it was very tiring, for the road was excessively bad and steep. I was so tired by the heat and my weak health that I felt I could not put one foot before the other; then I thought of Jesus carrying His cross and walking before me and I put my feet in His foot-prints and thus step by step I arrived at the end.

On Saturday afternoon, 11 September, we left Jerusalem with regret to go to Bethlehem accompanied by the good Father Guido. As I could not walk so far, I was sent by carriage accompanied by Father Bordachar, but the others wished to go on foot. It took about an hour and a half to go from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

With the good Father Bordachar I was always very much at ease and very happy, his conversation was so pleasant, so spiritual, that with him, time passed quickly, and on arriving in sight of Bethlehem, he made me intone the hymn "*J'entends la bas dans la plaine*" and both of us saluted Bethlehem by the "*Gloria in excelsis Deo*". Having gone in

a carriage we arrived first, but before going down to the Grotto of the Nativity we waited for the others to arrive, and then all together we went and prostrated ourselves in this blessed Grotto, where Jesus wished to be born, to become a little child, to teach us to be little and poor like Him.

Here as in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, all is invaded by the Greeks and the Armenians. The place where Jesus was born is marked by a silver star inlaid in the pavement with the Latin inscription, "*Hic de Maria Virgini Jesus Christus natus est*". This place belongs to the Greek-Schismatics. The Holy Crib where the Virgin Mother laid her divine Son and the altar of the adoration of the Magi belong to the Latins, but the Franciscans have continual wrangling to preserve them, and here as at the Holy Sepulchre there are Turkish soldiers who mount guard! What derision and what infamy that infidels and followers of false prophets should interfere in guarding the cradle of Christianity!!!

We remained for fifteen days in the hospice of the Franciscan Fathers at the Holy Crib. Very early, l'Abbé Bordachar said Mass at one of the altars of the subterranean sanctuary. Sister of the Infant Jesus with Sister of Jesus Crucified attended it and then left with him to look for the place where our future convent was to be built and to prepare the temporary house.

The other Sisters attended the Mass said by Father Estrate at the Grotto. We went to see the field where the angels sang the *Gloria in Excelsis*, and also the Grotto of Milk at a little distance from the town.

At last the temporary house was ready. The grilles, the turns were placed and His Excellency, the Patriarch, came from Jerusalem to see us settled and to demarcate the

enclosure of the little Monastery in which we had to live until the Carmel was built.

It was on 24 September, feast of our Lady of Mercy, that the ceremony of our installation took place. We were in our full costume with white mantles and long veils not yet lowered. All of us were assembled at the crib. Abbé Bordachar gave a touching address in which he entrusted us to the paternal solicitude of Monsignor, the Patriarch who replied in the same tone and then the procession started. The Cavas always take the lead in those lands; then followed the Consul of France and then Monsignor, the Patriarch, with their suites, the Franciscan Fathers and then we, two by two headed, by our Cross carried by Sister Josephine, and then many other persons.

The Reverend Father Guido had taken great trouble to get swept the road on which we were to pass to get to our temporary house, otherwise our procession would have been obstructed by all kinds of garbage that is thrown on these narrow and winding roads. A room big enough was transformed into a chapel, a big picture of the Sacred Heart was placed above the altar, and on either side, those of our Lady and St. Joseph. The first one was presented by Mlle. Lasserre, governess of the Royal Princesses of Naples, and the other by Madame Gil. They were painted in Rome.

Everything was arranged in as orderly a manner as possible with regard to the enclosure in that temporary house, which lent itself very well to this purpose. Our choir had a grilled gate through which we heard Mass and received Communion. We arranged our cells with curtains made with sheets hung over ropes.

His Excellency, the Patriarch, celebrated the first Mass in our little chapel and reserved the Blessed Sacrament there.

Father Estrate celebrated the Mass of thanksgiving which was offered for the soul of Madame Dartigaux and at which she would be delivered from Purgatory. Then we offered lunch to all, at long tables, in the big hall adjacent to the chapel which would serve us later as interior sacristy, community room, ante-choir and dormitory. The turn was also placed at one end of that hall which was quite large and quite high.

After lunch His Excellency demarcated the enclosure and everybody withdrew and we remained in our solitude. Five days later (the 29th September) l'Abbé Bordachar, Father Estrate and Mademoiselle Dartigaux left for France and went to embark at Jaffa.



## CHAPTER V

### MY FIRST YEARS AT BETHLEHEM

We have arrived at the last period of the marvellous life of our beloved Sister of Jesus Crucified in this land of exile. She had said that she would die at Bethlehem, before the end of three years after her arrival in the Holy Land, and we will see how this prediction was fulfilled to the letter.

She had seen in ecstasy the place where the future Carmel would be built. It was situated on the slope of a hill on the western side of Bethlehem, opposite the Crib. It is separated from it by a deep ravine. The site is magnificent and very healthy for, in spite of the great heat in summer, there was always breeze on our hill which made it bearable.

The plot was bought in an almost miraculous manner, for the numerous proprietors of the place we wanted to buy, could never come to an agreement about giving it to us. The uncultivated plot consisted only of rocks and precipices with some fig trees here and there. Sister of Jesus Crucified began by marking the place where the cistern should be. It would be at the centre of the inner courtyard, and around this spot the convent had to be built in the shape of a tower.

However, there wasn't any plan of the monastery, nor an architect to direct the work. Father Matthieu, the Curé of Bethlehem, a Polish Franciscan, had been charged by his Superiors to supervise the workers, for he knew Arabic perfectly, and he put his hand to the work with all possible devotion. He understood very little French so that they always sent for me to speak to him in Italian. Meanwhile, this good Father Curé asked for a plan of the monastery drawn to metric scale in order to provide the measurements and begin to dig the foundation. He said that without a plan one never

puts up a building and that we must get one done by an architect. He proposed M. Guillemaut who had made the plan of the Carmel of the Pater, and other church buildings. But Mother Anne and others thought that an architect who is a stranger, would not let himself be guided by the inspirations of Sister of Jesus Crucified to whom Our Lord had shown the shape and the lay-out of this monastery while she was in ecstasy. They refused to send for Mr. Guillemaut. The Curé was quite annoyed and discouraged. He did not know what orders to give the workers. Meanwhile, Sister of Jesus Crucified spoke of making a little cardboard model of the future monastery as she had seen it, and I said that I would cut out the cardboard etc. and that she would only have to explain to me well, how Our Lord wanted it. So we set to work. She said that the monastery should be circular. Only the work-rooms should be on the ground floor and the dormitory should be on the first floor. It should have 22 cells and a room for the foundress which she would occupy when she came.

She explained to me that all the cells should have windows opening on the outside and that the door of each cell should open into the dormitory which should have open arches as well as the cloister beneath.

I used my skill in the best possible way and I built a little round monastery in cardboard according to her directions, dividing off each room, according to the needs of the regular workrooms of a Carmel. This gave an idea of what Sister of Jesus Crucified had seen in her ecstasy but neither the size nor the breadth nor the height nor the thickness of the walls was mentioned. It was not at all an architectural plan and Father Curé said it would not suffice to give directions to the workers. Mother Anne and Sister of Jesus Crucified asked me if I could not draw a plan. I exclaimed, "But I have never done that! I am not an architect and I do not know how to

go about it." Besides I had never been on the site nor seen the undulating plot where they had already collected the material. However, I replied that I would try, and at Communion I asked very earnestly for the gift of understanding and the grace to do by obedience what I could not do otherwise. Then I set to work with a big sheet of paper, my compass box etc. I had heard the number 30, told to me interiorly, and I understood that it was meant to be the size of the diameter of the tower. I was very embarrassed having no idea of architecture, but God helped me and I drew a plan with my metric scale which, the Father Curé said, was sufficient to undertake the building of the monastery. But in that circle there were neither the choir nor the parlours nor the chapel nor the infirmary. All these were planned by Our Lord who wanted them to be entirely separate so that total silence could reign in the monastery. No man could boast of having been the architect of that monastery.

Finally they dug the foundations taking for centre of the inner courtyard the place of the opening of the cistern. This cistern filled up the space of the cloister from one end to the other. The inner courtyard was paved, and right round it stood twelve pillars joined by arches which supported twelve other pillars of the dormitory above. Everything was open to the air. They told us that when the weather was bad we would suffer a lot and that we should close the space between the arches with glass. But Sister of Jesus Crucified said that Our Lord did not want that and that she had seen the monastery quite open, that Our Lord would look after the health of the Sisters, and in truth it was so.

Meanwhile, the walls began to rise and they wanted to mark the site for the chapel, the choir etc. which had to be completely separate from the tower. Sister of Jesus Crucified had marked the place of the chapel. The altar had to be just

over a grotto where the Blessed Virgin with the Infant Jesus and St. Joseph had stopped during the flight into Egypt. But there was a steep descent on the plot and we found it difficult to decide where to put the choir and the parlours. They told me to draw the plan for this part of the monastery as I had done the rest, but I had never yet gone up to the place where they had begun building and I had no idea about the space available, nor the layout of the land.

Mother Anne took me there one day. We went with Father Curé who got the length and the breadth of the plot measured. And then, on the next day, I drew the plan of the rest of the monastery, as I seemed to visualise it. Mother Anne, Sister of Jesus Crucified and all were satisfied; so it was decided to build accordingly.

During the Lent of 1876 the stigmata of Sister of Jesus Crucified reopened and bled every Friday. All the sisters were witnesses of it, and one Friday, on the feast of the Five Wounds of Our Lord, which fell that year on 24 March, the eve of the Annunciation, Monsignor, the Patriarch, came from Jerusalem to lay the foundation stone of the new monastery in great pomp. His Beatitude spoke for a long time to Sister of Jesus Crucified who was in bed that day because of the 'illness' of the stigmata, which he could contemplate at leisure. Then His Excellency went to the plot where everything was ready for the blessing of the foundation stone. Only five Sisters of the community were to be present – Mother Prioress, the Mistress of the Novices, the depository, a novice, and a white-veiled Sister. That was the will of Our Lord.

Those of us who remained at home could watch the ceremony from afar through the windows. Sister of Jesus Crucified was in ecstasy. I was near her and I saw that she



was eating something white like an almond. She let me take a little from her lips. I did not want to profit by it all alone and I went to give a little bit of this celestial food to Mother Teresa of Jesus, the Sub-Prioress and I ate the rest. We went to recite Vespers and during all this time I felt inebriated by this fruit from Paradise.

On one of the Fridays of that Lent, M. Patrimonio, the French Consul came to see us. Sister of Jesus Crucified was in bed with her usual illness of the stigmata. Her bed was placed in a room which opened on the parlour, and if we opened her door and drew the curtain that was round her bed, we could see from outside the saintly child in ecstasy. Mother Anne wanted to show her to the Consul in this state so he could contemplate her for some time.

I was also near her and she said many extraordinary things which must have been written elsewhere and then she came back to herself. When we saw that she was coming back to herself we quickly drew the curtain and shut the door. Even ordinarily, when she came out of her ecstasies, all ran away as soon as possible, leaving near her, only one from whom she did not hide herself, in order not to give her pain; for she could not bear that others see her stigmata bleeding, nor that they witness her ecstasies. She called them "sleep" and she always said that she had slept. Usually she did not know at all nor did she remember what she had said and done. It often happened to her, to receive Communion during these ecstatic states and to remain in them for the greater part of the day, to do a number of things, to walk about in the monastery or the garden, always in ecstasy, to sing of love, to say the most charming things and then towards evening sometimes she returned to the infirmary or to her cell. We made her sleep as if she had been ill, and when she came back to herself she

was quite annoyed with herself for having been so lax and so lazy as to sleep the whole day on a feast day. (For it often happened that these ecstasies seized her on feast days). She reproached our Mother and the others for letting her sleep without receiving Holy Communion on such a great day! And we, pretending to agree with her, laughed secretly knowing that she had been on her feet the whole day.

Good Friday of the same year, 1876, was the last time that the stigmata bled. She lay as one dying and towards three o'clock she stretched herself as on the cross, her feet crossed one over the other. Her face became pale as a corpse and she seemed to breathe her last sigh. Father Curé entered to comfort and help her. He remained near her, while we sang the Tenebrae office in the choir, which was by the side of the hall, where she lay in ecstasy. During the day I remained alone with her and then I saw suddenly that she had something white in her mouth which she was eating. I said to her: "My little one, if Jesus wills it, give me also a little of what you have in your mouth." She lifted her stigmatised hand and took from her mouth a little white thing like the half of an almond and gave it to me saying, "It is the fruit of sweetness." A delightful aromatic perfume exhaled from her stigmata, and I ate this fruit with devotion and happiness for surely it was nothing from this world. Dear and holy child, how unworthy I felt of sharing that heavenly food. I shall never forget it. It had a sweet taste and seemed to crunch like an almond, but not like the almonds of the world. I think I have been the only one who has received this favour in Bethlehem. At Pau, Mother Elias and one or two other Sisters, had already shared it at the visit of the Angel, I think. That must have been written in her life.

The stigmata closed definitely after that Holy Week in our temporary house which has been the witness of many marvels. A smooth and white skin always remained on her

hands and feet. For some days she put on little linen mittens to hide her hands, but later as the scar was much lighter she did not want them.

During one of the Easter days, Monday or Tuesday I think, she was seated in ecstasy, near one of the windows from where she looked at the starry heavens. Then she received a ring on the finger of the right hand. She said many ravishing things on this occasion and kissed her ring saying, "There are only hundred persons who have received a similar grace!!"

She went up many times with Mother Anne and other Sisters to the place where the new monastery was coming up fast. She discovered by a supernatural light that some of the supervisors and master workers stole material and cheated in their accounts and wanted to get rid of them, but in this country there is not much of a choice, and after much hot discussion, we had to be resigned, while at the same time watching closely the one who paid the workers, and the stones that they brought on the back of camels from the quarry. Sometimes they were stolen in the night, before the plot was enclosed. The Father Curé who had the charge of the overall supervision of the building spent the greater part of the day there. He spoke Arabic perfectly and he knew the tricks of these cunning people. Sometimes during the night, wrapping himself in one of the striped mantles which men in Bethlehem wear, in order not to be discovered, he took a revolver and went round the building to see if the negro who was the watchman did his duty and to find out if there were any robbers.

This good Father devoted himself during all the time that the construction of the monastery was going on, to bring it to completion as quickly as possible, by supervising the

workers, buying the material, fighting with the Muslims, the Greeks, Schismatics and also the Catholics, his own parishioners.

He spent his time, his sweat and I would like to add, his patience, for, many times, Sister of Jesus Crucified and he did not agree. Often she had knowledge by supernatural means of things which the Father could not perceive and then he wondered if a little ignorant religious could be better informed than he. That was natural for he did not know this child. Then they reasoned out, argued a little and then made peace for this poor Father Curé had an unlimited devotedness for this work. Sometimes he went up to the building early in the morning without having informed the Brother Cook of the monastery to keep his lunch or his supper, and when he returned, he found nothing. He even happened to go to bed on an empty stomach without supper. Then Sister of Jesus Crucified, who could see him supervising the workers through our windows, prepared herself what she knew he liked best for lunch and sent it through the tourrière, and when she saw that he had eaten well, she rejoiced. On the contrary, she was inconsolable when the poor Father suffered and went without eating, to devote himself to the building. This dear child was very grateful and had a very good heart.

Our little temporary monastery had been arranged in the best possible way in order to observe the enclosure but we had houses very near all around us and we could see and be seen from the windows, at least from several of them. Unfortunately, when there were some feasts in the neighbouring houses, as for example, weddings, the Mother Prioress did not prevent us from going to the windows to see those noisy oriental processions. On the contrary, she went herself first and called us to enjoy those scenes, little edifying for Carmelites. We also failed much in silence, specially,

the great silence, which several did not care at all to observe and this was more harmful because these conversations could be heard everywhere since our cells were separated only by curtains.

I could never understand how Mother Anne became so relaxed regarding the enclosure and silence because formerly, she had been a religious who was excessively scrupulous as regards all that concerned the rule and the old usages and customs. Several of us suffered from this state of affairs and I was one of them. The completion of the monastery was delayed or at least it was not even a state of being occupied by us so that regularity could be better observed. I must nevertheless say that charity reigned among us always. We loved each other tenderly and in spite of certain little vexations, our community was very united. As long as our dear Sister of Jesus Crucified lived, charity was always preserved. This dear child loved her Sisters very much. She loved us with true affection and did not spare those whom she found wanting, but tried to correct them.

Meanwhile, the new monastery was ready to receive us. Our Lord expressed the desire that some of the cells and a part of the dormitory should remain unfinished for some time and it was only two years later that this part of the monastery was completed. The 21 of November was fixed for the shifting, so that from the time of the laying of the foundation stone only about nine months had passed. It was really marvellous how this tower built fully in free stone was raised so quickly.

I forgot to say that in the month of May, we had an alarming warning. Suddenly, one day, we heard the bell of the tower ringing furiously. It was some members of the Abdallah family to whom our temporary house belonged, who demanded insistently that we give them the tower to

keep a young boy of the family safe from a massacre that would take place, they said. Sister of Jesus Crucified who alone could speak to them went to tell them that that could not be done etc, etc. and tried to find out what the matter was. In a few moments, we saw all the labourers who were working at the monastery leave their work and hasten towards the town. The roads were full of fugitives. Some ran towards the mountains, and the others towards the Franciscan monastery to be safe from danger. We were quite frightened not knowing what was going to happen, when Father Curé arrived to tell us that orders had been given to the Muslims to massacre the Christians; at least that was the rumour that prevailed. Everyone was taken by panic, it was a general headlong flight. He told us to keep ready; in case something dangerous should happen he would come, with about thirty armed Bethlemites to take us and lead us to the Crib, for the Franciscan Monastery is like a little fortress and can carry on a siege.

We could see, through the windows, processions of men and women loaded with their bundles on their backs holding little children by the hand or in their arms, boys and girls who ran after their parents all in a panic. Some went towards the mountains, the Catholics towards the monastery of the Franciscans, and the Greek Schismatics towards that of the Greeks, adjoining the Church of St. Helena, which they had taken from the Latins.

We were in suspense the whole day. Some were very frightened. Others prayed and trusted in God. Sister Marie of the Cross who was sacristan had kept ready all the sacred vessels in their covers on the vestry table so that in case we were obliged to take refuge with the Franciscans each one could take one and carry it with us. The Curé would take the ciborium from the tabernacle. He had promised to come and

warn us as soon as he was sure of something, for, all types of rumours kept circulating. They came even to tell us that the Turks had cut off the head of the Curé in the middle of a road! And one can imagine our joy when soon after, we heard his voice behind the turn, reassuring us.

We recited Matins at the usual time, and we were getting ready to take a little rest without undressing, when the good Curé arrived at the turn. At the sound of his voice all gathered together in an instant and he told us to be at peace because that was a false alarm. Besides, he had sent six or seven men to keep watch on our roof which was a terrace and that nothing terrible would happen. This news had come from Jerusalem where they were as afraid as at Bethlehem. We were, as it were, alone in our house for all those who lived around us had escaped. We could only see through the windows some men with guns on the terraces and on the roads. The women had all left. That night the Franciscan Fathers had given up their cells and all their rooms to entire families who came to take refuge with them. A poor woman gave birth to a child during the night in one of the cells in the middle of that uproar of a crowd, huddled in all the corners. One can imagine what it must have been when one thinks of the poor people who remembered the massacres of Lebanon which had taken place a few years before and they awaited a similar misfortune.

Everybody remained there for three days until they were perfectly reassured that they could return peacefully to their houses. The Consul of France sent his Dragoman with that of the Pasha to assure us that everything was in peace and that there was no danger. They said it was only a misunderstanding, a panic arising from false reports, but we came to know later that the government really had the intention of giving orders to massacre all the Christians. But this leaked

out before they could put it into execution and then they found it expedient to deny the whole affair. One cannot trust the Turks, so great is their hatred of the Christians.

At last the day approached for the solemn entry into our new monastery, 21 November 1876. It was decided that we should spend a few days at the Crib so that everything could be transported more easily. Monsignor the Patriarch, was invited to celebrate the first Mass, and then after a sumptuous dinner he demarcated the solemn enclosure of the Carmel in the new monastery. The Most Reverend Father Custodian and several other Franciscan Fathers were also invited, as well as M. Patrimonio, the Consul of France, and his Chancellor, with many other persons. Tables were laid in three rooms and all had dinner after Mass. All of us received Communion at Mass from the hands of Monsignor the Patriarch together with the Sisters of St. Joseph who also came in great numbers to rejoice with us. It was at this First Mass in the new monastery that the soul of Monsignor Marie Ephrem was delivered from Purgatory.

On that day, according to Our Lord's orders to Sister of Jesus Crucified, we dined on bread and water alone. Some days previously five new Sisters had arrived from Pau with the Reverend Father Chirou who was to be our Chaplain. They were Sister of St. Louis, Sister Antoinette, Sister Elizabeth, a white-veiled novice, and two postulants, Sister Marie Joseph (Mlle. Pradel) and Sister Marie of Mercy as tourriere.

After dinner, at which Monsignor the Patriarch presided at the first table laid in the Chapter room, all assembled in the courtyard for some moments and then Monsignor demarcated the enclosure of the new monastery after sending away everybody, by closing the two doors and giving the keys to the Mother Prioress.

How happy we were to find ourselves in a real monastery once again –The solitude and the silence of our dear cells seemed to me to be a real luxury, after having lived, as it were in public, for more than a year, in the temporary house. To me it seemed I was in paradise. As the choir was not completed, good Father Chirou came to say Mass in the Chapter room which served as a chapel for some time, but the Blessed Sacrament was not reserved and that is what we missed very much. Nevertheless, they worked assiduously to put the finishing touches to the chapel and the choir which, after the Church was built, were destined to be the choir and the ante-choir. We also improvised a little temporary sacristy adjoining the chapel.

During the first three years at Bethlehem, Canon Belloni, Director of the orphanage, was our ordinary confessor and a Franciscan Father called Father Ange was nominated the extraordinary confessor. But he was sent soon after to another mission where he died and then they gave us the Reverend Father Guido, the Director of Casa Nova, for extraordinary confessor. This Father had received many graces for us and was chosen by Our Lord to exercise the office of confessor for us and specially for Sister of Jesus Crucified. He was the English Confessor of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and although Italian, he spoke English well and even preached in that language.

About this time I read the life of a Jesuit Father, called Father Clement Cathary, who died in the odour of sanctity. This Father had made the rare vow of humility and had observed it until his death. This example of humility made a great impression on me. I felt urged to practise that virtue which is, however, quite contrary to my character, to my Protestant education, and, so to say, to my whole being. For a long time I had tried to combat pride in me, ever since

the beginning of my conversion, but I think I made very little progress in the virtue of humility.

At the time it seemed to me that Our Lord told me to make this vow, and on several occasions I heard the same thing. I feared that I would not be able to observe it and I spoke of it to Father Guido who permitted me after some time to make this vow, but only for some days, eight days for example, from one confession to the other. I think that has helped me. At least I had the good will of working with all my heart to acquire that virtue which is so contrary to my nature. But as one cannot acquire it except by practice, that is to say, by humiliations, Our Lord seemed to have taken charge of sending them to me until I was ground in such a way as to be a grain of dust under the feet of all. And still more, He gave me the grace of being able to thank Him for them with all my soul. This came my way a little later, as I shall relate in its place, after the death of the Sister of Jesus Crucified.

