

LOUIS VAN DEN BOSSCHE

THE MESSAGE
of
Sister Mary of St. Peter

Translated from the French

by

MARY G. DURHAM

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CARMEL OF TOURS

France

163

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Arrow

"Defenders"



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Pope Pius XII

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✠ LUDOVIC, Bishop of Blesensis

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Lonis Van den Bossche
Secretary of State of His Holiness

John XXIII

From the Vatican, 4th March 1961

No. 572.18

Reverend Mother,

I have the pleasure to make known to you that your recent letter to the Sovereign Pontiff has duly reached its august Recipient, as well as the work consecrated by M. Louis van den Bossche to a religious of the Carmel of Tours, Sister Mary of St. Peter.

His Holiness has deeply appreciated this filial homage and has confided to me the duty of expressing to you, as well as to the author of the book, His hearty thanks. Certainly one can but hope to see many souls being edified by the reading of these pages.

Invoking most heartily the abundance of Divine graces on the Carmel of Tours the Sovereign Pontiff willingly sends you, as a pledge of His paternal benevolence, the desired favour of the Apostolic Blessing. Please receive favourably, Reverend Mother, with my personal thanks for the copy of this work which you have kindly wished to send to myself, the assurance of my devoted sentiments in Our Lord.

✠ A. DELL'ACQUA
Subst.



PREFACE

*"His Face became shining like the Sun" (Matt. 17. 21)
"Some of them began to spit upon Him and to cover His
Face and to buffet Him" (Mark 14. 65)*

When the Bible seeks to translate the attitude of Moses at the moment when his unfaithful people were dancing round the golden calf, it tells us that he "sweetened the Face of God". *Note 1.* Ex. xxxii. 11. (This expression is a Hebraism which signified to appease the divine wrath. It supposes a dialogue "face to face", that which moreover does not mean that God may have appeared under a human form.) To entreat Yahweh to calm His wrath, Moses conducts himself before the Lord "as a friend before his friend". This will be one of the two great tasks of every prophet of the Holy God; to unveil His Face to men hurrying to be converted to idols, to appease the Face of that God, of whose Love men make for.

The Face of God will always be that of a Face of insults inflicted, the gaze of men always ready for the seductions of many golden calves. And it is for that reason that every manifestation will be accompanied by a necessary reparation. In unveiling the Face of that God of whom he is the ambassador, the prophet or the saint lays bare in the same action the ineffable need which this visage has of being appeased, of being soothed.

As the "seven princes of Persia and Media", cited by the book of Esther, and whose primary function was to "contemplate the face of the Kings, seated in the first rank in the Kingdom" (Esther i. 14). Providence seems to have chosen in every age those to whom it would entrust a refulgence of this Face, those who would take up Jacob's morning cry "I have seen God, face to face and my soul has been delivered. (Genesis xxxii. 30).

Those who would maintain in a forgetful world the plaint of the exile, "When shall I come and behold the Face of God" (Ps. xlii. 3) and who would open their hearts to the cry that the divine work descending here amongst us would stir up. "Oh, if Thou wouldst rend the skies, and descend" (Isaiah lxi. 1). "To see God, to contemplate the King in His beauty" (xxxiii. 19). The psalms and the prophet have been only one long echo of this inexhaustible nostalgia of exiled man, of the prodigal child.

Man, after his sin, saw himself naked, and with his companion hearing the voice of the Eternal God who was walking in the garden towards evening, they hid themselves far from the Face of the Eternal God, but the Lord God called the man and said to him, "Where art thou?" He replied: "I was frightened" (Gen. iii. 9, 10). But we, we ourselves, have heard other replies, to conceal in is that echo of the old man, the response of Peter before the Transfigured Face. "This place is good, let us make three tents" (Matt. xvii. 4). That of the psalmist, "How marvellous is Thy goodness for those who fear Thee, Thou placest them under shelter in the sanctuary of Thy Face" (Ps. xxx. 21). That of the saints summed up by Theresa of Lisieux, "Thy Face is my only homeland"; "Make Thy Face to shine upon us and we will be saved" (Ps. lxxix. 4). God has responded to the desire born of the world of trial, in taking in the Incarnation the face of a man where we could read the features of that Face, of Yahweh which the Old Testament describes, "God has said: That from the midst of darkness the light shines, this is also Him who makes light to shine in our hearts, in order that the glory of God which is in the Face of Christ may shine therein" (2 Cor. iv. 6). At every moment of the life of Jesus one saw the reflection of the divine Face appear. And of that constant manifestation the Gospel has made known the two privileged moments.

The Face radiant in the splendour of the Transfiguration, disfigured and veiled under the outrages of the pretorium. "Thy Face is my only homeland".

"There were in the court of Ahasveris seven princes of Persia and Medea who were contemplating the face of the King sitting in the first rank in the kingdom".

To unveil and soothe the