Our plot of land was only a mass of steep rocks, of ascents and rapid descents where it was very difficult to walk. One had to crawl in many places by holding on to the rocks or to the branches of the fig-trees that grew here and there. Now it happened that one day, it was the feast of St. John the Baptist, while picking up little flowers that grew between the rocks I fell flat on my back and dislocated my arm at the wrist. They sent for a priest who practised a little medicine, and he pulled my hand and bandaged it. But the bone did not get back into its place and I suffered much. For fifteen days I spent nights walking about in the dormitory without being able to have a wink of sleep. Then, they realised that the priest had not set the dislocated wrist, and after several months, an old Arab woman, who they said was well versed in such operations, was sent for. She pulled my arm roughly and in

order to succeed better she put her foot against my chest and pulling my arm with both hands tried to put the bone in place. But it was already set. She did nothing but torment me and made me suffer much. Mother Anne sent her away and I remained with my left hand crippled, that is to say, the wrist was not in place. So the fingers turned stiff and I could not use them as before. God be blessed for all. It was a little resemblance to our Mother Saint Teresa. For a long time after the accident I did not follow the exercises of the community. I did not attend Matins, nor go to the refectory, for I could not hold the Breviary nor eat without the help of someone to cut up the food and I did not keep to abstinence, that caused me great suffering, however.

One day Sister of Jesus Crucified was in ecstasy, during which she spoke of several things that Our Lord wanted to reform in the community, above all, in what concerned holy poverty. She also told certain Sisters what Our Lord inspired her regarding their amendment or sanctification. I asked her what Jesus wanted of me. She replied: "He wishes you to follow the community, that you, who are old, give good example to the young ones." From that day I had the grace of returning to the refectory where they were charitable enough to cut my bread etc. and I went about everywhere except for Matins. However, I never kept the fast, for they thought I was too feeble to fast; from the time I returned from Bayonne I was at a special table where they did not keep abstinence. The truth is that I hardly had any appetite and consequently no strength at all. Sometimes I tried to force myself but then I fell ill and was capable of nothing. I thought I would never be able to keep to the rule. This fact makes all the more remarkable, the grace I received later, of being able to observe the rule in entirety without any mitigation, for six years, in spite of my age and infirmities.

At that time we changed offices every year according to the order given by Our Lord to Sister of Jesus Crucified, and that was done on the feast of the Epiphany. At first I was wardrobe keeper and the year of the death of that holy child, I was sacristan. As long as she lived our relations with our cradle, the Carmel of Pau, were the most cordial and the most affectionate. The two communities wrote to each other, and the greatest fraternal charity reigned between the two which were of one heart and one soul. In the community of Bethlehem also I can say in all truth that as long as that dear child was among us there reigned great charity and union of hearts. There were often some little vexations, as everywhere, but charity, the queen of virtues, reigned supreme. Sometimes, when Mother Anne who was not naturally of a sweet and amiable character, though a good religious, made the Sisters suffer, Sister of Jesus Crucified, under the influence of the Spirit, stronger than herself, gave her a good talking to, reproached her severely and in such a loud tone that we could hear her voice in the whole monastery. And then the poor child reproached herself for being so carried away, for lacking in respect and charity, for being a "bad religious". She came to make her culpa at recreation, prostrating herself and in tears accusing herself with profound humility of all these things and asked for pardon for having scandalised the community.

Sometimes, after having been witness of these scenes, without however knowing what it was all about and only hearing that she blamed Mother Prioress and disturbed the silence of the monastery, I blamed her interiorly and without saying anything I had uncharitable thoughts against her. But such was her knowledge of souls that I could see that she knew what went on within me. She said nothing to me but I felt she understood all.

There was one more thing which troubled me with regard to her. From the time I knew this child I had always loved her in God and not by nature. I saw that she had received gifts and extraordinary graces and that it was all the more necessary that she remain in humility and nothingness, and I saw throughout her life that when God gave her the most marvellous graces, it was then that creatures or the demons had permission to torment and humiliate her. And, on the contrary, when creatures exalted her, God plunged her into desolation and ineffable annihilation.

During all her life I could not understand and I could not see as I see it now, why at the time of the foundation of Bethlehem, the foundress, Mlle. Dartigaux, gave full authority to Sister of Jesus Crucified, who was only a white-veiled Sister. Nothing could be done without her permission, nothing could be given without her agreement, she was absolute mistress and could do what she pleased with all that the foundress gave or sent. I assure you that I found that her humility was severely put to the test.

She was not yet confirmed in grace and she had to be all the more little and humble when God had given her such signal graces. God knows that I loved this dear child. When she was persecuted and ill-treated, I supported her and protected her with all my strength, but when I saw her exalted I feared for her and I never lent a hand in exalting her, at least in her presence. On the contrary, I thwarted her. However, she has always loved me and I am convinced that she saw in what manner I stood by her and had her perfection very much at heart.

She had never, until the end, ceased calling me Mother, when we spoke in confidence. And to me she was always the cherished child of my heart. Now that I look back on the last

years of her life, I see that God Himself had taken charge of keeping her in humility and annihilation. She was exalted by creatures even above her status but in return she suffered desolation, interior trials, so severe and so atrocious, that often she could bear no more. The poor child was quite disfigured. She wore on her face such an expression of suffering, of anguish, that it was painful to look at her. It seemed as if Jesus Himself rejected her, for, often, she was thus after receiving Communion. I even believe that, that kept her away and that she did not dare to receive Communion so often because of the intense sufferings she was undergoing. Then she went away "to shake herself off" as she said. She did the hardest work, or she went to be with the workers, to supervise the women who carried water for the building in their "Kerbis". All these poor people loved her exceedingly. She tried to do good to them, to do them some service. She spoke kindly to them when she could not give anything else. However, she told them the truth when she perceived that they stole or deceived, which was not uncommon.

In all these trials, this dear child was the charm of our recreations. She seemed to forget herself and put herself aside in order to give joy to her Sisters. Often, specially on Sundays and feast days, she brought with her her French psalter or the Imitation, and with a pin, she picked out a verse for each Sister. She was never occupied with herself nor with her person. She was always untidy in her clothing and her head-dress was often upset. Although she liked to be clean, one could see that her heart was not in it at all and very gracefully she allowed others to put her dress right because it gave them pleasure. Some months before her death she desired, according to the order she received from Our Lord, to wear the cord of St. Francis and be a member of his

Third Order. I was sacristan then, and alone with her during the ceremony conducted by Reverend Father Guido. It took place at the little grille for Communion in our choir. She received the cord and I helped her to tie it round her waist. It was that of the Very Reverend Father Gaudenzio, Custodian then, of the Holy Land, who had wished to send his own cord. The candle he sent through Father Guido, was the one that burnt during her last agony while Don Belloni read the recommendation of the soul.

Almost a year after our installation in the new monastery, my sister Catherine who was then a widow came on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She was a bigoted Ritualist. But she wanted at all costs to receive Communion in the Catholic Church and also in the Greek Schismatic Church. She succeeded several times in her first plan, for on Maundy Thursday she received Communion in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre from the hand of Monsignor the Patriarch, who himself told me about it, but she could not receive Communion in the Greek Church because it was necessary to make so severe a fast for three days in advance that she could not keep to it. I think the priests deceived her and ridiculed her. She came to see me at Bethlehem. Sister of Jesus Crucified spoke to her for a very long time. But Protestant pride was too strong. I was desolate seeing her so far from the truth, and one day when Sister of Jesus Crucified was in ecstasy I asked her what should be done to open the eyes of my poor sister. She replied: "When humility is lacking God cannot force the soul but you make the acts of humility and she will have the light". Some time later Catherine married again and went further still in her ritualistic fanaticism. Poor soul.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE DEATH OF SISTER MARY OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

This saintly child had predicted several years before, that she would die at Bethlehem, less than three years after her arrival there. Our Lord had also told her that her last illness would be short but very painful.

The last winter before her death, we had had torrential rains. The monastery, which was not complete, had been flooded. Water flowed everywhere. On 7 February, the day of the death of Pope Pius IX, a great section of the wall of the enclosure had sagged and collapsed. It was snowing and the weather was frightful. Sister of Jesus Crucified came to know about the death of the Holy Father before the news arrived and then she saw in ecstasy the conclave which had assembled for the election of the new Sovereign Pontiff. We were all gathered together around her, while she saw the counting at the scrutiny. She said: "Accept, darling, accept. He prays that the most humble may be elected and he does not know that he himself is the most humble." The next morning she said to me: "What does that mean '*Stella persa*' or '*Stella versa*'?" They told me that the new Pope was '*Stella persa*'. I replied to her: "'Stella' means 'star' and 'Persa' means in Italian 'lost' or 'wandering', but I am going to look in the dictionary." I went to bring my dictionary and we tried together to understand what was meant by '*Stella persa*'. Later on we learnt that it was 'The inverted star' which Leo XIII has in his coat of arms, the '*Lumen in Coeli*'.

Some days later we got the great news of the election of the new Pope. We knew it already.

She loved Monsignor Bracco, our saintly Patriarch, very much. He came sometimes to pay us a visit and then she



spoke to him at length. When it had been a question of the foundation of the Carmel of Bethlehem, Monsignor, the Patriarch had been against it. But after having known the providential and marvellous circumstances regarding it, and after having seen Sister of Jesus Crucified at close quarters, His Beatitude recognised the signs of the Spirit of God. He loved to speak to this holy child who treated him like her beloved father and dared to tease him by saying jokingly that he had not wanted Carmelites in Bethlehem. And he in his humble simplicity replied, "You have not yet forgiven me for being against your foundation!" One day she said to him, "Monsignor, you are too severe outwardly. You should become more amiable towards your priests and those who come to meet you." And he with his incomparable humility replied, "What do you want me to do? To dance?" Meanwhile, we had remarked that our good Patriarch who at the beginning was very austere and a little difficult to approach, had become much more paternal and amiable in his relations with us. He was a saintly prelate, humility and mortification were his characteristics. Prudent and charitable as he was, one could count fully on his knowledge which was never lacking, all that he did was done with incomparable dignity and piety. It was a joy to see him officiate. His priests said that he was very slow, like Rome, but once a decision was taken, his firmness was unshakable. As for me, I found him a real father and I shall never be able to express my gratitude for what I owe him, and the kindness that he showed me.

Sister of Jesus Crucified left after her interviews with "her father", as she called him, quite transfigured with joy and happiness.

Meanwhile, the moment was approaching when she would have to leave this exile. She knew it and she felt it. This dear child thought of each one and seemed to settle her

affairs before leaving. From Mangalore the Mothers and almost all the Sisters who had misjudged her and had her sent away had realised their fault and wrote the most touching letters of repentance asking her pardon a thousand times. That mission had passed into the hands of the Jesuits as she had predicted and there remained not more than two apostolic vicariates on the coast of Malabar which belonged to the Reverend Carmelite Fathers.

Sister of Jesus Crucified loved Madame Gil and her son Pedro very much. She called him her brother and wrote little letters to him to show her affection and give him good advice. On these occasions I was always her secretary. Once, on the occasion of the death of one of Pedro's uncles, who was also his tutor and who was not as pious as she would have liked him to be, she prayed much for this soul and sent a young Arab girl called Mariam, who served us as Tourriere, to the Crib to say the rosary for the intention of the deceased, without however telling her anything on the subject. Mariam returned to Sister of Jesus Crucified very upset and troubled. She told her that she fell asleep when saying the rosary at the Crib, and that she had seen a gentleman who told her to go and meet the religious and tell them to warn his nephew on his account, "not to follow his example and that they would understand what he meant". Mariam was afraid and asked Sister of Jesus Crucified for whom she asked her to say the rosary, and who was the nephew? The Sister did not tell her anything except that she was a sleepy head and that she must not be troubled about her dreams. The young girl meanwhile was so deeply affected by it, that she was ill for some days. Sister of Jesus Crucified made me write a letter to Pedro to give him a warning that would be useful to him later. I sent the letter to the mother that she may do what she thought best for her son.

One of the most important things that Sister of Jesus Crucified did in this the last year of her life was to go to Nazareth and visit the plot which had been bought, in order to found another Carmel. The details of the foundation of that monastery which seemed to be in the designs of God are written elsewhere in the life of our saintly Sister, but it has not yet taken place. And God knows if it has not been prevented by all that happened at the Carmel of Bethlehem after the death of that child.

She left with Mother Anne and Sister Marie of the Infant Jesus immediately after Easter of the year 1878 to go to Nazareth via Jaffa where they had to embark for Caiffa. Mother Emily, Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph at Bethlehem, accompanied them.

On the route to Jerusalem, at Jaffa, a spot far away from the highway and altogether unknown to any one, Sister of Jesus Crucified saw in ecstasy the true Emmaus where, on the day of the Resurrection, Our Lord had consecrated for the second time His Body and Blood for the two disciples. This place is called Amoas now, and is found at 160 stadia from Jerusalem. The place which the Franciscans have considered as the Emmaus of the Gospel and which is called Bongosch is on quite another side and it is only sixty stadia from Jerusalem. Mlle. de Nicolai, a holy and pious pilgrim, got a church built there. But learned persons who have studied this affair in detail, are of the opinion that Amoas is the true site of the breaking of bread. Besides, several ancient manuscripts, specially one in the Vatican Library say that, the distance from Jerusalem was 160 stadia. This whole interesting question is dealt with at length elsewhere. I will only say that Sister of Jesus Crucified went to Amaos accompanied by Mother Anne, Sister of the Infant Jesus and Mother Emily. She was in an ecstatic state and went so fast

that the Mothers found it difficult to follow her through those rocks and furrowed fields where there was no proper path. Arriving in the place which she had seen in spirit, she indicated the spot where, on excavating they would find the stone table on which the Risen Lord had consecrated His glorious and impassible Body and Blood for the first time, and had communicated with the two disciples, who were until then wavering in their faith. Unfortunately, none of the three religious who were present as witnesses thought of marking the place, so that later, no one knew where to make the excavations to find the precious stone, and they had to dig at random.

The four travellers continued their journey up to Jaffa where they embarked for Caiffa and went from there to Mount Carmel where the Reverend Father Francis, Spanish Carmelite, was asked by the Reverend Father Vicar to receive them and accompany them everywhere. His Reverence did so with the greatest charity and devotedness. They were enchanted by their stay in the first monastery and cradle of our Holy Order. Sister of Jesus Crucified had always had a great devotion to our Father St. Elias and it is at Mount Carmel that this great and holy prophet still delights to do marvels for the protection of his sons and where he has protected the monastery often from the attacks of the Bedouins.

There is at Carmel a breed of fine dogs with long fur and beautiful fluffy tails which are the guardians of the religious and the terror of the inhabitants. On the arrival of the Carmelites these dogs seemed to recognise friends. They frolicked around them specially round Sister of Jesus Crucified. They sniffed her and licked her and at last when they were leaving, the dogs followed the travellers for a certain part of the road and it was with difficulty that they were led back to the monastery.

At last they arrived at Nazareth where they met Monsignor the Patriarch, who was on his pastoral visit, and visited the plot which Mlle. Dartigaux had bought for the foundation of a Carmel in this town, sanctified by the Incarnation of a God, who became man for us.

During the voyage, Sister of Jesus Crucified wore a black veil, like the Choir Sisters, but on her return to the Carmel of Bethlehem, hardly had she arrived when she threw off her black veil and asked the ward-robe keeper for her white veil saying that the black one did not belong to her. She loved her status of lay sister and the black veil was a burden to her.

After her return, she began again to be actively busy with the labourers who were trying to finish the cells and that part of the dormitory which had not yet been built and she saw before her death the entire tower completed. Good Father Chirou supervised the work with inexhaustible devotion. He lived at the orphanage with Don Belloni and came to say Mass for us, had breakfast and spent a great part of his time with the workers. He knew that Sister of Jesus Crucified had said that she would not live three years in Bethlehem, and as the three years were coming to an end, Father Chirou said teasing her, "Well you see you are not yet dead. You are keeping well!" And she replied, "Let it be, Father, you will see. The three years are not yet over."

On 26 July, the feast of St. Anne, we offered to Mother Anne, according to our custom, all our little gifts, and the recreation room was decorated and lit up. But I noticed that Sister of Jesus Crucified was absent and I went to her cell to see if she was there. The door was closed from within, but when she heard my voice, she opened it for me and I found her in great suffering. She did not want to see any one and

told me that she was tempted against... I think something went wrong, and not to spoil the joy of the community she hid herself in her cell. I remember some one having said something against me. I do not remember what exactly, and the dear child defended and excused me. I tried to console her and calm her and I remained with her until Mother Anne came to say the rosary with her, and then she slept.

The last time we had license to speak was 29 July, feast of Saint Martha. This dear and holy child came to look for me in my cell and said she wanted to speak to me first. She made me sit down on the mattress and she sat on the floor at my feet, and we talked for quite some time. It was for the last time. Rising to go away she said, "Mother, pray for me and ask for humility for me." "Yes my little one, you also ask the same for me."

She was good and charitable not only to persons but also to animals. At her request our Fathers at Mt. Carmel had sent us one of their little dogs of good breed. He was black and had silky long fur and a beautiful tail. Sister of Jesus Crucified loved him very much and got him washed and brushed. She wanted to name him Loulou and he guarded the monastery perfectly at night. The Arabs were very afraid of him. However, one night, Loulou went out of the enclosure and ran round the walls. An Arab saw him and shot him with a gun loaded with lead bullets. The poor dog dragged himself up to the door of the enclosure and remained lying there without being able to stand on his feet. Next morning, Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified on opening the door for the workers found her dear Loulou almost dying. She got him carried to the monastery and wept to see him suffer so much, so that she could not watch the operation which the veterinary doctor did to remove the bullets. She begged Sister Mary of the Cross to

cut Loulou's "plumes" (feathers or fur) round the spot where he was wounded. She looked after him so well that to her great joy he got quite well. This dog loved her singularly and obeyed her even after her death, for she had told him to caress the Foundress when she arrived and that is just what Loulou did by licking her hands. This dog lived for many years after the death of Sister of Jesus Crucified. It was only a short time before my departure from Bethlehem that one morning Sister Josephine found him dead. It was because the Sister who looked after him rubbed petrol on him to get rid of his ticks, a kind of insect that fastens on sheep. Loulou was covered with them and I think this poor dog was poisoned by licking the petrol.

On Thursday, 22 August, octave of the Assumption, Sister of Jesus Crucified was as usual very busy with the workers. She had not received Communion for several days I think. One could see that she was suffering interior anguish which she tried to shake off. Ordinarily I received Communion very early during prayer and then the chaplain said Mass after the Little Hours. That day seeing that Sister of Jesus Crucified had not come to the choir, I went to look for her at the door of the enclosure where she was supervising some work. I said to her, "Go my little one to hear Mass, I will do without it today for I received Communion this morning and you did not come. I shall replace you meanwhile". She appeared very sad and her face had an expression of deep suffering. She replied, "No, I cannot; I must distract myself. I cannot go for Mass". I pressed her only a little but seeing that she was in a state of anguish which would only increase, if she remained quiet, I went to hear Mass for her. Towards 10 o'clock she went to bring a bucket to get drinking water for the workers and it was when doing this act of charity that she fell flat while climbing a steep path which led to the place

where they were working. Her left hand folded itself under her and broke; in fact, the fracture was compound as the bone was broken in several pieces. She had fallen on a box in which she herself had planted several cuttings of pink geraniums. The labourers who were working very close by and two or three Sisters arrived immediately and they carried her to the infirmary. It was there that I found her a moment later, sitting in an arm chair near the door, suffering immensely. They sent for an Arab who was supposed to be an adept at setting broken bones. He bandaged the arm and they said the bones had been put back in place, but as for me I can say nothing about that. I can only say that the poor child suffered atrocious tortures day and night until the end.

She had understood perfectly that it was the beginning of the end for from the time of her fall she did not want to occupy herself with anything except God and herself. Two days passed in this manner. She could not sleep for a moment at night. She said "If only I could sleep for an hour." We gave her a few drops of Laudanum to try and calm her. They scarcely had any effect. On Saturday evening she called me and told me to feel her broken arm near the wrist. "That smells so bad," she said. In fact it was the odour of the gangrene which had begun to set in at the fracture. She spent a night of terrible suffering. The next morning, very early (Sunday), the Arab who had treated her arm came to see her, but I think he saw that he could do nothing about it and they sent him away. I had received Communion very early on coming to the choir for prayer, and immediately after, I went to the infirmary. There I found Sister of Jesus Crucified on her little bed propped up against her pillows. They had opened out her poor arm (for the empiric Arab had just left) and it was all uncovered. I approached the dear child who showed me her arm which had turned fully black. In an instant

I saw what it was. The gangrene had made the most frightful progress during the night and there was no more hope. She looked at me fixedly without saying a word. I too could say nothing. My heart was wrung, and by a sign which she understood well, I pointed to heaven. That was all I could do, for I could see that in a few hours we would have her no more with us.

Only then they hurriedly sent for a surgeon from Jerusalem, the one from the hospital where the Sisters of St. Joseph work, Mr. Carpani, who arrived in great haste. At first sight he saw that all was useless. He said, "If you had called me earlier, I would have been able to amputate the arm, but at present the gangrene is too advanced. The whole arm is affected. However, I will go back to Jerusalem and get what is necessary to bandage it and also to inform Father Guido who will arrive immediately." Monsignor, the Patriarch, was also informed of the imminent danger in which our beloved Sister was.

Mr. Carpani left for Jerusalem in all haste and as soon as he came to Father Guido, "Khalas", he said in Arabic, a very expressive word which means "All is finished". And he told him in what condition he had found the dear sick child. Father Guido came immediately on horse-back and was at once taken to Sister of Jesus Crucified who waited for him in order to receive the last sacraments, for, she had told him that he should help her at her death. On entering, the good Father Guido, said to her: "Well my little one, the two of us will settle our affairs for the departure." We left them alone, and the dear child made her confession. It was soon over. There was nothing between her soul and God which was an obstacle to her union with Him whom she loved above all. Suffering was only one more link between her and her

Beloved. And she settled her last accounts very quickly. Then, as I was sacristan, I went to get ready for the administration of the Holy Viaticum which Reverend Father Guido gave her after her confession.

Mr. Carpani came back soon from Jerusalem with the remedies he had gone to fetch. He began by making red-hot the surgical instrument, and with that he made a deep groove all around her gangrened arm near the shoulder to prevent the progress of the gangrene. Her flesh sizzled under the red-hot iron, but she did not even feel it, so dead was her arm. Then the doctor covered her from top to bottom with a large poultice which he had prepared, yet without hope of saving her, for, he said, the gangrene had already advanced right into the shoulder.

Soon after, Monsignor the Patriarch, arrived from Jerusalem and entered with Don Belloni. His Beatitude spoke to the dear dying child, strengthened her, consoled her and wished to give her Extreme Unction himself which she received with the greatest devotion and gratitude from the hands of her beloved Father. Then he blessed her and returned to Jerusalem as well as Father Guido who had also assisted at the Extreme Unction.

Our holy child thought she had hurt Father Curé and she wanted very much to send for him to ask for his pardon. She did it with a touching humility, though I think it was rather the Father who had been wrong. She kissed his hand and he blessed her. I forgot to say that Father Guido made her make her profession in the Third Order of St. Francis after her confession and she received all the Indulgences of that Holy Order.

She spent the whole evening in terrible suffering. The weather was extremely hot. A strong wind blew which seemed to have passed over the burning desert of the Sahara. Such wind is rare in Bethlehem. But when it does blow it is like a fire which scorches the plants. It did not stop until after her burial and then the weather was refreshing.

In the afternoon she could not take any position and could not lie down. She walked up and down in the infirmary. One of us supported her poor broken arm. She said to me: "Sister Mary Teresa, thirst, thirst." Then I remembered that we had brought with us an apparatus to make aerated waters and I went to make some for her. She drank it with pleasure. Then at each moment she repeated in a heart rending tone "Thirst, thirst" and wanted more of it. Nothing could quench that burning thirst. Her entrails were on fire. She suffered so much from this that I thought that she would be relieved a little if we placed on her stomach some flannel cloth dipped in boiling water and squeezed dry. And in fact, after applying flannels two or three times, she did not have any more that extreme thirst and the pains, too, lessened. During those atrocious sufferings the dear child did not utter a word of complaint. She called on Jesus and cried: "As the deer longs for living waters, my soul thirsts for you, my God." She thought of the Sisters who surrounded her, of their fatigue, thanked them for the care they bestowed on her, and thinking that all would like to render her some service she asked each one for something.

Father Chirou and Don Belloni entered and remained for quite some time with her. I said that the wind blew violently - she suffered very much from it. It was like purgatory for her.

At each moment she changed her position. Towards evening she left the infirmary. I supported her affected arm. She went towards the door of the monastery which leads to the bell and sat on a trough turned upside down which happened to be there. Fresh air seemed to relieve her a little but Mother Anne arrived and said it was not good for her to remain there seated on a stone. Without a word this dear child, obedient until the end, rose immediately and went back to the infirmary. We were all there. We felt that we were going to lose a treasure and all surrounded her to gather the last perfume of sanctity.

The poor child suffered so much that she could not take any position. She did not complain. "My God, I thank you," was always her ejaculation. She called on Jesus and she longed to go away. She wanted to be placed on the floor for there at least, on the flag stones with which the Infirmary was paved, there was some coolness. Everything was open, doors and windows and the burning wind of the desert blew violently and upset everything. It was night and Don Belloni and Father Chirou went out of the enclosure to a room near the tower to rest for a while. Some of the Sisters did the same.

Suddenly, Mother Anne thought the tongue of the dear sick child was heavy, and that the last moment had arrived. She sent for the two Fathers immediately, who asked if she wanted to receive Our Lord in Viaticum again. She was very happy and we went in procession to bring the good God with lighted candles, and for the last time Jesus came to visit His faithful little servant whom He would soon take away with Him. She received Him lying on the ground. Her tongue was heavy only for some moments. She could speak until the end and her mind was alert. After making her thanksgiving she

wanted all to leave the room to take a little rest. "Only two remain with me, Sister Marie Therese and the infirmarian (I think), Mother Teresa of Jesus." But Mother Anne who knew how exhausted I was and could not any more remain on my feet, said to her, "No, Sister Marie Therese must go to rest a little." Then I approached her and said softly in her ear, "My dear child you will not leave unless your old mother who brought you to Carmel is with you". "No," she said, "I promise you, go and rest, I shall wait for you." Then I went away overwhelmed with grief and I slept a little. I woke before five o'clock, and hardly had I dressed up, when the clapper sounded hastily. I ran to the infirmary where I was one of the first ones to arrive. The end was approaching. I found our saintly child who was going towards the door, helped by Sister Elias. I joined her and the two of us made her sit down on a chair near the door. Sister Elias held the chair at the back and I supported it in front, on my knees before her. She had foretold during her retreat before her profession in Mangalore that Mlle. Angele (Sister Elias) and Mother Veronica would support the chair. That happened literally at her death. She was in agony. But she was strong until the end. They gave her a mouthful of soup with wine. Suddenly, she looked fixedly at something in front of her to the right, high up. She had an expression of astonishment and rapture. Assuredly she had a glimpse of the invisible world that lasted only for a short while. Then one of the Sisters said to her: "Would you like to come to your bed now?" "Let's go," she said and rose. We led her towards the big bed. She climbed on to it only with great difficulty. We raised her and made her lie on it. But we could see that the last moment had arrived. Don Belloni and Father Chirou entered. Don Belloni was near her head by my side. Father Chirou stood at the foot of the bed and wept big tears. He raised his hand and gave her

the last absolution. He said "My God mercy." "Yes, mercy," repeated the dear dying child. That was her last word. Suddenly she made an effort to vomit. I put my arm under her back to raise her a little. She brought up the broth tinged with wine and fell dying in my arms. Don Belloni asked for the stole to say the prayers for the agonising, and as I was the sacristan I went to look for it on the table at the side and then came back to my post at her head. In a few moments all was over. She gave up her dear soul peacefully without any contortions to the One she had loved solely, on 26 August, towards 5.30 in the morning.


Mother Anne who was near me closed one eye and I closed the other. Her face took on an expression of peace and heavenly beauty. The whole community was present at this precious death. So were Don Belloni and Father Chirou who retired soon after to say Mass in the Chapel.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE BURIAL

She had always said that her heart should go back to the Carmel of Pau and they sent for Mr. Carpani to remove it. As soon as she gave up her last breath we dressed her up. They put on her one of my habits and the scapular, because hers were too short, and later when putting her in the coffin, also a mantle which had been made for me and which I no longer wore. It was light and made of very thin material.

When she was dressed they placed her on a long narrow table in the middle of the infirmary to do the autopsy. Mr. Carpani began by making a deep incision from right to left on the heart, but as he could not get to the heart due to the thick layer of fat – for she was very strong and healthy, he had to make another perpendicular incision in the middle of the chest, from top to bottom  and even then he had great trouble to arrive at the heart. I had to hold with my two hands the cut open to the right, to help the surgeon in his operation; and Sister Marie of Mercy, the Tourriere, and another Sister (Sister Madeleine) also helped a little by holding from the other side.

When the surgeon was about to extract the heart he called each one of us near, to observe that it was in its place. Then plunging his hand into the large incision he removed that dear and marvellous heart which had loved her God and her neighbour so much. Holding it in his hand, he looked at it from close quarters and made all of us observe that there was a scar about 4 centimeters long in the middle of the heart, which, he said, had crossed the ventricles and with which naturally one could not have lived. He said that was extraordinary and that it ought to be noted down carefully.

Several priests of the Patriarchate who happened to be at Beitjallah had come to get news of our saintly Sister, having heard on the previous day from the Patriarch that she was in danger. They had been sent by him. They waited in the outer parlour. Among them was Don Felice Valerga, the Patriarch's nephew, who had preceded Monsignor Bracco and was very devoted to Sister of Jesus Crucified. They thought that it was good to have witnesses of the autopsy and of the state in which the heart was found. So they brought in Don Valerga and the other priests who accompanied him, among whom was Don Giovanni, Superior of the Seminary of Beitjallah, Don Belloni, Father Chirou and others. Don Valerga who is excessively sensitive and impressionable, said later that he did not understand how he had not felt any repugnance nor any disgust, on looking at the scene in the infirmary.

In the middle of the infirmary the body of our holy child was laid on a table. Her chest was fully open with two enormous gaping wounds bleeding profusely. Linen and bed sheets were soaked with blood. The surgeon and the religious had also their hands stained with blood. Yet Don Valerga said that neither he nor any other person was negatively affected. On the contrary, virtue went out from this body and this heart.

After the departure of those gentlemen, Mr. Carpani began to stitch up the wounds which he had made to extract the heart. He did it with curved needles and white silk thread I had in a bundle given to me by one of my cousins in London. He could not fully make the edges of the two wounds meet at the place where they came together, exactly in the middle of the stomach, at the waist.

One little opening remained there, from where the warm blood spurted out like a little spring which comes from



the earth. Mr. Carpani said it would stop soon, for blood congeals in a dead body, and having dipped his white handkerchief in this red blood to keep as a relic, he said, he went out to return to Jerusalem.

The heat was excessive; the wind still burning; more and more there exhaled from the body an odour of gangrene and corruption which was unbearable. The Sisters could not remain in the room though everything was open to the four winds. The blood continued to boil and flow out from the hole between the two cuts and only two or three Sisters remained near the body to soak the blood with sponges, and this had to be done the whole day until we placed her in the coffin. Her face and her body were swollen out of proportion.

She became perfectly monstrous, unrecognisable, her legs and her thighs were enormously swollen and they had blue, red and violet patches which looked like marble. The young Sisters were forbidden to enter the infirmary because the odour might suffocate them. Only the infirmarian who was Mother Teresa of Jesus, Mother Anne, Sister Madeleine, Sister Elias, Sister Marie the Tourriere and myself could see the state in which she was. The limbs remained flexible and when we joined her arms on her breast, they spread themselves out and formed a cross. We tried it several times. Only when we tried to put her in the coffin Mother Anne having whispered in her ears to hold the arms joined, by obedience, that they remained in place.

Several times during her life and specially during the last days she said to us, "When I die, I shall be like that," and she inflated her cheeks and made a horrible grimace. "And I shall smell so bad that you will be in a hurry to put me underground." And this happened to the letter.

A zinc coffin and another wooden one had been ordered, but when they were trying to put them on the back of one of our camels to bring them to the monastery, the camel refused to carry them and threw them on the ground and at last we had to engage some men to bring the coffin to the Carmel. That is the reason why we were able to put the body into the coffin and carry it to the choir only after it was very dark. We could not do it ourselves as the body had become so big and heavy that even four or six men found it difficult to transfer it from the table into the coffin. We had placed the formula of the vows on her chest with a cross. Her face was covered with a corporal for we did not want anyone to see it. A wreath of white roses was placed on the top. At last she was placed in the coffin. Blood kept on gushing out and immediately we sealed the coffin because we could not expose it in the choir nor any more bear the odour. We had to throw again on her body the beautiful sheets in which she was wrapped because they were stained and soaked in the warm blood that flowed continually from her stomach like a fountain. A Jew from Jerusalem sealed the coffin.

While he was about this work, I saw one of the workers who had helped to carry the body weeping and sobbing behind one of the pillars of the cloister. It was a young Greek Schismatic called Moussa, to whom Sister of Jesus Crucified had shown her usual charity. I approached this poor boy with Sister Marie Clemence, who was an Arab, to be my interpreter, and I asked him why he wept. "Ah! it is the mistress who is dead". "And you loved her very much?" "Oh yes, like my heart" and his sobs redoubled. I wept with him as you can imagine, but I said to him: "This dear mistress is happy, she is up in heaven and we also must try to join her there." Poor Moussa! He had earned a little money and had begun to buy some clothes to make a trousseau in order

to get married, and one night robbers broke open his box and took away his belongings. He came to tell this to Sister of Jesus Crucified who had great compassion for him and wanted to help him.

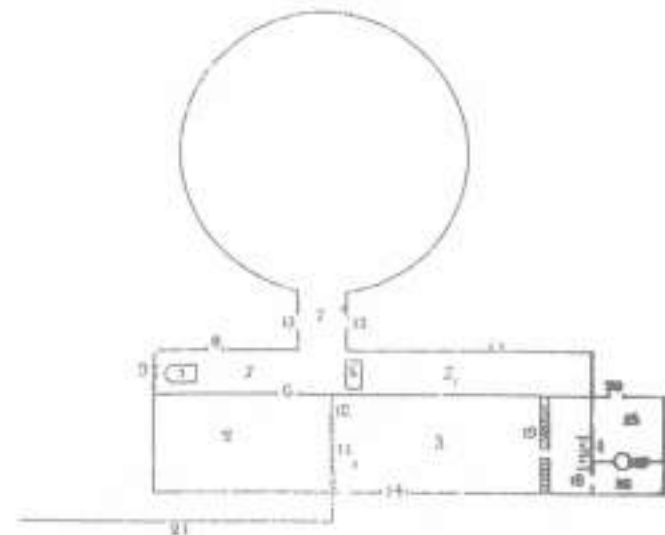
At last the coffin was sealed. The Arabs took it to the choir. We surrounded it and after placing it in the middle, I went to look for two large rose bouquets which she had asked me to mount some time before, and we placed them at her head, and also four beautiful lilies, two on either side of the coffin, which was covered with a white sheet decked with roses and lilies.

She was still there among us for the last time. We said the Matins of the Transverberation of our Mother St. Teresa, which reminded us that this child was also pierced with a wound of love. Her heart had been placed in a glass jar filled with spirits of wine, so that it could be carried later to France.

On either side of the coffin large chandeliers with candles were lit and most of the Sisters remained in prayer in the choir the whole night. The funeral was on the next day, 27 August. Many priests came from Jerusalem: those of the Patriarchate, seminarians from Beitjallah, the Franciscans from Bethlehem and also from Jerusalem, the priests from the orphanage of Don Belloni were invited. It was Reverend Father Guido who intoned "*Deus in adjutorium meum intende*" to begin the Office. We sang one Nocturn. The chapel was draped in black by Sister Marie of Mercy, the tourriere, and decked with white roses. After the Mass which was chanted by Don Felice Valerga, to his great satisfaction and consolation, all the ecclesiastics entered for the absolution. Our choir was full. Don Belloni gave the first Absolution, the second was given by Reverend Father Frederic, Franciscan Vicar of the Holy Land, and the third

by the celebrant Don Felice Valerga, who then continued the prayer for the removal of the body and its placement in the tomb. The seminarians sang at the Mass accompanied by the harmonium, and then at the Absolutions that followed.

The grave was dug at the entrance to the right of the door of the choir. It was a kind of cloister with a passage two metres wide, which led from the monastery (tower) to the choir; and there was a recess there with a window which opens into the garden where there is enough place for the dear tomb so that each time that we entered the choir we passed in front of it leaving it to the right.



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|--|---|
| 1. Tomb of the holy child  | 11. Grille of the Choir                   |
| 2. Choir   | 12. Communion Grills                      |
| 3. Chapel  | 13. Doors opening on to the garden        |
| 4. Altar of Jesus  | 14. Outer door of the Chapel              |
| 5. Tomb of Mlle Dartigaux  | 15. Interior Sacristy                     |
| 6. Door of the Choir   | 16. Exterior Sacristy                     |
| 7. Cloister or Passage   | 17. The turn of the Sacristy              |
| 8. Window  | 18. Door for the Priest                   |
| 9. Wall at the back of the Tomb on which are hung several wreaths          | 19. Communion Railing                     |
| 10. Circular-shaped Monastery (monastery in the shape of a circular tower) | 20. Door leading to the Interior Sacristy |
|  | 21. Enclosure wall                        |

After the last absolution was given, we removed the flowers and the candles which surrounded the coffin and with the help of Brother Alphonse the sacristan of the Church of the Holy Crib, I took the big sheet decorated with roses and lilies and we brought it to the courtyard by the side to place it out of the reach of pious thieves. Already a Maronite priest had taken a white rose which I took away from his hand. Later, I felt remorse to think he wanted a souvenir of his holy compatriot. Then we let down the coffin into the tomb. It was mighty, so large that we could not place it on the bier that we had – it was placed on trestles in the middle of the choir.

The pit was not well dug. No one had thought of making a deep grave as they did later for Mlle. Dartigaux. It was simply a pit without even being bricked up. I think the coffin was placed on flagstones at the bottom but I cannot affirm it. I only know that each one of us approached and sobbing threw a little mud on the coffin which contained the mortal remains of this child who had been our treasure. Don Valerga was so deeply moved, that he could hardly finish the prayers from our Manual. On the eve, at the moment of her death, he was at Beitjallah and had seen from the window as well as several other persons had seen a rainbow above our monastery at Bethlehem. The weather was fine and he was surprised at this phenomenon. It was then that he came to Carmel and heard of the death of Sister of Jesus Crucified who had just expired.

After the ceremony of the funeral he spoke to me at the turn of the sacristy and said how happy he had been to chant the Mass and at the end that our sorrow and our tears had affected him so much, that he could hardly finish the last prayers. The same evening began the pastoral retreat for the priests which is preached every year in Jerusalem. This year Father Chirou attended it.

As for me I had just enough strength to go to the end and see that dear child whom I loved specially, being buried, and then I felt that my legs could not support me any more. I was crushed, overwhelmed with grief, with fatigue, with the oppressive heat, and could not, literally, stand on my feet. I gave up the keys of the sacristy to Mother Anne and asked her to get some one to replace me, for I could not any more, and I dragged myself to my cell where I had just enough strength to throw myself on the tiled floor without being able to move.

I remained for a long time there semi-conscious. I hadn't even the strength to call out to those whom I could hear passing in the dormitory. At last, towards evening, as they did not see me, someone opened the door and found me lying on the floor hardly able to speak. I had hardly eaten anything the whole day. Mother Anne sent the infirmarian who made me sit down and gave me some chicken after which I went to sleep.

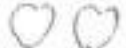
My God! What a void I felt in my heart, in the monastery. This child of grace! I had led her to Carmel. She was dead and I was still in my exile. How I longed to get away also – to follow her. I could not bear to live longer on this earth. The next morning I got up and went to the infirmary where I had seen her breathe her last and I lay down on her bed in the same place where she died. I would have liked to go also, so exhausted did I feel.

Meanwhile, Father Guido arrived to say Mass and he brought with him two Armenian monks who were photographers, to photograph the heart of our dear saint. Mother Anne gave me back the keys of the sacristy and Father Guido said Mass, after which he entered the enclosure with the two Armenian monks to take the photo, for we did not wish to give them the heart outside the enclosure. We hung

the dear heart against one of the pillars of the cloister and the Armenians took several photos. In the bigger one which came out well we could see very well the scar of the wound. Another small photo was taken but we could not distinguish it in this one.

This dear heart! It had suffered so much and loved so much, for, love cannot exist without suffering. I held it in my hands for a long time; and I kissed it and examined it at ease. So did all the others. We are all witnesses of having clearly seen the scar. They tried to see the letters *O J 2* – But in spite of the fact that an extraordinary effort of the imagination of one or two, who perceived almost imperceptible very small marks which they said were the letters, I can assure you that the truth which comes before everything urges me to say that these little fibres which seemed to be and which some Sisters felt sure were the name of Jesus, were nothing supernatural. Then others said that we should open the heart to find the letters but we put off this operation until the arrival of Reverend Father Estrate and the Foundress, Mlle. Dartigaux, to whom we had sent a telegram and we thought that they would soon arrive. And in fact shortly after the death of our saintly child – about two months later, they arrived at Bethlehem accompanied by two other Fathers of Betharram who came from America and wanted to visit the Holy Places before returning to their mission.

One day, during their short stay in Bethlehem they sent for Mr. Carpani, the surgeon, who had looked after Sister of Jesus Crucified and extracted her heart, so that they could examine it and at all costs find the letters inside. Monsignor, the Patriarch, had also wished to come from Jerusalem to be present at this opening which was made in the Chapter room in the presence of His Beatitude, Father Estrate, Mlle. Dartigaux and the religious of the community.

The heart – was preserved in spirits in a jar. Mr. Carpani held it in his hand and asked Monsignor in which direction he should cut it. His Beatitude asked him to cut it perpendicularly and in an instant the surgeon took an instrument used for amputation and cut it into two equal pieces but no letter was seen. Everybody hastened to look at the heart  which Mr. Carpani had placed in a plate, and some proposed to make another gash thinking perhaps the letters would be found elsewhere. His Excellency, whom Mr. Carpani consulted, wished that he cut another slice from one of the halves and in the same direction, for the surgeon said that he would join it again immediately. So he made another cut but they found nothing. Monsignor's face had fallen, he appeared anxious and disturbed, but he said nothing. Father Estrate was annoyed and almost angry. We could see that he was strongly tempted not to believe any more in that dear child and he expressed it aloud. Mlle. Dartigaux who could see Father Estrate's faith shaken, seemed desolate. They were in great consternation because the letters could not be found.

I approached Mlle. Dartigaux and I said to her: "Are you sorry?" "Yes," she said to me, "very much so". "Don't be sorry," I said to her. "As for myself I am not at all sorry. It's perhaps not the moment to find the letters. I cannot believe less in that dear child."

It was a very painful moment. They told me, but I do not know if it is true, that later, Mother Anne seeing Father Estrate's incredulity, strongly reproached him saying, "Kiss the ground Father and make an act of reparation for your lack of faith." But I cannot affirm if that is true. At last Mr. Carpani stitched the three pieces of the heart with the white silk so that it got back its former shape and we put it back in the jar.

While Father Estrate and the Foundress were at Bethlehem, Boulos (or Paul) the only brother of Sister of Jesus Crucified arrived from Nazareth. When she had been there in spring, she had asked for news of him, but he was not there and she had only seen her godfather at Abelyn. This was a fulfilment of one of the predictions which had been made to her by the religious who had looked after her, at her martyrdom, namely, that she would never see her brother again.

When Boulos arrived he was disconsolate when he came to know that his sister had just died. Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux adopted him as their son and we welcomed him as our brother. He was simple and pious, without malice, like a child, and we loved him very much because of his saintly sister. But unfortunately they gave him too much liberty. He began to enter our enclosure of which he had no idea and no one prevented him. So that when the door was opened for the workers he entered without fuss and roamed about all over. They said that he had ecstasies and it was he who consoled Father Estrate after his disappointment on the subject of the letters in the heart of his Sister, who they said appeared to him, and told him that later they would see them when her father opened the box.

I cannot affirm anything of what I relate here but only what I heard said by some Sisters. Father Estrate entered the monastery very often, or else Mlle. Dartigaux went out to the parlour. She always had her meals outside with the Father and Boulos and then the whole community came for recreation with them in the parlour. One Sunday, since I was still the sacristan, I went to fetch some bouquets from the parlour, where the cupboard was kept. The flowers of the sacristy were stored in it. My companion, the assistant

sacristan, who was Sister Antoinette, accompanied me and I spoke to her not knowing that there was someone in the outer parlour. She made a sign to me to keep quiet and said in a low voice that Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux were there outside. Having taken the bouquets I wanted to make sure if it were true that they were in the parlour, and I went to the other side of the choir (with Sister Antoinette if I am not mistaken) to the spot where the workers had left the wall so low that on standing on a stone we could see the door of the parlour, and if it were open we could also see whoever was inside, as well as the little flight of steps before the door. Perhaps I was wrong in looking over the wall, but our enclosure was so little observed – they entered our house so easily; the wall was so low at this spot that we didn't pay enough attention to it and often we went there to look out without thinking of raising the wall. So I went there and saw the door of the parlour open. There was a table in the middle of the little room, and Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux were writing in silence seated opposite each other. Boulos was there outside standing on the steps and towards the spot where I was, and as he could see me although only my eyes were above the wall, I only cast a glance and I went away quickly. "Next time," I thought, "I shall be more careful to say nothing when going to fetch flowers from the parlour." I relate this little incident so insignificant because until the eve of my departure to return to the Carmel of Pau, nine years later, Father Estrate reproached me before the whole community calling me "sow" and other similar epithets saying that I was going to look over the wall to see if he and Mlle. Dartigaux did wrong!!

The wrong they did was that neither one nor the other had the least regard for prudence which is so absolutely necessary, specially in Muslim countries. They didn't even dream of it. For they were always together,

except at night, when Mlle. Dartigaux entered the convent to sleep in the cell which Sister of Jesus Crucified had occupied when she had a fall.

During several consecutive Saturdays they went to the Crib accompanied by Sister Marie the Tourriere, where Father Estrate said Mass. I thought sometimes, "What will the Franciscan Fathers say when they see Father always accompanied by Mlle. Dartigaux?" And it seems that I expressed my thoughts aloud one day to some Sister (I cannot remember who) who repeated it to the Father years later and that has been also the matter which poor Father Estrate made use of in his insults.

This time they did not remain long in Bethlehem. Mlle. Dartigaux and Father Estrate were in a hurry to return to France with the Heart to take it to the Carmel of Pau. They took Boulos with them, whom Mlle. Dartigaux had had dressed in the costume of his country. But once in Europe he got a European outfit because his eastern costume might cause them some inconvenience.

The jar which contained the heart had been placed in a little white bag and Mlle. Dartigaux climbed on an ass at the door of the monastery and carried the dear heart on her knees.

The three travellers embarked for Naples and from there they went by land to Rome, where the heart was examined by several doctors and other persons, but as they never wished to tell us openly what had happened on that occasion, I cannot affirm anything. It seems that they found several circumstances relating to her death were extraordinary, but in Rome they act with great prudence and all these things were left for the Church to decide.

From Rome they came to France passing by Montpellier, where Father Lazare had the consolation of

seeing the heart and keeping it in his cell, and then through Perpignan they arrived at Pau.

No one in the Carmel saw the heart. Monsignor Ducellier to whom it was sent placed it in a hole in the wall in a vault where it was closed up, and a stone bears the inscription, "Here rests the heart of Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified who died in the Carmel of Bethlehem on 26 August 1878. Pray for her."

I came to know a long time after, that Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux and Boulos had gone to England with a commission for the Empress Eugenia which they said Boulos had received during an ecstasy but when I do not know. They remained in France for about four months. Mlle. Dartigaux sold her hotel at Pau and settled her affairs in order to establish herself for good at the Carmel of Bethlehem. During all this time, Boulos and Father Estrate were at Betharram. The Fathers of Betharram had received permission for a foundation at Bethlehem. When the moment came to leave, the Reverend Father, Etchicopar, the Superior General, appointed Father Chirou, Superior of the new foundation which the Betharram Fathers had received permission to open in Bethlehem. Father Estrate was appointed treasurer. Besides Reverend Father Abadie and Brother Hillary were also sent to complete the Community. Two Sisters of the Carmel of Pau also left with the Fathers and Mlle. Dartigaux. They were Sister Euphrasie and Sister Thérèse of Jesus, Mlle. Emilie Cabiran. In the month of May 1879, we received the travellers with the greatest joy. Unfortunately the joy was short-lived.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TRIALS

As long as Sister of Jesus Crucified lived, the Community remained united in charity. She was the lightning conductor of the monastery, but as soon as she died one would have said that the devil was let loose against the Carmel of Bethlehem.

At first Sister Elizabeth, a young professed white-veiled Sister, fell ill with a strange sickness that no one could understand. She had violent attacks of what we thought was a pernicious fever during which she had convulsions and frightful contortions, and even Father Frederick, a Franciscan, who preached a retreat to us at the beginning of 1879, gave her Extreme Unction during one of her attacks thinking she was in danger of death. What made us feel very sorry and ashamed was that, in the middle of the ceremony the Sister slapped the good Father on the face. We thought she was delirious, but as these violent fits increased we thought she was mad. We had to put on her her chemise by force and strike her for she was violent, and there was no other way of keeping her covered. She cried, she howled, she sang at the top of her voice day and night. She said the most abominable and indecent things. She went about quite naked, wanted to eat continuously. One had to be all the time with her to prevent her from shouting, for we had workers in the house. For some time I was her infirmarian but at the end of Lent, I could manage it no longer and Sister Marie Joseph was given the charge of looking after her. One day, when she was not tied down and Sister Marie Joseph was alone with her, she tried to throw her out of the open window.

Sister Marie Joseph was a Mlle. Pradel from Marseilles. Her family was distinguished and very pious, but she had no

health and Sister of Jesus Crucified who had doubts about her vocation had got her sent back to France to be cared for. I think she did not want her to return to Bethlehem, but one fine day she arrived again, and we gave her the holy habit. She imagined she was in an extraordinary state. She had offered herself as a victim for the Holy Father Pius IX and for the Church. They told me at the Carmel of Pau that together with Sister Antoinette, her friend, she had tried to produce stigmata with a match stick to imitate a Cistercian Saint, from Chartreuse. Sister of Jesus Crucified had scolded her very much for it. I do not know if this is true for I did not see it, but she persisted always and knew how to obtain the good will of Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux, when they returned to remain at Bethlehem. She also tried to win the favour of Mother Anne and Sister of Infant Jesus who let her do what she wanted. This Sister related to me that when she went to Rome, she had had an audience with Pius IX and that when she knelt at his feet accompanied by two other ladies he had looked at her, and placing his hand on her head, had said in a tone of compassion "Poverina"! The Holy Father had often a prophetic insight into souls and perhaps he foresaw that this unfortunate young girl would have to suffer in the future.

We had thought at first that Sister Elizabeth was mad and the doctor, Brother Peter, wanted to send her to a mental clinic in France. However, Mother Anne was against it, and in fact that would have been very difficult.

They gave full authority over the Sister to Sister Marie Joseph, for Sister Elizabeth wanted to imitate the extraordinary ways of Sister of Jesus Crucified. She wanted to be a choir Sister, eat well and sleep, and do nothing. Sister Marie Joseph obliged her to work and when she thought it proper, made her lie on the ground naked, face downwards, struck her violently with the *courbach*, a kind of lash or whip

which is used to whip the horses, and every evening led her to the laundry at the end of the garden and locked her in prison. They came to the conclusion that that Sister was not mad as they said, but that she was possessed, and one day in the presence of the whole community in Chapter they took off her holy habit and dressed her in rags with a night bonnet on her head, and left her in that state for several months. She never approached the sacraments, neither did she even want to. At last one day, I heard she was converted. They gave her back her religious habit and she received Communion. I do not know what happened.

As soon as Father Estrate returned he began more than ever to enter daily into the monastery and spend entire hours there. Boulos followed his example. I was then infirmarian and several Sisters were ill. Without any warning, Mlle. Dartigaux arrived with the Father, made him enter the infirmary, regardless of the state it was in, where two Sisters were in bed. They remained there for a while and then went into the small infirmary where Sister of Infant Jesus was also ill. Accompanied by Mother Anne, they remained there for quite a long time. All this annoyed me very much. I was patient at the beginning but one day when I went in to my two patients who were Sister Euphrasia and Sister Antoinette, I found Boulos who had travelled with Sister Euphrasia from France standing near her bed. I could stand it no more and holding him by the sleeve I led him out into the courtyard and calling Sister Marie Clemence to be my interpreter, I told him he should not enter where there were sick Sisters. He replied that he was our brother and that he loved us as his Sisters, and that was true, for he was very innocent, without any malice. It was not he who was at fault, but those who allowed it, without explaining to him our obligations regarding our enclosure. I made him understand that in our rule even at the

moment of death, if our father and mother were at the door of the monastery they would not be allowed to enter to see their daughter. He went away very sad and never entered the infirmary again. I related this affair to Mother Anne who did nothing to prevent the violation of our enclosure.

Father Estrate entered everyday and installed himself in an armchair in the garden with Mlle. Dartigaux, Mother Anne, and Sister of Infant Jesus, the Mistress of Novices, on one of the terraces, immediately opposite the house of the Protestant missionaries and the whole town of Bethlehem which is built on the opposite slope of the hill, facing Carmel. Only a ravine separated us and they could see us perfectly for, there are no trees nor anything else to hide us. One could not distinguish faces but when persons passed on the road on the other side of the ravine we could distinguish men and women. We could see the Franciscan Fathers, the Sisters of St. Joseph, etc, and surely with binoculars could also distinguish faces.

Father Estrate entered the enclosure between four and five o'clock in the evening and installed himself in the garden. As Mother Anne and the Mistress of Novices did not want to leave him, neither one nor the other appeared in choir for the five o'clock prayer nor for supper at six o'clock. Father Estrate went for their supper which was at seven, and then the two religious had also to take their supper, almost always after the community, so that they arrived only towards the end of recreation. What an example that was, first of all of prudence before the public and regularity for the whole community! I quite believe that their talk was about God and holy things, but the Protestants and the Bethlehemites, the Turks as well as the Greeks, who saw a priest every evening in the company of a lady and two religious were perfectly free to say and think what they liked.



Still I often wished that at least they would be contented in holding their conversations in the parlour, or even behind the monastery where they could not be seen from the town – but no – they always put themselves in view and that lasted not one or two days but entire weeks. I felt indignant, outraged. I prayed to God to stop what could be a scandal, for “men and women are like straw and fire,” and one day I could not contain myself, and before two or three Sisters I spoke some words on this subject, by repeating this sentence, which does not come from me as is well known. This word was repeated, and reported as an infamous calumny against the honour of Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux, as I shall relate a little later.

All these things gave me so much pain that I was completely disturbed, and I fell ill with jaundice. I thought I was going to die and I desired it with all my heart. It is well known that this illness is often caused by some grief or violent emotion, and already twice in my life I had liver trouble with violent pains following a sudden shock.

This time it was diagnosed as jaundice. My heart-beats were so violent that on two occasions I felt the last moment had arrived.

I was completely exhausted without any strength even to be able to speak. Brother Peter, the doctor who was told, that I felt I was going to die, said to me one day, “Courage, you are not going to die yet”. I replied to him, “Brother, I need more courage to live than to die”.

It was the time of the Jubilee and we were told that we were free to choose between the ordinary and extraordinary confessors. I asked Mother Anne for permission to make my confession to Father Guido who was our extraordinary confessor and they asked Brother Peter to inform him. So he

arrived. I was still sick in bed, and in confession I told him all my sorrow. He told me that in conscience I was obliged to tell these things regarding the enclosure to Monsignor, the Patriarch. I did not wish to do it, but the Father repeated it to me that in conscience I was obliged to do it and I promised to do so, when Monsignor came to visit us. The Father left, telling me to be prudent in my speech, and ended with the following words: “I hope this will be a lesson for all”. I had accused myself of having taken part in the infractions of the enclosure the first time that Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux had come to take the heart of Sister of Jesus Crucified and that I had encouraged Boulos in helping to dress him up and cutting his nails, and making him wash his hands before leaving for France, but that I was full of remorse for it now. He said that at that time it had been for a few days, but that it should not have been begun again on their return.

Shortly after, Monsignor, the Patriarch, came to visit us. I do not remember if it was the pastoral visit – but I do not think so, and I think that I asked to speak to him. I went and told him that I was obliged in conscience by Father Guido to tell him certain things that were done against the enclosure. I knew the Bishops were guardians of the enclosure and that they were obliged to give an account of it. I spoke to him about Boulos specially, about the way in which I was obliged to make him leave the infirmary. He was surprised to know that Boulos had entered the enclosure and said that I had done well. I also told him that I was shocked to see Father Estrate and Boulos come for benediction into our antechoir to the door of the choir, instead of remaining outside in the chapel and that the long periods that Father spent in the garden disturbed the exercises of the community. I said these things in a few words and I ran away as soon as possible. After that

I think Boulos did not enter so often, or at least they hid it from me, but I do not know if Monsignor said anything.

Father Estrate was then very good to the Sisters. He was our extraordinary confessor and he gave us direction, sometimes for a long time. He permitted me to make my general confession and encouraged me much in the interior life and prayer, showing great interest in me. He preached to us regularly, gave us a retreat every year – and as he also has a beautiful voice, Father Abadie who is a distinguished musician sang with him in the chapel at Benediction and we enjoyed the other beautiful hymns they sang.

It was then that Mlle. Dartigaux bought the plot at Emmaus where Sister of Jesus Crucified had said the excavations had to be done, and as they did not know the exact place they asked permission from the Patriarch for Mother Anne and Sister of the Infant Jesus to leave the enclosure and go with Mother Emily to Emmaus to show the place which Sister of Jesus Crucified had indicated. They went then but as none of them had marked the spot, they could not recollect exactly where it was, so that, the excavation had to be done at random. Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux and Sister Marie of Mercy, the Tourriere, as well as Boulos were there already, and the Foundress got a little house of three rooms built, where they remained for several months to supervise the excavations. As it was very hot in summer in this plain of Amoas, Mlle. Dartigaux suffered much, specially because they lived in a little house, with a tiled roof without ceiling. She indefatigable in following the excavations where an ancient basilica built by St. Helena had just been discovered and several other very interesting things. Father Estrate said Mass in the room which he and Boulos occupied, for he had a portable altar, and later the following year, they built another room which served as chapel, and where the

Father obtained permission to reserve the Blessed Sacrament for the time that he and Mlle. Dartigaux remained at Emmaus. The first year 1879, they didn't even have a house but lived in tents set up near the place where the excavations were done.

It seems to me that they went to Emmaus for three consecutive years, during the months of April and May and perhaps a part of June, that is to say after Easter, but I do not remember well. One year, when she returned to Bethlehem, Mlle. Dartigaux fell seriously ill with fever which she had caught in that unhealthy place and where she suffered all sorts of privations. Boulos also suffered from fever. In the Carmel, Mlle. Dartigaux had a room on the top, in the dormitory where we have our cells, and while she was ill, Father Estrate entered and spent several hours each day by her side, but never alone I think. The room which she occupied was so placed as to let the sun beat on her, and that made Mademoiselle suffer a lot from the heat, so they shifted her down to the Chapter room which is bigger and better ventilated and where she remained until her death.

The first year that the Father and Mademoiselle went to Emmaus they took with them M. Guillemot, the architect of the residence of the Fathers of Betharram, which rose by the side of our Carmel on the hill. It is a magnificent building - a palace. Mademoiselle did not spare anything to make it splendid and comfortable according to the plan made by M. Guillemot who had all her good will as well as that of Father Estrate. One did not know exactly who M. Guillemot was. He was a very intelligent man, very skilful, who knew to speak perfectly, even on religious subjects but who, unfortunately did not practise. He attended Mass on Sundays and feast days and that was all. It is only after my return to France that I heard at Montpellier that this M. Guillemot was an unfrocked Carmelite, Father Philibert, and that he was not

dispensed from his vows in religion! He was very interested in Emmaus and as he was a learned archaeologist, he directed the excavations. He has written an account of it which has been printed. He was formerly, before entering religion, Captain of the Engineers but I think he had never taken Sacred Orders being already old.

Before dying, Sister of Jesus Crucified had asked for a letter to be written to Father Estrate where she gave him details of what would be found when excavating the place which she had marked. This letter which I heard read to Father, was very remarkable, so remarkable that Mr. Guillemot made them read it during the excavations and said that each word came true. They found a stone which resembled a Doric column where there were two inscriptions: one in Greek, which even I could read perfectly  $\text{ΕΙΕ ΟΕΟΕ}$  which means "One God," and then another longer one in Chaldaic with Syriac letters which is much more difficult to decipher.

For some time we thought this stone was the table that they were looking for, but then they said that it was too small as it was not 60 centimetres square. M. Guillemot who did not hesitate to say what he thought, could not forgive the three Sisters, who had accompanied Sister of Jesus Crucified to Emmaus, for not having thought of marking the place where the stone table would be found.

Sister St. Louis who remembers better than I do, assured me that Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux went more than three times to Emmaus. It was in 1879 that they went for the first time, and they went again before Christmas of the same year, and then until 1883 and 1884 they continued their various sojourns there. It seems that the Reverend Father Etchecopar, the Superior General, did not approve of Father Estrate's frequent absences from his Community at

Bethlehem in the company of Mlle. Dartigaux. They took with them Boulos and the Tourriere of Carmel but they were like domestic servants, for Sister Marie did the cooking and Boulos supervised the workers. We can all understand that a religious and a priest should act with prudence, but unfortunately this poor Father completely lacked this virtue being otherwise gifted with so many qualities and special talents.

I know from a good source that he did not submit anything to the Superior, Father Chirou, but took counsel only with Mlle. Dartigaux and certain Carmelite religious who surrounded him with flatteries. Woe to a religious who allows himself to be inveigled by women.

When Father Chirou in the spring of 1881 returned to France for the Chapter that was held at Betharram he passed by Emmaus where Father Estrate was, and it seems he made certain observations to him, and even expressed the disapproval of his Superior General to those long sojourns with Mlle. Dartigaux at Emmaus, but the Father did not mind it at all.

I must now relate what happened to me in the year 1880. Mother Anne sent me back to the sacristy, since I had recovered from jaundice but still I never went for Matins. Father Estrate often gave me direction and showed me much affection and was interested in me. Though I did not like his continual comings and goings, I loved and venerated him much and gave him all my confidence. One day after Communion, it was the octave of the feast of Corpus Christi, it seemed to me that Our Lord told me to tell Father Estrate that he should not enter the monastery and that it was enough. I felt it was a very delicate commission and I was afraid to make it, but Our Lord repeated the order. At the next confession before beginning the *Confiteor*, I told

Father Estrate what I believed Our Lord wanted. I felt immediately that he was shocked for he did not reply to me, and asked me to make my confession and which I did in a few words and then I ran away.

Ordinarily he gave us instructions on Sundays and feast days. Some days passed without Father speaking to us at all. I prayed to Our Lord to inspire him, for I feared I had upset him, and one day while I was working in the sacristy, Mother Anne entered. She came from the parlour where Father Estrate was. It was rather odd that exactly at that time I was thinking of the whole affair and that lately, several Sisters had been deprived of Communion for several days. I said to myself: "*Sur le pont d'Avignon tout le monde passe*", (In English we would say, 'Every dog has its day'). Who knows if that will happen to me also? Mother Anne came to me and said: "Father Estrate has sent me to tell you that you will not receive Communion until further orders." I replied without reflecting as if to myself: "*Sur le pont d'Avignon tout le monde passe*," and after some words I added: "tell Father that I shall obey". Mother Anne went back to Father Estrate and in a few minutes I saw her back in the sacristy. She said to me: "Sister you carried out a commission to Father telling him that it came from Our Lord. He wanted to test you by depriving you of Communion and you have replied so rudely etc. I take away from you the office of sacristan and for eight days you will not receive Communion." I confess how shocked and even indignant I was, that Father Estrate could repeat to Mother Anne what I had told him in confession. Certainly I had expected him to keep all under the seal of confession, as he should have understood. I would have preferred if he repeated my sins and I said as much to Mother Anne when leaving the sacristy. She replied that Father had not repeated what had been told, but it was easy to understand,

for, for some time he had not entered the enclosure, at least I did not see him. I begged of Mother Anne to tell Father that I asked his pardon for having replied in that fashion without reflection to the message which he had sent me, but I did not think she would repeat it to him, and that I was ready to submit myself to everything as I had already said.

I remained eight days without Communion that caused me great grief for, the feast of the Sacred Heart fell during that week and Sister Marie of the Trinity received the habit on that day. But it was only the beginning of my trials. From that day Father Estrate did not wish to see me nor hear my confession even on Ember days, in spite of being our extraordinary confessor. I told all that to Father Chirou who was our ordinary confessor.

One day, when they gave me permission to receive Communion again, which I had received every day for the past thirty years, that is, since my conversion, except while travelling or in illness, I heard an interior voice say to me, "Prepare yourself to suffer". And once more after some days, "Prepare yourself for suffering". It was quite distinct, but I did not suspect what type of suffering was in question, and without experiencing it I would never have been able to imagine it.

11 August 1880: Soon after the last warning, on Wednesday, 11 August, I received Communion as usual, and hardly fifteen minutes later I felt something in my soul which I shall never be able to describe or explain. It was as sudden as a flash of lightning. It seemed that God had abandoned me, had left me entirely to myself. I was overwhelmed, annihilated under the weight of my sins, and the anger of God! Pure suffering had taken up my whole being and I could see only my sins which were the cause of it. It seemed that

I was going to die – I could see a huge mountain of my sins which stood between me and my God, and I wanted to make my confession hoping to be relieved and find him again whom I had lost.

I imagined that, if I made my confession to Father Estrate and if I made my peace with him, his word would give me calm and I went to tell Mother Anne that I needed to make my confession to Father Estrate because my sins overwhelmed me and that I begged of him to see me. He refused, if I remember well, and sent word to me in his usual way, to write to him whatever I had to tell him. Mother Anne attributed this state of suffering and this remorse to what she called my ingratitude to Father Estrate because of my disapproval of his coming into the enclosure and his interminable interviews with Mlle. Dartigaux and the religious; and then also to what I had spoken to His Excellency!! For they suspected that I had reported and were indignant about it!

I went to confession to Father Chirou on the eve of the Assumption and I received Communion which I had given up since the 11th August. But my state of suffering was the same always. Mother Anne, seeing that she could not get me to confess what she wanted and certainly it was Father Estrate who pressed her to extract it from me, deprived me of Communion for three weeks, until I had confessed and made reparation for my ingratitude towards Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux! They wished that I accuse myself to Mother Anne of all that I thought, said and did, regarding Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux, since our departure from France, and she would go immediately to report it to the Father, God knows in what way, for what is repeated is always changed. My soul was in such a state that I believed all that they said to me. They said that I had calumniated Father Estrate and he

himself wrote that to me. I believed it, without knowing in what way. They said I had lied. I believed it without knowing on what subject nor on what occasion. They also accused me of many other faults for I was in such a state of darkness and torture of soul, that I believed I was guilty of all they accused me of.

Fear took hold of my soul. I could see myself damned, in the hands of the devils. Fears, panic caught hold of me. I could not sleep nor eat. At night if I dozed a little, I got up with a start. My heart beat violently and I thought I was falling into hell. There was neither God nor mercy for me, and what caused me inexpressible suffering was that sometimes, for some moments, it seemed to me that I was indifferent. I was in such torture of soul that I thought I could bear it no longer without dying. I threw myself on the ground and at other times I prostrated myself before a statue of the holy Virgin which was in the workroom where I worked and I pleaded of her to have pity on me, then the crisis diminished.

They always repeated that I had to make public reparation. I made, therefore, my *culpa* which I wrote down, where I accused myself of I don't know what, but I know that I scandalised the Sisters, who knew nothing of all that, for I think I said things that were only thoughts or temptations. They asked me to give a copy of this *culpa* to preserve it, according to the odious system which Father Estrate used thereafter to torture souls. I can only say that I didn't know what I was doing. I was like an imbecile, and Sister St. Louis told me later, that they were astonished to see me in that state and did not understand anything of my *culpas* where I accused myself always of being a hypocrite. I thought I would be relieved by humiliating myself, but that was of no use. I suffered still more.

I used to go to confession to Father Chirou to whom I made an extraordinary review of life. He tried to calm me, for, in all my accusations he did not find that I was guilty of calumny of which they insisted that I should accuse myself of, because Father Estrate wanted it absolutely and said so.

My God, my God! in what terrible distress my poor soul found itself! They said to me that I was in a state of mortal sin because I had calumniated these persons, so saintly, to whom we were indebted for everything. As for myself, I was in such thick darkness that in spite of my good will to find in what this calumny consisted, I could not discover it. At each confession I repeated the same things that Father Chirou told me was no calumny at all, as for example for having said "that men and women are like straw and fire" for having looked over the wall to see if Father and Mlle. Dartigaux were in the parlour etc. etc.

At last, one day after one of my ordinary confessions, Father Chirou told me that I was losing my head and that I was falling into Jansenism. He commanded me never to repeat these things again, and he told me to remain very tranquil, otherwise I would see what he would do to me.



## CHAPTER IX FURTHER TRIALS

I believed that perhaps I might have said something which could be "calumny" to some Sister and which I might have forgotten. I went, therefore, to each Sister individually, to ask her if I had said anything against Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux and I begged of them to remind me of it. Nobody said anything new to me, but night and day I did nothing but examine myself. At last I think the devil inspired me to say, hoping to satisfy them that I was guilty of calumny but I did not know in what way, because I wanted to speak to Father Estrate who had sent word to me, that he would not see me, until I declared that I had calumniated him! It was through Mother Anne that all these commissions were done and she was not a person to console a soul in distress, she prevented me from speaking to him this time as well.

Everybody kept away from me and left me alone. I had really become an imbecile. I was surely beginning to lose my head, and did not know what I was saying. Meanwhile, I prayed as well as I could and I cried to God to have pity on me, and to forgive me my sins, above all, my great pride which I thought was the cause of this punishment. I asked to be permitted to go to Matins – which I had not done for a long time, and on the feast of St. Cosmas and Damien, 1880, I took my place in the choir for Matins and since then, I have been able to continue it.

I shall never be able to describe all that I suffered during this time. I did not know and did not understand that it was God who had put me in this pit and that it was He alone who could relieve me. I thought, that perhaps in speaking to someone or other, I would get relief. But I saw that creatures did me more harm than good. No one understood me. At last

Father Chirou, not knowing I suppose, what to do with me, for he alone treated me with all the charity possible – told me that Monsignor the Patriarch, was to come shortly, and that I would do well to make my confession to him, and tell him everything about my sufferings, the accusations that weighed on me, and then to abide by his decision. “He is your Superior, therefore, the Patriarch has the grace of state for you; besides, as Bishop, he has the plenitude of the Holy Spirit, you should submit all to him.” I replied to Father Chirou, that I would very much like it but that I feared to ask Mother Anne for permission to speak to the Patriarch, because I knew how jealous they were of every person besides Father Estrate – But good Father Chirou without telling me anything, spoke himself to Monsignor about me and told him that I wished to make my confession to him. When he came to visit us, he asked for me. Otherwise I would not have been able to see him. When Mother Anne told me that His Excellency wanted me, I could see well that she was not pleased, but I could not help going. He went to the confessional and I made my confession as well as I could. I can never forget his charity and the goodness with which he treated me, with what compassion he listened to the account of my distress, the balm of consolation which he poured on my frightened and tortured soul, finally he gave me absolution with the psalm “*Qui habitat in adjutori altissimi*” for penance, telling me to write to him when I had something to tell him. I felt the immense grace that emanated from our holy and venerable Patriarch. From that day the state of my soul improved. I did not have any more those frightful crises – like a damned person, without God, without hope, about which I have written already. I suffered still for quite a long time, but not to such a great degree as in the first months. Monsignor told me that he found nothing that was calumny in all that I accused myself of to him, and that surely

when I spoke to him about the entries within the enclosure I had said nothing to him against Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux, etc. He blessed me and left me fortified and very grateful to Father Chirou who had obtained for me the grace of being able to speak to him.

As I have already said, it was many years then since I had made a vow of doing the most perfect thing – and it was in these terms: At first after Communion I renewed my vows of religion and I added: “And besides I promise to do everything with the greatest perfection of which I am capable, to correspond to the designs of God for my soul, and to please you, my well Beloved.” I had made it with the permission and the approval of all my confessors, and during my retreat, before my last and great profession, at the Carmel of Pau, I had spoken of it to Father Estrate who preached the retreat. He told me to renew this vow, and not only in great things but also in little things. I had never had regrets, nor scruples on this subject, and I had also made a vow of humility, but that was limited to short periods of time. These two vows, now that I was in a state of interior suffering, added to my tortures. I had written to Father Estrate, who replied to me also in writing that I should never have made them and that when His Excellency came to visit us, I should ask him to relieve me of them. The vow of humility depended entirely on Father Chirou according to the intention of Father Guido who had permitted it to me and I had already asked to be dispensed from it, but the other did not depend on any one, and was perpetual. I explained everything to Monsignor the Patriarch in confession and I told him that Father Estrate wished me to ask him to be relieved of it, because he said at that time that I should never have made it. His Excellency replied that that did not suffice according to him, and he did not want to dispense me from it. He asked me several

questions on this subject and ended by saying that I should observe it as well as possible without tormenting myself.

Later on I spoke to Monsignor again several times about this vow and he has never wished to dispense me from it. The last time that I spoke to him about it asking him if he wished to dispense me of it, he stopped for an instant, put his hand on his forehead as if to reflect and take counsel with the Holy Spirit. "No," he said, and in an inspired tone "it will help you". From that day I never even had a doubt on that subject, and later Father Lazare explained it to me in a way that no one had done, as I shall explain later in its place.

It was then that Mlle. Dartigaux sent word to me that she did not wish that my inheritance should be used for the construction of the Church of Carmel as had been promised to me. Father Estrate through the intermediary of the two Mothers Anne and Mary of the Infant Jesus obliged me to make a declaration signed by the English Consul and which has been preserved in the archives of the consulate of Jerusalem, to the effect that I had not given anything to the Carmel of Bethlehem – all remained at the Carmel of Pau.

Monsignor the Patriarch, returned again on 28 April 1881, and I had the consolation of seeing him again. He had written to me several times in reply to the letters I wrote to him to give an account of the state in which I found myself. Here is the advice, that His Beatitude gave me and which I put down in writing. It is the only paper which I could carry with me when I left Bethlehem, having hidden it between the pages of a book stuck together.

Monsignor said to me: "Suffering, and in particular false judgements are the greatest graces that God can give to a soul. They make the soul resemble Jesus in His Passion, in which He deigned to endure all sorts of torments and

calumnies. He who builds an edifice has no need to polish the rough stones with which he builds the foundation: all kinds of stone are good enough for that. But a stone destined for the cornice, how many blows of the hammer and strokes of the chisel does it not require to shape it and give it the necessary polish, so as to make it fit to be placed in this honourable position! It is the same with your soul. God fashions and polishes it by suffering. Bear everything with patience and in conformity with his holy will for it is with love that He does everything. Suffering is the gift of God par excellence, which He gives to those whom He loves the most. Suffering is more advantageous to the soul than even Communion, more even than consolations, sweetness and ecstasies. God gives milk and sweetness to beginners and to children, but He gives dry bread to adolescents. The edifice that He is building is spiritual, and I understand that God asks something else from you. Bear everything in patience. Surrender yourself to Him, whose favour of which is of more value than that of the Sisters and of the entire world. Take care that no feelings of resentment remain in your heart, whatever may happen to you; and when He has accomplished His will in you, then the trials will cease. There is no calumny at all in what you have told me, for the other Sisters have already informed me about the same things (about the entries of Fr. Estrate). You have only told me about the facility for entry into your cloister, which was causing an infringement in your Community exercises. There is nothing against Fr. Estrate or Mlle. Dartigaux".

I do not know how to express sufficiently all the gratitude which I owe to Monsignor who was for me a true father, and also to Rev. Father Chirou who supported me and consoled me as best he could. But in the months of March and April he was obliged to go away to attend the



Chapter of His Congregation, and Father Estrate was appointed our ordinary Confessor.

On Christmas night 1880, Sister Marie Joseph and Sister Marie Clemence made their Profession. Mother Anne, I do not know for what reason, prevented me from giving my vote and sent me out of the Chapter room when these novices were to be voted for their profession. So also for Sister Marie de la Misericordie who was to be professed as a Tourrier Sister, to whom a veil and a blue mantle were given. These three Sisters were in great favour with Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux, especially Sister Marie Joseph – We shall see later how this extraordinary friendship ended.

After the arrival of Sister Euphrasia, she had begun a system of reporting which was never known to us until then. One could not say anything nor do anything that was not repeated, voiced abroad and reported to Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux. Sister Euphrasia was always a person to be feared in the community. Gifted with a bright intelligence, but without education, and very little instruction, she was one of those, commonly found in Aveyron, capable of doing much good or much harm. She was always very devoted to Father Estrate, and also to Mlle. Dartigaux. It was a kind of idolatry. She had a kind of jargon when speaking of Father at recreation which was understood only by the initiated, of whom I was not one. They were terms of veneration, of such exaggerated praise that I thought they were speaking of the good God. They always called Father Estrate, 'Jesus', which made their conversation incomprehensible and seemed to have a double meaning to those who were not in the secret. As example of what I say, I am placing on the following page

<sup>1</sup> Aveyron = Basin of the river of the same name between Central and Southern France.



*Les recommandantes Enfants  
de Jésus Pater et de Toute Mere  
Le 10 Novembre 1880-1881.*

a picture, which was sent by Sister Marie Joseph to Mother Marie of the Immaculate Conception as a souvenir, I think, of her profession which she made with Sister Mary Clemence. This "Jesus - Pater" of which she spoke is no other than Father Estrate and "Toute Mere" signifies Mlle. Dartigaux. The young Sisters always called her "Mama".

Mother Marie gave this picture to a young Sister here, who later, in 1888, presented it to me.



## CHAPTER X

## THE SO-CALLED REFORM

It was towards the end of 1880 that the fatal movement called the Reform was begun. Sister Josephine, a white-veiled Sister, said to me one day while helping me to wash the vessels: "A great secret! Father Estrate has seen the Heavens open while he said Mass. The Holy Virgin, our holy Mother, appeared to him and gave him a great mission; great lights on the role he is destined to play in our community, perhaps in the order. Who knows?"

This was the only time that I had heard of visions and revelations spoken of openly while I was at Bethlehem, for they did not trust me – but after my return to Pau the Sisters told me that in all the letters they received from Bethlehem at that time, it was always a question of supernatural communications to Father Estrate.

He began on 21 November 1880, by making us give up the alpargates we wore until then, and made us put on simple corded soles attached at the ankle by white cords. I heard them discuss the reason for being shod in this way whereas the Constitution says "The footwear should be alpargates or shoes of cord," and does not speak either of sandals or of simple soles. It seems that Father Estrate had asked for a decision in prayer, as he used to say, and he replied that he knew that at the time of St. Teresa there was a heel and also that the toes were covered a little; but that if he permitted anything whatever on the sole, little by little it would be enlarged, and for this reason he wanted the foot to be entirely exposed! He wanted to be more Catholic than the Pope and more enlightened than St. Teresa.

After that he reformed one by one all our articles of clothing: the toque, the veils were re-tailored, some changed

in form and others were made much smaller. The Communion veil was done away with altogether. We had to wear the big veil each time we went to Communion. We had to undo all our habits, cut off the corners and the false hems and re-do the sleeves so that they were real bags, like covers of umbrellas. The tunics met with the same fate. In winter they gave us neither vests nor under-sleeves, nor jackets, nor caps. We wore absolutely nothing except the tunic, as small and narrow as possible, and only one petticoat, and the holy habit, the scapular, the toque and a little veil tied around the head which fluttered above the scapular, and brown or white footgear with feet quite bare in corded sandals. At night, instead of having the head covered with a veil and a short scapular according to our custom, everything was given up and we religious lay down with the head completely uncovered like men, and still having a close crop we looked like shorn urchins. I tried for some days this new fashion, but I felt ashamed of myself. For anything in the world I would not have liked anyone to see me like that, and I said to myself "If I were to die, really I would have no sign of a religious to show, much less of a Carmelite," because at night they allowed us only the little scapular of the people of the world. I therefore put on the toque of the previous week during the night, and I said to Father Estrate that I did not have the 'devotion' of sleeping with the head uncovered – that it did not seem religious to me. He replied rather dryly that I could put on what I wanted because there was nothing on this point in the writings of our Holy Mother. Meanwhile, all the Sisters, except two or three, continued to sleep with bare heads.

Some days before leaving Bethlehem, to return to Pau, Mother Prioress was ill with fever in the infirmary. She sent for me to give me a commission and I found her in bed with

the head fully uncovered. I cannot tell you what effect that had on me. I thought I was looking at a shorn urchin.

From our dress, they passed on to all the rest. All the ceremonies of the choir, the manner of saying the Office, of standing during the Office, of placements in the choir, of singing, chanting the psalms – one after the other all were changed. It was enough that until now we had done things in one way, for a new way to be introduced, invented by Father Estrate, or as they said, having been revealed to him in a supernatural manner! After Mass, Mlle. Dartigaux and the initiated went to spend a great part of the morning in the parlour where Father Estrate instructed them and communicated his lights to them.

I heard it said that all that was done was the result of lights drawn from the Father's prayer but I had never imagined that he believed he had visions and revelations, and that the Sisters also believed in them, and for this reason obeyed blindly all that he said to them.

The old Ceremonial which we brought with us from Pau and the "Point of Exaction" were thrown in the fire. They preserved absolutely nothing but the little book of the Rule and Constitutions which Father Estrate explained in his own way and added all the rest from his head.

The regular places of silence were abolished; one could speak everywhere but in a low voice. All our old pious practices of devotion were cancelled. We ended by hardly having any recreation and that of the afternoon never, except on Sundays and special feast days, and in the evening after supper, the Sisters, who were not under penalty, went for recreation up to seven o'clock which meant about 20 minutes, and then they rang the bell for the rosary – a devotion which had been introduced by the Father and which

was said in common, either in the ante-choir or in winter in the choir or in the recreation room. He said that the rosary was not obligatory, but woe to the one who absented herself. Each evening Father Estrate sent the intention for which we should offer the Rosary (through Mlle. Dartigaux) or else she gave it herself. I can remember some of them – "For the conversion of Mother Prioress", "In reparation for the contempt with which your Father Founder has been treated" etc. On the evening of the canonical visit of Monsignor the Patriarch, here is the intention which Mlle. Dartigaux sent us: "In thanksgiving for the calumnies that His Excellency has discovered today"!!! Very often I was ashamed when I heard these intentions being announced before beginning the Rosary, and I made my own intentions.

Father Estrate had composed a certain anthem or hymn to our Mother St. Teresa which they often sang at recreations.

"*Sancta Mater nostra Teresia, ora dilecte tuo, ut in tuo ordine recedant vetera, nova sint omnia*". As for me, I could never bear that song and I said in a low voice "*Recedant nova, vetera sint omnia*", for I could not understand why they changed everything that we had learnt to do since we entered Carmel. It was change for the pleasure of changing without any reason for doing it. For example, in commencing the Office we had always said, as in every religious Order, the "*Aperi Domine os meum etc*" in the singular as it is written at the beginning of all the Breviaries. One fine day, Father Estrate said to us: "The good God must be smiling hearing you say that prayer in the singular whilst you are in community. You must put it in the plural and say "*Aperi Domine os nostrum ... recitare valeamus munda quoque cor nostrum*" etc. etc. until the end. I remember that Sister Elias thought of saying that she had always heard the Fathers recite "*Aperi Domine os meum*". She was made to keep quiet and

from that day we have changed that prayer to say it in the plural. How often I thought that, if the good God had to smile at the singular number of the "Aperi", then He could also do it for a great number of psalms like the "Miserere Mei Deus". And we always begin the Office by "Domine labia mea aperies" "Deus in adiutorium meum intende", etc. One ought to be very ... I do not wish to say what, not to perceive, that it was not the Holy Spirit who led all these reforms.

It was the same in every aspect of our life. Our Carmelite way of life was completely upset, turned upside down. "Well", I said sometimes to myself; "the old custom was at least as good and as religious as the new custom that is imposed on us; what is the use of changing then?" When Father Estrate entered, which was certainly not a rare thing, all the Sisters who met him on his way, stopped to speak to him, and sometimes it was quite a little crowd in the cloister, in the dormitory, and they chatted. How unreligious that was!

As these reforms were made in Bethlehem, they were communicated to the Carmel of Pau. It had started in the time when Mother Marie of the Immaculate Conception was Prioress and continued with Mother Agnes of Jesus who succeeded her. Father Estrate said that he saw all that went on in the Carmel of Pau and even what went on in the interior of the Sisters, certain Sisters at least. He directed them in writing. When he ordered anything for the Carmel of Bethlehem, he sent the same articles to the Carmel of Pau – as when he changed our counterpanes from white to brown, and also the mantles which he made us get done in serge instead of thick sheeting.

All these changes were made without consulting either Monsignor, the Patriarch, or Monsignor Ducellier the Bishop of Bayonne for what concerned the Carmel of Pau.

According to what I understood, Mother Agnes was alarmed with what was being done, seeing that the community did not agree to it at all, and that regular life was upset. She gave an account to Monsignor Ducellier of what went on and his Grace put a stop to all communications with the Carmel of Bethlehem, and forbade them from changing anything more whatsoever without submitting to him. It is thus that he stopped this pernicious movement but unfortunately, the poison had entered already, and the poor community suffered from the effects and still continues to do so.

But let us return to Bethlehem. The six years that Mother Anne was Prioress having come to an end, we had elections, presided over by Monsignor, the Patriarch, assisted by Father Estrate. It was 14 November 1881 and Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus was elected Prioress, Mother Teresa of Jesus re-elected Sub-Prioress, Sister Emmanuel continued to be the first depository and they nominated Sister Euphrasie as the second depository.

Permit me, now, Reverend Father, to tell you here what I would like to tell you personally for my direction in continuing this history. I would like to know if you wish me to relate all that follows by naming persons, and in saying things as they happened, without going round about – very simply and in all its naked truth, for I have arrived at a moment when what I have to say seems almost incredible. One must have seen with one's eyes and heard with one's ears to believe that in the 19th Century and in a Carmel such strange things, I would say monstrous things, could happen. I waited for a long time hoping to have the happiness of seeing you, Father, and asking you for your opinion – but the good God willed otherwise. I therefore thought of putting down everything in writing as truthfully as I am capable of, without exaggerating anything. Yet I fear to fail in charity by

naming persons. I shall then, put down only initials and I beg of you, Father, because this writing is only for you, to burn it if you find that I lacked charity and prudence in what I have written.

You have, besides, in your possession what I had written at your order at Montpellier when we passed by, after having left Bethlehem, last year in 1887, in the month of May, when I related to you the most important things. Here I shall mention them a little more in detail. When Mother Mary of Infant Jesus took up charge, the joy of the community was great. We were tired of the rudeness and harshness of Mother Anne (who has always been a very austere but good religious) and all hearts went out to Mother of Infant Jesus who until then had been the sweetest, the most amiable, the most charming of Sisters, in the community. Sister of Jesus had predicted that she would have to carry the Cross, and I think she was elected unanimously. She could have done what she wanted with the community if she had won the hearts of the Sisters for all were for her, but unfortunately as it often happens, authority changed her completely. She became unrecognisable in a short time. Even the expression of her face was not the same. Oh my God, what a delusion for us! We had hoped to have a Mother and we had only a tyrant! How often I thought of the Israelites when King Solomon died and his son Rehoboam told them: "My father chastised you with whips and I shall chastise you with scorpions. You were not happy with the severity of my father and I will treat you with still greater severity". It is thus that Mother of the Infant Jesus acted. God forgive her for it.

A few weeks after her election, she began by depriving me of every office in the community, even of reading the lesson in choir, of being *hebdomadary* and chantress etc. in my turn – even from intoning an antiphon. I went to ask her

what the reason was since everything had been done without telling me anything, and I begged of her to tell me for what fault I was punished so that I might correct myself. She replied that she would not or could not tell me the reason and that I had only to obey. Then at Christmas, Father Estrate gave us a retreat. He began with the words: "*Converte nos Deus salutaris noster*" and told us that there were several Sisters guilty of certain serious faults which drew down the anger of God and that during this retreat they should confess to Mother Prioress and that, as soon as possible, otherwise punishments would come down upon them. He gave us a terrible fear and began that horrible system which they call "the avowals" to the Mother Prioress. We had to dig into our brain, our memory, our minds, to recall a word, an action, a thought, that might concern specially Father Estrate or Mlle. Dartigaux and then we went to make the "avowal" to Mother Prioress, who gave an account of it to Father. She was like the confessor of the retreat. I have never seen such a thing! In all the retreats that Father Estrate gave us, he never allowed us to make a confession, except once, and that on the last day. There were six Sisters on whom suspicion fell, and who specially were asked to make avowals. I was one of them. I went several times to Mother Prioress who pretended to praise me for my frankness, but was never satisfied. She always said that I had not confessed everything. Alas, my God what this Mother made me suffer I cannot tell. Night and day I examined myself. I hadn't a moment of rest. She said that there was something which I had not still said. I was devoured by fear, terrified by the thought of the penances that they would inflict on me. At last I made my *culpa* which was shown to Father Estrate at the end of the retreat and I hoped to have done with it. But at Christmas, Mother Prioress announced that six Sisters who were guilty, would spend these feast days in their cells and come out only

to attend the Office – and at last on the fourth day after Christmas she came to our cell and told me that henceforth I would be deprived of voice and a seat in the Chapter, and that she forbade me strictly to have the least communication or any relations with any of the Sisters – not to speak to anyone except herself and to the Mother Sub-Prioress who was charged with giving us work, and no recreation at all. And this penance would last until further orders, ad libitum. In choir, also we were deprived of all the offices. Here are the names of the six Sisters who were punished: Sister St. Louis of Gonzaga, Sister Marie of the Cross, Sister Madeleine, Sister Elias, Sister Teresa of Jesus (Mlle. Cabiran) and I.

From this moment we were considered as not belonging to the community. That is what Mother of the Infant Jesus never stopped telling me several times. I was so discouraged and sad that a long time after, having had the occasion of speaking to Monsignor, I asked him if he had the intention of sending me away, for I was continually told that I did not belong to the community. His Excellency assured me that he had no intention of doing so and to be quite reassured on that point. I think he might have asked Mother Prioress not to speak in that way any more, for from then on she stopped saying it to me. One cannot imagine with what rigour they kept us in isolation. In the beginning, not knowing exactly what was imposed on us, I sometimes offered my lamp to some Sister while climbing the staircase to our cell after Matins, or made a necessary sign during our work in the garden. They hastened to report to the Mother Prioress that I had disobeyed and communicated with some Sisters, and that resulted in my being deprived of Communion (even that of the rule), and we were more carefully watched. We led the life of galley slaves. It was the reign of terror, and this was only the beginning. You will see later to what excess this reign of terror was carried on.

During the Carnival of that year, when Mother Anne and Father Estrate etc. accused me of calumny, I had asked Our Lord to be able to fast like the rest of the community, for only eight days, as a proof that the accusation was false. For several years I could not fast at all. They even asked me not to abstain. I had a very strong cold. I even had a little fever, but I felt inspired to begin to fast as a sign that I was innocent of the crime of which they accused me, and told to Father Chirou, my confessor. On Monday of Septuagesima, the 13th of February, I had nothing for breakfast and could easily fast that day and the following days without any relaxation of the fast and I hardly suffered from it. I followed community life in everything. I could not explain my astonishment, and I thanked God with all my soul. I told it to Father Chirou who was also astonished and asked me if I do not suffer from it. “No” I said, “I have a good appetite at meals but I do not feel the need of anything else.” He was struck by it and I was very consoled. From that day, until my departure from Bethlehem, I did not miss any fast or abstinence of the Rule, except for a few days later, at Pau, when I had fever that is to say, for more than six years. My prayer had been literally answered.

I have already said that in this so-called reform all our ancient usages and religious customs had been changed, but the thing which carried most weight for them were the penances which are mentioned in the last Chapters of the Constitutions. All these penances were put into strict practice and imposed on us very often in quite an arbitrary manner, and other penances still more severe and cruel had been invented by Father Estrate and those religious who supported and followed his spirit. Oh my God, I shall not be able to describe the life that I led and I speak only for myself. But all the Sisters, at some time or other, had more or less passed through the same tortures of soul and sufferings of

body. Each word that I said (and surely I did not say many during the day) each action, each look, was taken up, reviewed and interpreted badly, called up in Chapter, before the whole community in the ante-choir, and then penances were imposed. We were given the discipline on our bare shoulders by the Mother Prioress who seemed to enjoy it when she had the chance. We had to fast on bread and water, seated on the floor in the middle of the refectory, one, two or three days in succession. Communions, prescribed by the Rule, were forbidden. She often obliged me to carry big baskets of mud and the watering-cans full of water which were beyond my strength, and reproached me for what she called my laxity and laziness. Alas, my God, if I could, I would willingly have gone faster, but I could scarcely lift that weight, and in the burning heat of the summer, we were drenched in perspiration under the sun. Once she accused me of having made too much noise in my cell after Compline. Unfortunately, I said that I had not moved from my bed, and that made her say that I had excused myself. An extraordinary Chapter was called for immediately, in which Mother Prioress condemned me to three days on bread and water, and three disciplines, one which she gave me there and then, and two on the following days. It was just on laundry days on which, we first had to fill the cisterns by carrying water in big buckets, and then wash all the linen. I thought I would not reach the end of it for, already I was not strong, and working hard only on bread and water, was too much for an old woman.

This is only to give you one example of the severity of the penances imposed on us at every instant. There were always one or several Sisters doing penance who dined on the floor, on bread and water, even for several days or several consecutive weeks – as for example Sister Elizabeth.

Another white-veiled Sister, Sister Marie of Calvary, an Arab, brought up by the Sisters of Charity, at Beyrouth who was a good and excellent child and could be led with a little humanness and Christian charity, was punished for months together, because they said she did not want to work. She was continually on bread and water and they followed her during the day in order to make her work in the garden, and in the night she slept in the prison which had been made in a room at the end of the laundry, at the very end of the garden, quite apart from the monastery. There, this poor Sister spent the night on a heap of straw, placed on the tiles with which the room was paved. It was used to keep the soiled linen of the community. I do not remember how many months she spent there, but it was all through the summer and still longer.

Other Sisters were imprisoned in their own cells for eight or fifteen consecutive days, not leaving it except under the eye of the jailor, who was ordinarily Sister Euphrasie, or the Mother Sub-Prioress, to hear Mass on Sundays at the door of the choir. They were brought a piece of bread for dinner and another for supper with cold water, and when the time of the penance was over, a Chapter was summoned. They made their culpa and then the Sister was admitted again to the choir and the refectory! This happened to Sister St. Louis, to Sister Teresa of Jesus and Sister Madeleine who spent fifteen days in the prison of the laundry. Sister Marie of the Cross had also been three days in prison in her cell on bread and water. So was Sister St. Louis. These last two were condemned to this penance because they did not wish to declare to Father Estrate, the Foundress and Mother Prioress, in the parlour, what they had said in confession to Father Chirou!

Sister Teresa spent fifteen days on bread and water in her cell because she unfortunately said that M. Dartigaux, the father of Mlle. Dartigaux, did not behave himself. This

was a public scandal. Everybody at Pau knew that Madame Dartigaux was separated from her husband, who lived with a servant and had several children by her, who went about publicly in a carriage. The daughters had a striking resemblance to Mlle. Dartigaux, our Foundress. When her father was on his death-bed, Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified had advised her to go and visit him and see if she could bring him back to more Christian sentiments and to receive the last sacraments, or at least to regularise his state... This pious young girl, in spite of the repugnance which she must have felt in going to a father who had treated her worthy mother with such infamy, obeyed. But I believe she was very badly received and she returned with a broken heart.

All this was known to the public for, the Dartigaux family was one of the most notorious in the country. But that did not prevent Sister Euphrasie from punishing Sister Therese of Jesus (Mlle. Cabiran) for her words. She took away her habit and kept her fifteen days on bread and water.

About this time three novices arrived from Pau: Sister Cleophas, Sister St. Luke and Sister Paul of St. Jerome. The first two were from Pau, the last from Paris, the daughter of a certain Captain Gauvain. Father Estrate had appointed Sister Euphrasie mistress of novices. One day, I saw in passing, that the door of Sister St. Luke's cell was tied with a string, and at dinner they brought her for her meal to the last place in the refectory and she did not have the holy habit on. She remained thus closed up for a month and one fine morning she disappeared from the monastery. They had sent her back to France and she had returned to her home at Pau.

It was only after my return here, that I learnt the reason of her being sent away. Whilst speaking to her companions she had let fall a word about the misbehaviour of the father of Mlle. Dartigaux and that sufficed to take away from her the

holy habit by her mistress, Sister Euphrasie, and on the spot she was imprisoned and then sent back to France!!

It was a crime of high treason and considered as foul "calumny" to whisper anything about the parents and family of Mlle. Dartigaux which certainly on her father's side was a public disgrace, and on her mother's side, though noble and honourable, was unfortunate, for two of her uncles, her mother's brothers, died mentally ill. Sister St. Louis, who knew them, had the misfortune of mentioning these two men, one day during recreation, and I cannot relate here, all the reproaches she received then, and all the penances she was given.

I would never end if I were to relate all the miseries, the trials, the penances, we suffered during the three years that Mother of the Infant Jesus was Prioress. I lived in continual fear and panic. I feared her like fire and with reason, for she did not lack intelligence and she used it to exercise her tyranny which I can say was used at every moment. She was perpetually on the watch to discover some fault, even the smallest, in order to make a sharp and bitter reprimand and impose a hard penance without any mercy. The Chapters which she held were a real torture to me. She seemed to be happy when she could find a pretext to give the discipline to anyone.

One day I picked up a bit of dirty newspaper in the garden which I used to wipe something. Mother Prioress pretended that I had failed in the Rule by not bringing it to her cell. I, terrified, prostrated on the ground and very humbly asked for pardon, to which she said, "I just read to the Sisters that they should not speak in the Chapter room except to accuse themselves of their faults and here you are disobeying. I am going to give you the discipline. Uncover your shoulders." And she gave me the discipline. One can



easily understand, that for me, who was a proud English-woman, who even in childhood, had not been corrected, except two or three times in my life, a very powerful grace from God was necessary in order to submit myself and silence all the thoughts that rose up. I reflected or tried to reflect on Jesus, our innocent Saviour, cruelly scourged at the pillar and I accepted the indignity in union with Him, I, who deserved hell for my sins. But I want to tell you Father, what came to my haughty and proud mind, in spite of my efforts to silence it. I thought, or rather the devil whispered to me: "This little good for nothing French-woman gives me blows, me, born a free English-woman and of a respectable family. If my uncle, the General, Governor of Portsmouth and his three sons, my cousins, the three colonels, came to know that I was treated like a slave, even though they are Protestant, this poor monastery and all those in it would see if it were good to thus whip unjustly an English-woman in public. The English Consul would be sent at once to find out the reason for this conduct." The conduct of this Mother disgusted me and it pained me still more, because I had loved her much and she had always been one of the most amiable and most loving in the community. She was, besides, an example of those whom authority changes completely and makes imperius, tyrannical and arbitrary. She had been the mistress of novices of Sister of Jesus Crucified and had through her received many graces and seen so many marvels in that holy child, and now she became unrecognisable, even the expression of her face changed completely. In the beginning I think she acted according to the advice given by Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux but little by little, she even surpassed them in all the minutiae of her rigour, from which there was no means of escaping.



## CHAPTER XI

### SISTER MARIE JOSEPH

In this chapter I wish to relate more in detail what happened to this unfortunate Sister at the Carmel of Bethlehem. What I am going to relate is the pure and absolute truth. I do not wish to exaggerate anything, but I declare, that if I had not seen with my own eyes and touched with my hands what I am going to relate, I would not have been able to believe it. They speak of the prisons of the Middle Ages, of the cruelties of the Inquisition which took place in the cloisters. Here one will see that in the 19th Century, at the Carmel of Bethlehem, I was an eyewitness of deeds, that could have hardly been surpassed in rigour and in cruelty.

Sister Marie Joseph was a young lady of good family of Marseilles, Mlle. Pradel. Her father was dead, but her mother, a saintly woman, was still living at that time (she died lately). She also has relatives who are religious. This young lady did not have good health, and because of that, as well as because she had certain ideas, somewhat extravagant and exalted, about the extraordinary ways she imagined herself to be in, they did not give her the habit for a long time, and even sent her back to France to recoup her health. But after some months she came back to us quite healthy and they gave her the holy habit. Then, when Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux returned to Bethlehem, to establish themselves permanently there, Sister Marie Joseph got into good books with them, and by this means was able to make her profession on Christmas night 1880, with Sister Marie Clemence, into the hands of Mother Anne.

Sister Marie Joseph was then the favourite. They gave her extraordinary authority. She was portress and had the full confidence of Father Estrate and the foundress. She called them Papa and Mama. It was then they gave her the charge

over Sister Elizabeth about whom I have already spoken, and which she exercised with such harshness that surpassed all the limits of decency and of religion.

It seems that Sister Marie Joseph imagined that she was led by extraordinary ways. She believed that she was called to carry on the spirit of Sister of Jesus Crucified and she wrote to Father Estrate towards the feast of Pentecost in 1885 that God had manifested his will to her that she should be the Prioress of the Carmel of Bethlehem! It was only a few months since Mother Anne had been reappointed after the three years of Mother of the Infant Jesus who was now Sub-Prioress. Father Estrate did not mind the pretensions of Sister Marie Joseph after her first note, but she repeated the claim to be Prioress and then the Father assembled the community in the parlour, placed Sister Marie Joseph in the centre and read her letters. One can imagine our astonishment and our indignation, for who could think of this young Sister who besides had nothing that could fit her for such an office.

She insisted on her claim, and then Father Estrate ordered Mother Prioress and Mother Sub-Prioress to put her in prison in the laundry. Then began the frightful scenes. Sister Marie Joseph shouted at the top of her voice at the windows of her prison which opened on the garden. She called to Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux: "Papa! Mama! Come and deliver me. I wish to be Prioress of Bethlehem but it is you who will be Prior and Prioress." She said a thousand other extravagant things with such noise and confusion which could be heard outside the enclosure. At night she tried to open the lock of the door, and one morning she succeeded and went to hide in the confessional which was in the parlour and then when Mlle. Dartigaux arrived for her two hours usual chat with Father Estrate, Sister Marie Joseph suddenly jumped out of the confessional and gave the two of them a fright.

It was then that Father Estrate asked M. Guillemot, the ex-Carmelite, (Father Philibert), the architect of the residence of the Fathers of Betharram who was his confidant and great friend to enter the enclosure. We did not know then who this gentleman was, to whom Father had entrusted the work of putting a new lock to the prison and then to speak to Sister Marie Joseph and try to get her into a more reasonable behaviour. They had put her, while the prison in the laundry was being repaired, in a room below my cell, so I could follow perfectly the interview between M. Guillemot and Sister Marie Joseph which took place at the open window which was very low and very close to the ground. He told her not to shout, otherwise he would have to bundle her off to France or she would be treated as a mad woman etc. etc." But she continued her uproar and redoubled her banging on the door with her fists crying, "Papa, Mama, come and deliver me." And the noise went on the whole day at intervals. The silence of the monastery was fully disturbed, but the Mother Prioress and the Mother Sub-Prioress did not pay any attention to it and seemed not to hear it. That made Mlle. Dartigaux call them and make outrageous reproaches to them in public, telling them that they agreed with Sister Marie Joseph and supported her in her conduct.

Sister Therese of Jesus (Mlle. Carrere who had been Sub-Prioress when leaving France) was given the charge of watching over Sister Marie Joseph, of giving her bread and water daily and taking her back to the prison. In one corner of the room some cut hay was spread on the flagstones and this unfortunate young religious who seemed mad, was locked up. The two windows (one of which was like a ventilator) had iron bars. There was absolutely nothing in the prison that was quite large and airy, except this bed of straw and a little grey blanket. In the beginning Sister Marie Joseph was strong and plumpy. She cried out and spoke at the open window in a

resounding voice. But her stay in this prison, always lying on the pavement and having for nourishment a bit of bread at noon and another at supper, with cold water, and that for more than a year and a half, at different times with a break of some days or some weeks, made this unfortunate religious, so thin, feeble and unsteady that she became unrecognizable. Her skin turned dark, her eyes sunken. She was only a walking skeleton and her colour was that of a ghost.

At first they brought her for Mass on Sundays to the passage at the door of the choir, but as Father Estrate feared that she might say something scandalous which could be heard in the chapel, he gave an order to bring her on a Saturday evening. It was exactly at the time when we were going to sing the *Salve* and while we were preparing for it in the room before the ante-choir, which opened into the garden, we heard cries and vociferations, which frightened us. All ran to the door and there we saw two or three Sisters pushing and dragging Sister Marie Joseph who shouted and struggled, with all her strength: "I want to be the Prioress of Bethlehem! I am the Prioress of Bethlehem".

She came from the parlour where Father Estrate had spoken to her and they were now taking her back to the prison in the laundry, and mind you, the whole town of Bethlehem could see and hear her because the Carmel is built on the slope of a hill, and Bethlehem is opposite on the other slope.

From that day Sister Marie Joseph did not even come for Mass on Sundays and that for quite a long time. I must say that neither the Mother Prioress (Mother Anne), nor the Sub-Prioress (Mother of the Infant Jesus), were bothered about Sister Marie Joseph who had been their spoilt child, their favourite. It was Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux who gave orders and Sister Therese of Jesus who carried out

their orders, aided by Sister Marie Clemence who had been elected Depository in the last elections, and who now was in great favour with Father and with Mademoiselle. I cannot refrain from speaking now about this young Sister. She was a pupil of the Sisters of Charity at Beyrouth from her early childhood. I think her father had been killed in the massacre of Damascus for he was a Maronite and her mother had escaped with her two little children on her back, to the Sisters of Charity at Beyrouth.

Sister Marie Clemence spoke and wrote French very well, and even in the refectory, no one read as well as she did. Her brother was the baker of the Sisters of Charity at Beyrouth and a very honest young man. She knew also her own language, Arabic, and she wrote it. She had suffered from tapeworm when she arrived here. Sister of Jesus Crucified had given her some remedy which cured her entirely. She was always small and stunted, but in spite of it she always observed the rule in its entirety. As she was very intelligent and also very sweet and obliging in her relations with the Sisters, we loved her very much. She was wonderfully discreet. I remarked that during the several years that she was portress and tierce, where she was continually in contact with outsiders, I never heard Sister Marie Clemence utter a single word, no matter about what or whom she had to deal with. It was quite a different story when Sister Euphrasie or Sister Marie Joseph were at the turn. We heard at every moment stories about the Fathers etc. etc. which they came to report. Sister Marie Clemence was also the most regular about the enclosure. She had always her big veil on, when opening the door of the enclosure and when speaking to the workers, while I saw the French religious times without number open the door and speak to the workers while pulling over their faces the end of the small veil which

we wore and which only reached up to the ear on the other side, scarcely covering their faces.

Father Estrate had started the custom, that as soon as Mlle. Dartigaux made any report about what was happening in the community, the bell had to be rung to call the Sisters to the parlour. Then he installed himself in a big armchair behind the open grille and Mlle. Dartigaux sat in her place on our side. With what fear I heard those bells! I said to myself what is going to happen to us now? One cannot imagine what those assemblies in the parlour were. The Father began by putting one Sister right in the middle on her knees. First it was Sister Marie Joseph, then it was Mother Anne, and Mother of the Infant Jesus, and he questioned them and then insulted them with the most vulgar comments, with epithets which only those who are badly brought up would utter, such as I had never heard except from his mouth. It was "dirty beast", "monster" "devil" "sow" and other similar things. Then Mlle. Dartigaux added her remarks, and at last the Father his fury mounting, shouted in a frightful manner, "Go!" "Get out!" "Dirty beasts!" in a thundering voice, and all of us left the parlour, trembling and in silence, leaving behind only Mlle. Dartigaux. One cannot understand the effect produced by these frightful 'conciliabules.' I would have hidden in the bowels of the earth to avoid going to that parlour.

Mother Prioress and Mother Sub-Prioress were suddenly in the bad books of Father and Mlle. Dartigaux who never ceased insinuating to them to hand in their resignation, in order to be able to depose them. On the advice of the Father, a letter signed by all the Sisters was written to Monsignor, the Patriarch, begging his Beatitude to accept the resignation which they were sending him on a separate sheet and asking his permission for the community

to have fresh elections, giving as reason, that their conduct towards the founders was unbearable. This letter was composed and written by Sister Paula of St. Jerome (Mlle. Gauvain) who had a special gift for such compositions.

As only eight months had passed since the last elections, they wanted to have them in secret, and for this they asked Monsignor to delegate Father Estrate in his place and he granted it, so on 24 June 1885, fresh elections were held in the presence Father Estrate, as Monsignor's delegate, and Father Chirou who helped him.

Mother Teresa of Jesus was elected Prioress, Sister Marie Clemence Sub-Prioress and Sister Emmanuel Depository. I heard it said later, that Father Estrate had said that Sister Marie Clemence had only 2 votes.

We now had Mother Teresa of Jesus in charge. She had always been a very perfect religious, of remarkable virtue, but of a soft character. Her veneration for and obedience to Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux had no limits. We will see how they abused it and how she was treated. Only a few days after her election I saw her take the *courbach* (whip) which had been used to whip Sister Elizabeth and go out of the enclosure. I always thought she was going to whip Sister Marie Joseph (as she had done since), but I think she must have resisted the orders of Father Estrate on this subject, because Mlle. Dartigaux reprimanded her before the whole community for her lack of obedience and submission to the wishes of the Father, and the poor Mother only prostrated without a single word, as she always did. The next time Sister Marie Joseph was brought to Mass, her clothes were all torn to shreds, as if she had gone for a battle.

This was the first time that this poor unfortunate Sister got the whip, but it was not the last, though I cannot say when

and how many times she had submitted to this flagellation, similar to that which she had inflicted on Sister Elizabeth before. I only know that one could hear her cry no more nor her voice at the windows of which she had broken two or three glass-panes, which remained so, even in winter, all the time that she remained in prison. She was hardly clothed, having only her tunic on, a light petticoat and her holy habit all in tatters, then her toque and veil. Her feet were almost bare. She had only a little night blanket. I do not know how she did not die of cold in winter, with the window panes broken, and lying on straw, on the bare pavement.

I have seen her being brought for Mass on a Sunday by her two jailors, when the ground was covered with snow. She had bare feet. She had thus crossed the garden and come by a long stone staircase from the prison, without anything to protect her from the cold. Her poor feet were red and she stood on the flagstones at the door of the choir. I cannot forget the impression she made on me: thin, pale, tottering, with an expression of indescribable sadness and misery, and no one had pity on her. Woe to the Sisters who showed any sign of pity. Oh my God, I have never seen such cruelty. It was a treatment like that meted out to slaves in Africa! Never did she have any warm drink. They gave her only bread and water.

At night I was haunted by the thought that one of my Sisters was lying on the stones, in the damp prison. At table, that this unfortunate person, who, moreover, having lost her health and having the appearance of a ghost, had for nourishment nothing but bread and water, and that this was a young lady who was used to delicacies. They did not permit her to go for Confession nor Communion. She did not say the Divine Office nor did she have any book. No one spoke to her. She was always alone at the end of the garden,

completely separated from every living being. She could have died and no one would have known it. After several months, I think six or seven, the first time, Father Estrate finally gave the order to bring her back to the community. They put her in the last place everywhere, forbade everyone from speaking to her and in the refectory she ate what was served to the community. But as it was Mlle. Dartigaux who divided the food, she gave her little very, very little, as it was her custom to do with the Sisters who were not her favourites. She even kept her only on bread and water, so that the poor unfortunate thing did not have enough to satisfy her hunger specially after having passed so many months in such a rigorous fast.

They began to hear noises at night. Things were missing from the store-room, and at last they discovered that Sister Marie Joseph got up when everybody was sleeping and went to take bread, cheese, chocolates and all that she could find to eat and drink, to make up for what she was not given in the refectory. She even hid a slab of a chocolate in her mattress.

That was enough for Father Estrate to send her back again to the terrible prison, and this time they closed carefully the two windows with wooden boxes because a Sister had gone to speak to her. So now the poor, unfortunate Sister had neither air nor light. For reading, light could come in only at midday and that by climbing on the window sill. It was a real dungeon. She remained there seven consecutive months except for four or five days, when it pleased Father to bring her out to see if she would follow community life. This time she was still more disfigured than before. This long fast added to the lack of air and light, had ruined her health completely. When she began to eat like the community, she suffered from diahorrea. She could not digest any more. But they did not show her any pity. I think she suffered from

rheumatism, for she could hardly walk. Once when they took her back after Mass, to her prison she could not climb the stone stairs in the garden as fast as Sister Euphrasie would have liked her to. She pushed her and let her fall twice during the crossing, and no one went to help her to rise.

One evening, during the few days that Sister Marie Joseph was with the community, she came for Matins and in the middle of the Office she fell, or lay on the floor. She imagined she was in ecstasy, for she said "Jesus" and did not wish to rise. Then the Mother Prioress with two other Sisters took her by the arms and legs and carried her to the prison of the laundry. After throwing her on the hay and closing the door, they returned for Matins. The following day she began to shout through the window, after having pushed aside the boxes and let them fall, so that she could get some light. She also broke a glass pane and that was enough reason to keep her for two days without even her pittance of bread, and she received from Mother Prioress a whipping with the *courbach*, with the help of two Sisters who held her, stretched on the straw.

I do not know how the unfortunate child did not yield to utter despair, without the sacraments, without prayer, treated like a beast, left to herself, and to the devil, who assuredly tempted her.

Meanwhile, the poor creature, asked and pleaded to be allowed to make her confession and Father Estrate who was then our ordinary confessor did not wish to hear her, neither did he permit that she make her confession to the extraordinary confessor. Only at Easter did she make her confession and receive Communion. It was then one of the occasions when they brought her out of prison for some days. Madame Pradel, her mother, and Mlle. Madeleine, her sister were desolate at not receiving any news of Sister Marie

Joseph. It was then that Mlle. Dartigaux, gave me the duty of going to make her write a letter to her mother, which she did. It was because of this that I can speak of what I had seen and heard, for I went several times to the prison. But Mlle. Dartigaux feared that I showed her some compassion and did not send me anymore. The unfortunate Sister asked me each time to beg Father Estrate to hear her confession. He would not hear of it nor did he allow her to go to the extraordinary confessor. Meanwhile, I made them give her her breviary to say the Office, a little stool to sit on and they allowed me to let in a little air and light, by pushing the boxes about 30 centimetres from the top of the window, so that she could read and write her letter.

The last stay in this prison was of seven consecutive months. They told her that she would have to remain there until her death, and she would be buried in a corner like an animal! It was only when the Patriarch came on his canonical visit in the month of February 1887, that His Beatitude, at the repeated requests from several of us went to see her in the prison and gave orders to bring her back to the community. We had told him that this unfortunate Sister was deprived even of air and light. But that His Beatitude may not see all the misery of that dark prison, as soon as he said he wanted to enter the enclosure and see Sister Marie Joseph they ran before him and quickly removed all the boxes that blocked the window and let in air and sunlight. That made His Excellency say that the room was well ventilated. The following day I saw all the boxes put back in their place and it was only after some days that the unfortunate prisoner was set free.



## CHAPTER XII

## THE FOUNDRESS OF THE CARMEL OF BETHLEHEM

Truly, Father, I do not know how to begin this Chapter. It relates to facts so extraordinary that they seem impossible. However, I must say I will write only the strictest truth.

Mlle. Berthe Dartigaux had been brought up at home under the eyes of her mother – a woman truly virtuous and pious, but severe and strict with her only child whom she loved, however, with all her soul and in whom she did not tolerate any weakness. Mlle. Berthe was of a haughty and proud nature. All had to yield to her will, but grace had done much for this soul who was given to God from her earliest years. “Do not condescend” was her slogan. She had never condescended to glance at the solicitations of the world, although with her attractive looks, her education, and her large fortune she could have shone. On her deathbed, her mother had entrusted her to Father Estrate, her confessor, and since then, this Father, took over the direction of the soul of Mlle. Dartigaux as much as the administration of her property. She did absolutely nothing without his permission and his advice. She was not generous by nature, but just the contrary, as she herself admitted. But Father Estrate made her do all that he wanted, and he was very generous. It is through his influence that Mlle. Dartigaux accepted to be the foundress of the Carmel of Bethlehem. In the beginning and as long as Sister of Jesus Crucified was alive, she moderated and regulated the relations between these two perfectly pure souls, who had unlimited confidence in her. But when this curb was lacking, many abuses set in, and that was the misfortune of the Carmel of Bethlehem.

I must say that Mlle. Dartigaux never had a vocation to the religious life. Sister of Jesus Crucified used to tell her that she was not called to it, but that instead she should do good in the world. I think that because she had no vocation and consequently the grace necessary to live in this narrow enclosure of the Carmel, where she locked herself up, during the last years of her life, without ever getting out of the walls of the monastery, this solitude had a fatal effect on her mind and on her temperament.

For some months, after her first arrival at Bethlehem, she came with the community. She dined in the refectory between the Mother Prioress and the Mother Sub-Prioress. She came for recreation, but she lacked our spirit and we did not have hers. We shocked and scandalised her, and she retired completely from the community. At first, she did not meddle with anything or anyone and was contented with spending two hours in the morning and as many in the afternoon, with Father Estrate, in the parlour. However, little by little, she began to meddle in the kitchen, to divide the food in the refectory and then she took up the direction of the novitiate. For some time there was no mistress of novices at all, and then as the Mother Prioress was not at all in their favour, first the novices and then the professed sisters, went to Mlle. Dartigaux for all that had to be done.

All the correspondence of the Sisters passed through her and Father Estrate and even to make a penance in the refectory we had to inform her if we had not been able ask Father in the confessional.

I myself said to him one day in the confessional: “Father, what must I do when I wish to make a mortification in the refectory? Does not the Constitution say that we must ask permission from the Mother Prioress, or should we ask you for it?” “Yes,” he replied to me, “the Constitution does

say that the Prioress should give the permission but I am obliged to withhold it from her and you will do well in telling me about it." Now the Prioress at the time was Mother Teresa of Jesus, who was assuredly the most virtuous of all those we have had at Bethlehem. But from that time, they agreed to crush her, to insult her, and to take away all authority from her and to treat her like a rag, with the worst indignity. The poor thing submitted to everything and humbled herself always. I could never bear such things. When Mlle. Dartigaux sent me a letter through a Sister, I did not read it until I went to our Mother whom they called "the Mother Prioress" and I said to her, "Mother, Father Estrate or our *Toute Mere* has sent me a letter from my Sister (any one else). Permit me to read it", and she replied gently, "When our Father sends you a letter, you do not need to ask me for permission". I said to her, "It's my duty to do it Mother, and it is for you to give us the permission. Our Father wishes us to observe the Constitutions." I could never relate here all the insults, all the indignities this poor Mother had to undergo because of Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux, but before going further I must say here, that I am certain that the foundress was no more responsible for her actions in the last period of her life. There was mental illness in the family, for her mother's two brothers were stricken with this sad illness and died of it.

Mlle. Dartigaux was closed up in this strict enclosure without having a vocation for it, without the grace of the holy habit, without that of saying the holy Office, nor of obeying our holy rule. It is not astonishing therefore, that her mind, without having anything to occupy it, and distract it, without any relaxation or any recreation, except those hours spent in the parlour with Father Estrate, besides being inclined to it by her temperament, I say it is not astonishing that her mind should be unbalanced and that she should behave like a

person who had lost her senses. Besides, she ate hardly anything and consequently she became extremely feeble. I think she took good wine and several little cups of black coffee per day but what she ate was insufficient as far as I know, to sustain her. And then, on this subject she was very reserved. It was Father Estrate who sent her lunch in a basket. Sister Mary of the Holy Pastors who looked after her, went to receive it at the door of the enclosure alone, daily at midday, at the striking of the hour. This little room, where Mademoiselle took her meals, was always closed and the key was left in the Chapter room, where she stayed. The Chapter room was also locked, except for some time in the morning when the Sister in charge made her bed etc. No one could enter it. Those who wished to speak to the foundress had to do so through the window which opened on to the garden. She replied without moving from her arm chair which one could not even see, for it was at the other end of the large room.

I do not know exactly when this kind of fits of anger began. But it seems to me that it was more or less a year, or a year and a half before her death. When some Sister, from among those she treated badly, did something, which upset her, and sometimes even without reason, Mlle. Dartigaux threw herself upon her, beat her, slapped her, seized her, (specially towards the end) by the throat, with her two hands and would have strangled her if the Sister herself or others who were present, had not saved her. The one whom she treated with the greatest indignity and struck the most was, I think, poor Sister Marie Clemence, who was portress and consequently obliged to go often to the turn which in Bethlehem is about 20 to 30 metres away from the house. Mlle. Dartigaux waited for her there, seized her, beat her, then made her open her mouth and spat in it and also in her face!! This poor little Mother, who was then Sub-Prioress,



submitted to this unheard of and ignoble treatment. Then I saw her returning to the choir and weeping hot tears during prayer. I did not know what had happened to her for I was completely unaware of the infamous behaviour of the foundress, who thought she had the right of treating certain Sisters, specially the Arabs, and the novices, according to the whims of her disdainful and arrogant nature, driven, I think, by her madness, over which she had no control.

I must say that she never touched me nor exercised her madness on the other Sisters in my presence. They told me later that she feared me and did not dare to do these things in front of me. They even hid them carefully from me. The whole community, or almost the whole, knew about it, but as I never asked anything, although sometimes I heard noise and I saw tears, I was completely unaware of what went on. If I had seen Mlle. Dartigaux strike a religious, assuredly I would have said to her fearlessly: "Mademoiselle, how do you dare beat a person consecrated to God? Do you not know that in doing so you are ex-communicated?"

Once, at the beginning of compline, she sent for Sister Marie Alphonsine, a young Arab Sister, a pupil of the Ladies of Sion. She beat her and submitted her to a thousand indignities. Towards the end of compline, this poor child arrived in choir, all in tears and breathless. I could not imagine what had happened. Then the foundress took her and led her to her cell and kept her in prison there until the next day, when one of her old mistresses came to see her and she was let out.

On another occasion, she pounced on Sister Marie Louise (Mlle. Le Camus) and in front of several other Sisters whom she called to see the punishment she inflicted only because she imagined that, as sacristan she was not careful

enough. She beat her, slapped her, spat on her, and holding her by the chin, pushed her fingers into her nose, from where blood spurted out. Seeing her covered with blood, Mlle. Dartigaux took dirty water from the tub under the tap and threw it on her. Mother Sub-Prioress and some other novices, who were present, tried to free Sister Marie Louise from the hands of this furious woman who would not let her go. At last, they succeeded in leading her away, but she was in a very sad state, all wet, her clothes torn and stained with blood, and her veil pulled off. One can imagine the indignation of this young religious, daughter of M. Le Camus who administered all the property of Mlle. Dartigaux and to whom she was very much indebted for his good offices!

Mlle. Gauvain, Sister Paula of St. Jerome, did not escape her either! During the great silence one day, Mlle. Dartigaux went up to her cell, struck her, and beat her as much as she could!

And Mother Therese, the Prioress! God knows all that she made her suffer. She insulted her at every moment in public and in private. One day, having found a dirty vessel which was being used by a Sister, she took it and filling it with water, she caught hold of Mother Prioress and washed her face in this dirty water several times, wetting her toque and insulting her, sent her away. I heard her say, "Go and get married Mlle. Carrere"! The poor Mother said nothing but blushed up to her eyes. Before the whole community she called her "Mlle. Carrere" and it was enough for Mother Prioress to give an order, as for example to say the Office for the Dead, for Mlle. Dartigaux to give a counter order, in the ante-choir.

I shall never be able to describe the state in which, this poor community of Bethlehem was, during the last year

before the death of Mlle. Dartigaux. It was pitiful! There was neither Prioress nor Sub-Prioress, nor Depository except in name. It was Mlle. Dartigaux and Father Estrate who governed all. The latter, even held the Chapter every Sunday, in the parlour, where he made Mother Prioress make her *culpa*, like the others, and that for several weeks. After that, I think, he got tired of this affair and said that as we did not profit from it, he did not wish to do us that favour and we remained until the canonical visit of the Patriarch in the month of February, 1887 without any regular Chapter. We had only those frightful *conciliabules* in the parlour of which I have already spoken, which froze us with fear.

Sometimes I said to our Mother that it was her duty to hold the Chapter, but she replied to me very gently that she was not capable of doing it, and really I am not surprised, for Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux, treated her and made other sisters treat her, with such indignity and insolence, before the whole community, that she needed grace and special assistance from God, to carry on with that humility and that perfect equanimity, which she always showed, without a sign on the face, or a word of excuse. She prostrated with her face to the ground, asking for pardon, even when some Sister, for example, the Mother Sub-Prioress gave her a reprimand, in the ante-choir, in the name of the foundress, or when the foundress herself, came to give her one in the most insulting manner! Truly it was a world turned upside down.

It was not only reprimands but the most severe penances. Once when the poor Mother had picked up many grapes from the garden which the wasps had half-eaten, and not to let them get spoilt entirely, she wished to get them cleaned and to serve them to the Sisters in the refectory. Lo! Mlle. Dartigaux, who interfered in everything, found those grapes which looked very bad, in the pantry. Soon she found

a pretext to pounce on our Mother and also on Sister Emmanuel the Depository, whom she said had helped to pluck those grapes, which was, however, false. She got those grapes brought to the turn, to show them to Father Estrate and called me as witness, for then she had taken me in her favour.

The Father arrived and condemned Mother Prioress and the Depository to eight days of fast on bread and water, for having picked up and wished to serve to the community bad grapes!!! And then they obliged them to sort them out and clean them in the cloister courtyard and that's what they did! Poor Sister Emmanuel was old and had a severe pain on one side which made breathing difficult. She wept with pain and grief at witnessing such unjust and unseemly behaviour. I suffered as much as she did and tried to comfort and console her. I begged Mlle. Dartigaux to ask pardon for her from the Father, because she was ill, but he refused, and I had to place a poultice on her chest, which had the effect of a vesicatory. The only relief that I could obtain for poor Sister Emmanuel was to get a cup of black coffee brought to her in the morning. In spite of her great sufferings she spent eight days, like our Mother on bread and water.

Mlle. Dartigaux, made them go to the parlour, to receive a reprimand from Father Estrate, and having made them go on their knees before the open grille, Father passed his stick through the grille several times. As he was not able to beat them, he poked their stomachs with the end of his cane, and then as they prostrated, Mlle. Dartigaux took their heads and knocked them against the pavement!!! I have all this information from the lips of Sister Emmanuel herself, who related it to me before my departure from Bethlehem.

Yet another time, she caught hold of Sister St. Louis' throat with her two hands in order to strangle her, because she

had written to Monsignor, the Patriarch, and as the latter struggled to free herself saying, "You want to kill me." "Yes," replied Mlle. Dartigaux, "I want to kill you". One can see that this action is definitely that of a mad person. Only thus can we understand and judge such unbelievable conduct on the part of Mlle. Dartigaux, but what one cannot understand, is that Father Estrate always supported, approved, praised her, called her a saint, and pitied her as a victim of the cruelty and the wickedness of the community, specially of the senior Sisters! I do not know if she gave him an account of what she was doing, of the way in which she treated the Sisters, but I could see that the priest's manner of acting and his speech were in perfect agreement with those of the foundress. May God forgive them.

What proved still more their bad faith, in all these affairs was the secrecy they maintained with Monsignor, the Patriarch. Several letters that the Sisters wrote, had been intercepted and opened by Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux, specially that of Sister St. Louis, who asked to leave. It would be too long if I intended to write all the details here. I only know that I myself did not dare to write to Monsignor for fear that my letter be opened. Sister St. Louis was lucky enough in managing to get her letter across to His Excellency secretly. In it, she begged of him to come on his visit since he had not come for the last two years, and it was thus we were able to make known to our Superior what went on in the community.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CANONICAL VISIT OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE PATRIARCH

3 February 1887. The state of affairs in the Carmel of Bethlehem had now reached a degree which made life impossible and unendurable. Father Estrate through Mlle. Dartigaux who was his intermediary with the community gave authority to one after the other of the Sisters, who, they thought would follow their views and could be led blindly by them. They even wished to make use of me, to accomplish their pernicious and secret designs – always without the knowledge of our legitimate Superior, Monsignor, the Patriarch – and I must admit, that, it was only for a short time I was partly deceived by the specious words and confidences of Mlle. Dartigaux and by her affection, for she knew how to take in people when she wished to. Little by little, I perceived that she deceived me, that she acted underhand, that she did not seek truth and justice in her relations with the Mothers and Sisters, that she reprimanded and punished them according to her caprice and wished to make use of me as her instrument in this illegitimate and unjust government.

At first I believed that she was a saint, for I could not think she and Father Estrate deceived me, and specially that they wished to put me in the place of legitimate authority, which I could not bear. I was straight forward, as usual and doubtlessly, I did many foolish things, committed many faults. However, the good God had regard for my good intentions, and for my uprightness, and He did not permit that I should long be deceived, nor completely so. Mlle. Dartigaux said to me one day, "you do not know how to deceive", and I think that is quite true, for when I am obliged to pretend, others perceive it at once and I am unhappy in such a situation.

I was, therefore, soon put aside and to my joy I went back to my place, for, all my ambition and my prayer was, to be the last and the least in the Carmel of Bethlehem.

Until fifteen days before the visit of Monsignor, the Patriarch, I was completely unaware that Mlle. Dartigaux beat the Sisters etc – and I did not suspect at all that she was losing her head, or that she had lost it, and it is quite by chance that I heard from the Mother Sub-Prioress, Marie Clemence, the ignoble manner in which Mlle. Dartigaux treated her. I was so indignant, so seized with horror when I learnt of the unheard of monstrosities, that I have only partly related, that I believed it my duty to do all in my power, that Monsignor, the Patriarch, might know all that went on, and I questioned several Sisters to know the truth, exhorting them to tell Monsignor everything when I came to know that his visit was expected.

This is now the place to relate another unheard of machination to maintain the status quo of this frightful state of affairs, and to prevent us from making known what we had to suffer. Father Estrate was our ordinary confessor for the past six years. Church law insists that confessors be changed every three years unless all the religious capitulars sign a petition to ask Monsignor that the confessor be reappointed. Father Estrate had been reappointed once and there were only a few days left to terminate the second triennial. A large part of the community awaited it with impatience in order to have liberty of conscience in confession. As for me, I must say in all truth, that I was free in confession only on Ember days when Don Theophile, our extraordinary confessor came. And the rest of the time God knows how I made my confessions. I went to them in fear and trembling always imploring Our Lord to inspire Father Estrate to speak to me gently. So afraid was I of the scenes he made when he was not

happy with anyone. I could not tell him either my temptations or my sins, for example I heard him say at the secret meetings in the parlour: "I am your founder, the delegate of His Excellency. I am the one whom he asked to preach the pastoral retreat for three consecutive years, what His Excellency has not asked of anyone else" etc. etc. Then when he exhorted me to humility, the thought came to me: "Yes, it is beautiful and good to exhort, but if you would give us an example that would be better!"

One day, a little before his three years as the confessor had elapsed, Sister Mary Louise asked me what was necessary to reappoint a confessor. I told her that the votes and signatures of all the religious capitulars were needed. "I shall never give my vote," she said. "Neither will I," I added. At this moment Mother Marie of the Infant Jesus arrived. She had, once more, I don't know how, again managed to ingratiate herself with the Father and Mlle. Dartigaux. We were near the fountain which is not a regular place and consequently it is not forbidden to say a few words. But, Father Estrate in his upsetting all the ancient customs, had forbidden us to speak here while in all the regular places one could now speak! Mother of the Infant Jesus went immediately to tell the foundress that she had seen me speaking to Sister Mary Louise, and some moments later she came to our cell where I had entered and said to me: "Sister I come as the 'zelatrice' to ask you to give me an account of what you told Sister Mary Louise a little while ago!" Everybody knows at Carmel that the 'zelatrices' have no right whatever to ask for an account from anyone, but only "to observe the faults and to tell them to the Superior". (Constitution: Chapter XIV). I knew that she did not come from authority for our poor Mother was treated like a zero and I told her quite dryly: "Mother I do not have to render an

account to you". She said to me again: "You will have to repent for it if you do not do it." – Without further ado, I repeated the same words and with that she went away.

The next morning I heard the bell for one of those *conciliabules*. We had to go to the parlour. Father Estrate put me in the centre according to his custom, beside Sister Mary Louise, and as I said nothing he ordered the 'zelatrice' to relate what had passed on the eve, which she did. The Father asked me why I had replied thus to Mother of the Infant Jesus. I only said "that according to the Constitution one did not have to give an account to the 'zelatrice'." Then arose an exclamation of indignation that I had dared to quote the Constitution, and the Father ordered that I be led to my cell, and that I be deprived of voice and presence at the Chapter! Sister Paula of St. Jerome got up and took me by the sleeve to lead me, but the Father ordered the Mother Prioress to do it, and I was confined to my cell as in a prison. After my departure he questioned the other Sisters, namely Sister Emmanuel, Sister Marie of the Cross, Sister St. Louis, and Sister Madeleine, about what they thought of my conduct, in speaking in a forbidden place. It seems that the first two answered in such a way that he could not condemn them, but as Sister St. Louis and Sister Madeleine did not show any indignation at my conduct, the Father also put them in prison in their cells and deprived them of voice and presence at the Chapter!

Thus they got rid of three capitulars who they knew well would not sign the petition to ask His Excellency to re-appoint Father Estrate as confessor and so immediately they hurried up to draft it and to take it to the Sisters one by one in their cells to make them sign it. It is understood that the three of us Sister St. Louis, Sister Madeleine and myself had no

knowledge of it. It was neither presented to Sister Emmanuel. Sister Marie Louise refused absolutely to affix her signature. Sister Marie Joseph who was in prison was absent also, so that six capitular Sisters did not sign the petition which they sent, in all haste, to Jerusalem asking for an immediate reply adding that there were three deprived of voice in the Chapter!!

They knew very well that His Excellency was to come for his canonical visit in a few days, but they wanted the reappointment of Father Estrate before Monsignor could verify and examine the situation, and on the next day they sent again for the answer, to their petition, which His Excellency, who did not suspect their ruse, signed.

As I did not want to be reproached for having lacked in respect by excusing myself regarding Mother Marie of the Infant Jesus, I went to ask our Mother for her pardon. This was immediately reported to Father Estrate who at once, sent me two or three sheets of paper with the order to write my culpa in detail – what he called "avowals", – that is to say, all that Sister Marie Louise and other Sisters had said to me and my replies to them. Three religious came to give me that message, Mother Prioress, Mother of the Infant Jesus and Sister Euphrasie, for though after our Mother had made her public *culpa*, they had pardoned her, and after several months of privation, the Father had allowed her to receive Holy Communion again, she was deprived of it even on Christmas night – they did not trust her much. Then, after having sent me the paper, the three Sisters came to ask me if I had obeyed Father. I said: "No" and that, after having prayed much to know what I should do, I had resolved to tell the Patriarch everything, at his canonical visit which I knew was due soon. I added "that I would have written to him but that I feared my

letter would be opened; this obliged me to wait to tell him orally what I had to say to him”.

My reply annoyed them very much and Mother of the Infant Jesus asked me how I knew that the letters addressed to Monsignor were opened. “You know it as well as I do”, I replied, “for Father Estrate himself told us in the parlour in public in front of the whole community and he showed us a letter from Sister St. Louis to Monsignor.” “Well, if you do not wish to obey you will go away.” After which they left.

This word was a light for me. I resolved immediately to ask God what he wished that I do, for I only wanted to do his holy will, and then to tell Monsignor everything and to receive from his lips the expression of his holy will. As I was praying, the thought of returning to Pau was clear to my mind and I only waited for the decision of my Superior. Meanwhile, I wrote the main events I had to bring to his notice in detail in order not to forget anything and not to spend too much time with His Excellency.

Monsignor, the Patriarch, arrived to begin his canonical visit on 3 February 1887, and he allotted three days for it, that is from Thursday till Saturday. Every evening he went to sleep at the major seminary at Beitjallah. He saw each Sister in private and some even went twice, according to the permission of His Excellency, who said to us expressly that he wanted it to be so, and that he would give us all the time we needed. Two years had elapsed since his last canonical visit and Monsignor had no knowledge of what was going on in the Carmel of Bethlehem. So well had they hidden under the specious pretext of observing the rule and the constitutions in their primitive spirit and prevented all communications between the Sisters and their Superior.

Among the abuses we had to point out to Monsignor were the grave infractions of the rule of enclosure. M. Guillemot, the architect, had thought of changing the place which Sister of Jesus Crucified had marked for the building of the Church of the monastery. It was not yet built, and he planned a church which would be placed in the highest part of our property very close to the residence of the Fathers of Betharram. They had opened a large double door in the wall of our enclosure for the convenience of the workers. This door was made out of planks of old crates, and as the sun had warped the wood there was a chink of two to three centimetres between each badly joined plank. And besides, this door did not have any lock, nor any bolt, but was closed from inside with the help of two big wooden bars placed at different distances. One end was fixed against the door and the other against a log of wood buried firmly on the ground. In the morning I saw Sister Josephine, a lay Sister, all alone, before the rising clapper, going to remove those two bars of wood and open the door before the arrival of the workers. Anyone could easily see her during the day and even at night, open the door and leave the enclosure. This state of affairs continued for over a year and when I left the Carmel of Bethlehem, it was not changed at all in spite of the recommendations and serious remonstrations made by Monsignor, the Patriarch on the strict necessity of observing our enclosure. He was obliged to render an account of it to Rome if they had come to know that it was violated. I only make mention here of the violation of this single point of enclosure, which had to be observed with exactitude, for, I cannot relate everything. I only say that everything else was in keeping with this. One could see the novices and the white veiled Sisters alone without a tierce, without their big veil on, opening the door for the workers and speaking to them and that sometimes everyday. I saw it with my own eyes and I complained on the subject to Mother Prioress.

When my turn arrived to see Monsignor, I spoke to him about what happened on the subject of Sister Marie Louise and the written account which Father Estrate had demanded of me. His Excellency said that I did not have to give that in writing and that I had done well in refusing. And it is only then that I learnt from His Excellency himself the story of the petition to ask for the re-nomination of Father Estrate as confessor. I showed His Excellency my indignation and I think he himself could not understand this kind of deceit. He told me that he had signed the paper, but that he did not suspect that the community or the greater part of it suffered in this strange way and desired another confessor, because no one had said anything to him about it. "I believe that no one could write to you, Monsignor, because our letters were intercepted, but this conduct is unique, and you see this is one more reason for me to ask your permission to return to Pau." I explained to His Excellency what had happened on this subject.

He acquiesced immediately to my request without reflection or a single objection. He told me to write immediately to the Mother Prioress of Pau by the following mail. That is what I did, by sending her my letter, begging His Excellency to recommend it. He had the goodness to do so and replied to me in the lines which I am copying textually:

"Very dear Sister, your letter endorsed by me will be forwarded to the Mother Prioress of Pau. I beg the good God to fill you with His blessings."

Latin Patriarchate Sgd + Vincent Patriarch of Jerusalem  
6 February 1887

Before terminating his canonical visit, Monsignor entered the enclosure to visit Sister Marie Joseph in her prison. I have already said how he was deceived again on

this occasion as the barricade before the window had been removed. And then on Saturday His Excellency assembled the whole community in the parlour to give us his recommendations. Among the first were that he wanted the religious to be given full liberty to write to him and he added: "I order you, Mother, to receive all the letters that are addressed to me by the Sisters and to send them to me without opening them."

Then he made grave recommendations on the subject of the enclosure and many other points which he had noted down on a sheet of paper he had in his hands.

It was decided that Sister St. Louis leave with me as soon as we received the reply from Pau. Poor Mother Marie Clemence, Sub-Prioress, would have wanted to accompany us but being a conventual of Bethlehem it was not possible.

Another recommendation made by His Excellency was that the sick be given good treatment. Several of us had fever and among them was Mother Prioress, but Mlle. Dartigaux said that it was her imagination and Mother of the Infant Jesus was given the charge to see if she had ague during the time of the Office and to lead her outside to the door. I saw Mother of the Infant Jesus watching to see if Mother Teresa had an attack of fever at Vespers; and when she perceived that she was trembling, as is usually the case with intermittent fevers, she got up from her place, took Mother Prioress by the arm and her chair in the other hand and led her out of the choir and left her in the open passage until the end of Office. I shuddered with indignation and the other Sisters also, but the poor Mother obeyed like a lamb and no one dared to say anything.



## CHAPTER XIV

### DEATH OF Mlle. DARTIGAUX AND MY DEPARTURE FROM BETHLEHEM

Monsignor the Patriarch had said at the end of his visit, very wisely, that he nominated Father Estrate as vice-Superior. Consequently, he could not be at the same time confessor of the community, and for the next confessions His Excellency would give us another.

We admired his prudence and wisdom in providing thus for liberty of conscience, without hurting Father Estrate, and from the following week good Father Chirou came to hear our confessions. We were quite at ease with him.

Meanwhile, it was evident that Monsignor was now in the know of what was going on in the community about the behaviour of Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux towards the Sisters, for I think His Excellency spoke to Father Estrate, without however naming persons, to prevent the foundress from ill-treating the religious. I say I suppose this, for, from that day all their aim was to make us confess what we had said to Monsignor! They tried in every way to do this. Those that were most pressed to speak were Sister M. Clemence and Sister M. Alphonsine. It seems that in the past they had spoken in front of Sister Mary Cleophas of the bad treatment they had suffered at the hands of the foundress and this Sister had nothing more pressing to do now, than to denounce them to Father Estrate and Mlle. Dartigaux.

The two poor little Arab religious, Sister M. Clemence, who was then Sub-Prioress and Sister M. Alphonsine, were sent for to the parlour on 15 February and questioned on what they had told Monsignor and as they did not wish to repeat what they had said to His Excellency, Father Estrate gave an

order to put them in prison. Sister Marie Clemence was locked up in the prison that had been occupied by Sister Marie Joseph for seven months and from which she had just been freed by Monsignor and Sister Alphonsine was locked up in another room at the other end of the laundry and away from the prison of Sister Marie Clemence.

Alas, my God, how can I express the sorrow I felt when I did not see these two poor children any more in the community and when I understood that they were in prison, condemned ad libitum to bread and water. One day they brought them to the refectory at dinner time, and then Mother Prioress said that they had calumniated the foundress, and ordered Mother of the Infant Jesus and Sister Euphrasie to attach tongues of white cloth on their scapulars, in front and at the back, which was the punishment for those guilty of such a crime! They dined on the floor on bread and water, and then the two poor victims were taken back to their prison where they remained until 5 April, i.e. to say fifty days, Sister Marie Clemence on the hay spread on the floor, and with only a little blanket.

During all this time they were deprived of the sacraments. On Sundays they brought them to the choir for Mass with their tongues of white cloth on their scapulars. Poor children! My heart was rent with grief and indignation, for I knew they had only told the truth, and both were poor orphans without parents, without anyone to defend them and that is why they were blamed with accusations of calumny because they had reported to Monsignor the mean treatment they had borne from the foundress who now took revenge on them in such an unjust manner. I wrote immediately to His Excellency, telling him what was happening, but, as only ten days had passed since his visit, he could not return so soon.



However, the designs and judgments of God are unfathomable, and hardly fifteen days after the imprisonment and condemnation of these two poor children Mlle. Dartigaux died suddenly, without even receiving the sacraments nor any other spiritual help. She was always feeble, but nothing gave warning of so sudden an end. She came down to the choir before the *veni sancte* as usual, wearing her veil to receive Holy Communion, for she received it everyday without fail, at Father Estrate's Mass which he said during our prayer.

During Mass we saw that the foundress was suffering and sinking in her chair. The Sisters hurried around her and brought some smelling salts to revive her. But she could not say a single word. She moaned softly twice, her head fell on her chest, her face became livid, and she died before Father Estrate could finish Mass.

They ran immediately to let him into the enclosure. He came in all haste, and entering the choir cried out: "Ah! Look at your work – You, the old Sisters have killed her!" and he fell on his knees near her and gave her absolution which fell on a dead body for I am very sure she did not move any more.

We carried her to the Chapter room, where she had lived and they dressed her in white. It was Saturday, the fifth of March, and on Monday they buried her in the cloister not far from the door of the choir, at some distance from the dear tomb of Sister of Jesus Crucified.

We were thunderstruck and affrighted by this death so sudden and unexpected. I could not but make reflections that came spontaneously to my mind. But I prefer not to make any judgements and leave it to you, Father, and to the good God, to judge. I would only like to say that if Mlle. Dartigaux was not mad, it was a very sad thing to die so suddenly

leaving two poor religious in prison for the unjust and false accusation of calumny against her, while everybody knew that these children had only reported the bare truth. In all charity I can only hope that she was not in a state to be answerable for her actions.

What I cannot understand, however, is that Father Estrate and certain religious of his party spoke of her as of a saint. All the honour and all the devotions were now for the deceased foundress. Sister of Jesus Crucified, the true saint, was forgotten and put aside. Father Estrate began entering the monastery every day after her death. He spent several hours, morning and afternoon in the foundress' room – in the Chapter room where he made what he called the inventory of what had belonged to Mlle. Dartigaux. He remained there sometimes all alone, or even with one or several Sisters, and he went to pray at the tomb of the foundress which was decked with flowers and a portrait of himself (Father Estrate) in the centre. This went on every day except four or five days during the period after her death, 5 March until 28 April when I left Bethlehem.

The two prisoners were still in the same place. They did not even come for the funeral of the foundress. From time to time they were brought to the parlour in order to make them declare what they had told Monsignor and as they refused to do so they were taken back again to the prison. I saw through my window which opened on the garden, the two passing with their jailors, who exasperated them with their reproaches and hard and insulting words. They told them that they would remain in prison until their death, that it was they who had killed the foundress and a thousand other things of this kind, which I came to know later.

One day when I was walking about in the garden near their prison, I saw Sister Marie Clemence at the window which was close to the ground. She saw me and made a sign to me to approach. I looked on every side to see if anyone was within sight, and seeing that I was alone I went a little forward and then the poor prisoner threw a ball of rags which I picked up and then I escaped as fast as I could. On opening it, I found that she had written me a letter, in which she related to me why they had put her in prison, what they made her suffer etc, and pleaded of me to try to have her freed, that she might be able at least to go for Mass and follow the exercises with the community.

I wrote immediately to Monsignor and sent him this letter written in pencil that he might see what these poor children were suffering, and I begged of him to come to deliver them, for he had promised during his last visit to come again to Bethlehem after a month. Some days later, on 31 March, Monsignor visited us a second time. I had the grace of seeing him again and that was for the last time. We were still waiting for the reply of the Mother Prioress of Pau. But His Excellency told me that, being a conventual of that Carmel and having left my dowry there, they could not refuse me. It was definitely decided that Sister St. Louis should also leave. She spat and vomited blood for the preceding four years and no care at all was taken of her.

Good Father Chirou whom we had the happiness of having as confessor encouraged us, and as we wished very much to visit the Holy Places before returning to France, we had asked Monsignor to give us the permission, which he promised to do.

His Excellency went to visit the two prisoners and gave orders to free them. But they were left for five days longer in

prison, and it was only for Holy Week that they were brought to the community with their white tongues still hung on their clothes. They went to confession to Father Chirou hoping to make their Easter duties on Holy Thursday, but Father Estrate forbade them. It was only on Easter Sunday that these poor victims could receive their God after fifty days of privation of material and spiritual nourishment.

At last, they made them do their *culpa* where I admired their discretion, their humility and their charity. And then one day the Father assembled the whole community in the parlour. It was the last and the most frightful *conclabule* I ever assisted at. He began by putting me and Sister St. Louis in the middle, and made the most outrageous reproaches about our ingratitude towards the foundress, calling us monsters, infamous persons etc., saying that her death should be avenged, and that it was we who had killed her. And then he asked me what I had to say. I prostrated and replied that I had nothing to say. Then rose an explosion from all sides, one shouting one thing, and another something else. "Put her in prison!" "We must put her in prison because she does not reply to our Father," etc., and other shouts which were not clear. It seemed like the "*tolle, tolle*" of the Jews. I felt I was in the midst of demons. The Father was obliged to call the Sisters to order, by saying that if we were not to leave soon he would have put us in prison, but in order that we may not carry away a bad impression he would send us back to our cells. The impression could hardly be worse, for truly I had never assisted at a more shameful scene in a religious community. I did not know when the moment of departure would arrive. The reply from Pau arrived at last. The Mother Prioress said there was place only for two and not for three. Latterly, Sister Madeleine had also asked to leave. However, they did not

want to keep her and it was decided that all three of us should leave by the French steamer on 29 April.

We hoped to see again our good Father and lord, the Patriarch. But we were told that he was on his pastoral visit and Father Estrate wrote to the one acting in his place to send us our obediences. The obediences were given but they were not shown to us because they wanted to exercise their odious tyranny until the last, even in the most holy things.

Monsignor had promised us permission to visit the Holy Places before leaving Palestine and I had asked him to mention it in our obediences. He had given orders to this effect before he had left on his visit, but Father Estrate was determined not to allow us to enjoy so legitimate a consolation, and not to satisfy this desire of every Christian heart of visiting once more the Holy Places sanctified by the most sacred mysteries of our faith and our love.

The steamer was to leave Jaffa on Friday, 29 April, but they did not tell us for certain whether we were to take that one. It was only on Wednesday evening after Compline, during the Great Silence, when having retired to our cell as usual to wait for the hour of Matins, that Mother Prioress, Mother of Infant Jesus and Sister Euphrasie entered and Mother Prioress informed me that we were to leave the next day at four in the morning. Sister Euphrasie spoke next, as if Mother Prioress was not capable of explaining things herself, that they would give me a letter sealed with the seal of the Order and addressed to the Mother Prioress of Pau. In one corner was written "Obediences of the Sisters who are leaving". They told me that Father Chirou would accompany us up to Jaffa and gave me a purse with 400 francs which would pay our expenses up to Marseilles. The rest would be paid by Father Chirou. Sister Euphrasie was careful to tell me

that the money was being given to me because I was more used to travelling than the other two. They told me that I should not come for Matins and that I should go to sleep. It was to prevent me from meeting the Sisters.

I had written two letters to be mailed at Jaffa – one to my poor sick sister, almost dying, of whom I had had no news at all for several months, because our letters were intercepted, and the other to my God-mother and benefactress, Madame Gil Moreno de Mora to tell them that I was leaving Bethlehem. The one to my Sister was in English, and I put them with the letter for Mother Prioress of Pau, ready to be put into the little carpet bag which they said would be given to me the next morning at the moment of departure, for they did not give us even the liberty of getting our carpet bags ready for the voyage.

The clapper for Matins sounded and thinking there would be no one in the dormitory, I left our cell, and went to knock at that of Sister St. Louis to tell her that we were leaving the next morning, but lo and behold! Sister Euphrasie, who was watching, fell on me, shouting loud in spite of the Great Silence, telling me I was a devil, a liar, a hypocrite, and made me get back into our cell. Then she brought Mother Prioress and Mother of Infant Jesus from the choir, and all the three created an atrocious scene, threatening to put me in the prison (of the laundry). Finally they took back the letter for Pau and the brief case, seized my two letters which they carried away, threatening me and forbidding me to leave the cell, and to prevent me from getting out they tied my door and those of Sister St. Louise and Sister Madeline with string, so that we could communicate with no one.

All this was done in such a rage and without any respect for the Great Silence that I was stunned. It seemed to me that

the demons were let loose and surrounded me. I trembled with cold and fear, but the good God helped me. I was calm and tried to keep silence saying only a few words very softly. But I could not dispel this feeling of satanic influences except after blessing myself with holy water after the Sisters had left. They made the same disgraceful scene with the other two Sisters who were leaving. Sister St. Louis threw holy water on them and bolted her door.

As can be imagined, I did not have a wink of sleep the whole night. Towards three o'clock Sister Euphrasie knocked at my door and untied the strings attached to it. We came down to the courtyard and though Father Chirou said Mass in the Chapel they did not allow us to attend it, nor to go to the choir until the Mass was finished.

It is understood that we did not make our confession nor receive Communion in preparation for this long voyage. They kept watch on us up to five o'clock and then we heard the bell ring at the door of the cloister. It was good Father Chirou who had come to take us. Oh! with joy we went out of that door which the Sisters closed with a bang behind us. Truly I felt like a bird delivered from its snares. And after kissing the hand of good Father Chirou I said to him "*Laqueus contritus est et nos liberati sumus*". He was as happy as we, seeing us out of this prison where we had lived like galley slaves in continual fear. Father Planche, another Betharramite, was also with him and they took us a little further to the carriage which was waiting to take us to Jaffa.

We related to Father Chirou the incidents of the previous night and he told me that the Sisters had given him the letter addressed to the Mother Prioress of Pau and the purse with the money telling him not to give them to us until we were on board the steamer at Jaffa.

We begged of him to take us to visit the Holy Places before embarking. But we would need fifteen days more for this and they had given us just enough time to arrive at Jaffa and take the steamer. As Monsignor was not at Jerusalem, we did not know whether he had expressly mentioned in the letter of obedience that he permitted us to visit the Holy Places. Father Chirou, always very good, said he did not wish to oblige us to leave like this, like pieces of baggage, but that he had consulted the Visitor who was just then at Bethlehem, and the Father had said to him that considering the circumstances and the bad reputation in which the Carmel of Bethlehem was held, and the bad treatment to which the religious were subjected, it would be better to leave directly without stopping at Jerusalem or even at the Crib which we could see before us, so as not to give scandal.

What could we do before the charity and goodness of this dear and good Father who spent himself for us? With a heavy heart and tears in our eyes we had to make this sacrifice which I will remember until my last breath.

Monsignor was to return in three days, but the poor Sisters of the Carmel of Bethlehem did not want us to meet him, and expedited our departure in his absence without giving us even a day at Jerusalem. All that I can say is "God forgive them."

I came to know later from Father Chirou that Monsignor was very upset when he came to know, that in spite of his permission to visit the Holy Places, we had been sent off directly without even showing us our obediences. That is one more proof, to show the bad spirit that governed to the end, the poor Carmel of Bethlehem, from which God had delivered us in His mercy.

We got into the carriage with good Father Chirou whose paternal goodness we can never forget. He seemed to want to make up for all we had suffered, and during the whole journey to Jaffa we related in detail, the terrible experiences of our life at Bethlehem. He already knew something but only as confessor, and now he told us that, all that we related seemed unbelievable and impossible and that in accounts of the tyrannies of the Middle Ages one would not find worse experiences.

We passed in front of the Holy City and we saw before us the cupola of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where I have always felt my soul would stop on leaving my body. However, we had to go ahead without even saluting and watering with our tears the places which Jesus had watered with His Blood. Once more I say "God forgive them".

We stopped at Bongosch, very close to Emmaus, where many excavations had been made, and Father Chirou proposed that we go there. But I said, "I could not go to Jerusalem. What am I going to do at Emmaus?" We saw it in the distance from the balcony of the little inn where we dined.

We spent the night at Jaffa with the Franciscan Fathers. Next morning, before embarking, we had the consolation of making our confession to our good Father Chirou and of receiving Jesus from his hands. How I wept with gratitude for being able to receive him again in peace here and also every day that I had the occasion during the voyage. At last we were out of that Jansenistic atmosphere which had dried up my soul and let me die by inches. At last my soul could breathe unreservedly in liberty. All my sorrow was for the dear Sisters whom I had left in that anguish behind me. And I knew how much some of them suffered, specially the two poor little Arab religious.

Father Chirou told us to stop at Montpellier and tell Father Lazare everything, and to follow his advice, as we did not know in what dispositions we would find the Carmelites of Pau whom Father Estrate had tried to drag into his pretended reform.

We went to visit the good Sisters of St. Joseph at Ramleh and at Jaffa, where I found some of my former daughters, who left no stone unturned to show their affection. We promised to go to their motherhouse at Marseilles and ask for a night's hospitality.

On Friday, 29 April, Father Chirou accompanied us aboard the steamer which had to leave that evening, and then he went back to Bethlehem taking with him our affection and undying gratitude. God knows what this good Father suffered because of Father Estrate's behaviour which he could not rectify, in spite of being his Superior. He was obliged to bear with him patiently and let him do as he pleased. Otherwise the whole foundation would have collapsed, or perhaps both, for, Mlle. Dartigaux was not a person whom one could oppose when she wanted anything. I can only say that the difference between Father Chirou and Father Estrate was like that between night and day as much in the spirit which animated their way of acting, as in the maxims they taught! Father Chirou was united to his legitimate Superiors and was submissive to them, while Father Estrate evaded them and let himself be influenced and governed perhaps without their knowledge by women who, according to Pius IX were always at the bottom when men went astray.

Yet Father Estrate had many talents and was endowed with superior intelligence and a rare gift of eloquence, had studied much, and was a man of deep piety. Before falling into the spirit of Jansenistic rigour he knew how to attract

and guide souls with remarkable goodness and wisdom. I knew him from my personal experience. But these daily and constant contacts with women who flattered him, made this poor Father unrecognizable. A religious man is out of his element with women just as a religious woman is out of her element with men. Both deteriorate and God forbid that it may not end in complete disaster.

Father Chirou always begged his Superior General to take him away from Bethlehem where he could not do his duty. Finally he returned to France a month after we did, and now he is happy at Betharram as Econome General of his Congregation. Father Estrate was appointed Superior at Bethlehem where another Father and a Brother were sent. May God help Father Estrate as Superior to watch a little more over himself.

The greatest stumbling block and element of discord having been taken away by the good God from the interior of the monastery, perhaps little by little things would improve. At the last elections Sister Euphrasie was elected prioress and Sister Marie Cleophas, the Sub-Prioress. All I can say is that I thank God for not being any longer at Bethlehem. Three Sisters have just died there within eight months: Sister Marie of the Cross, Sister Therese of Jesus (Mlle. Cabiran of Pau) and Sister Elizabeth of St. Joseph, a lay Sister. *Requiem eternam dona eis Domine.*

At Jaffa, before embarking, I met a doctor of the Alpee which was to take us to France. He told me that he had just travelled in Greece with an English lady whom I recognized as my sister Catherine, who was going to visit my other sick sister, the Ursuline, at Tinos. Thus I got news of my two sisters about whom I had known nothing for several months. They were upset about me, and Catherine had written to the

English Consul at Jerusalem who had replied to her that I had just left Bethlehem.

I cannot tell you what attention and kindness we received from each one in the course of our voyage. It seemed as though God inspired them to make up for all that we had just suffered at Bethlehem. Everywhere we were welcomed and treated as though we were angels come down from heaven.

On board the Alpee, we journeyed with M. Saignol, the President of the last pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and his two pious daughters. There were, besides, two religious of Nazareth, a Lazariste Brother with two dear little Arab girls whom he was accompanying to Paris to make their Novitiate as Sisters of Charity, and a French Franciscan priest. We were all like one community. There was no one right down to the cabin boys, who did not treat us with the greatest regard. Our bare feet and thin and pale faces excited their interest and compassion.

We got down at Port Said where we could hear Mass and receive Holy Communion. The kind Sisters of the Good Shepherd gave us breakfast. The next day, at Alexandria, it was the Sisters of Charity who gave us hospitality for the night. We hungered and thirsted for Jesus and earnestly sought to receive Him as often as possible. We had a very happy voyage and on our arrival at Marseilles we went to La Capelette, to the Sisters of St. Joseph. The Superior, Mother of the Mercy, would have liked to keep us longer. God reward them for their charity to the poor Carmelites. I wrote from Marseilles to Father Lazare to tell him that we were arriving and he was waiting for us at the station.

You know my good Father, what sympathy we found in you, specially I. God gave my soul into your hands and

you accepted it, not in a human but in a divine and deeply spiritual manner. And it is in obedience to you that I write this account of my poor life.

At Montpellier we remained for three days with our dear tertiaries near our Father Lazare, where we were treated like queens. I felt very much at home, so happy was I to find myself again with our Fathers whom I loved so much.

We related everything to Father Lazare who accompanied us up to Pau. At Lourdes where we stopped to honour our Immaculate Mother, I had the happiness of opening my heart which was full, to my Father, who gave me advice that I will never forget. He told me that, if in the future I were not happy, he would place me in a Carmel directed by the Carmelite Fathers.

On leaving Bethlehem, I felt I had a mission in France specially to support and defend, if need be, the memory of our holy Sister of Jesus Crucified. I left her dear tomb but I was going to find her heart at Pau. And as almost all the old Sisters of the community who had known her were dead I promised that I would do all in my power that she might not be consigned to oblivion. And I can say that after my arrival at Pau that this dear child has at least one religious, who had been her first old mother and who is very devoted to her. I have looked after the vault in the wall with pleasure where her dear heart is enclosed, decking with flowers, always awaiting the day when she will wake up from sleep and show that she is powerful with God.

On our arrival at the Carmel of Pau on 15 May, we were received with greatest cordiality. There were not more than three or four Sisters whom we had known – dear Mother Agnes, Sister Aimee, Sister St. Pierre and one more. All the others had entered during the twelve years that I had spent in

Bethlehem. I love them all but Father Estrate in wishing to introduce his reform had caused disorder in the community. They will feel the effects for a long time after.

Some months after my arrival my beloved sister who shared the grace of conversion with me left for the heavenly Fatherland leaving me as it were divided into two. Other events have taken place of which I have not yet been able to render an account to the Father of my soul, and consequently it is better that I do not mention here. I have the hope that before my death the good God will give me the grace of seeing him once again. And I ask him everyday to be kind enough to send one of my Fathers to help me at the hour of my death.

I finish this account on the 28th March 1889. It is destined for good Father Lazare who is free to do with it as he pleases after my death. Perhaps it would be better to burn it. And I beg of him to be kind enough to forgive me whatever he finds defective.

*Pau Marie Theres - Carmel de Pau*  
Aged 65 yrs 6 months *Carmelite L'obscure*



**J.M. + J.T.**

This writing was done for the Very Reverend Father Lazare de la Croix, Discalced Carmelite, Prior of Montpellier, who ordered me to write the story of my life, and above all to give details of all the circumstances and events connected with our very dear and Holy Sister Mary Jesus Crucified for the glory of God and the honour of His Servant.



As there are several things in this narration which may be confidential, I entrust it to Father Lazae with this intention. After my death he will do with it what he thinks proper.

Carmel of Pau, **Sister Marie Therese Veronique of Jesus**  
6 October 1887 Discalced Carmelite



The reader will kindly excuse mistakes of any kind that I have made in a language which is not my own.

**Sister M. Th.**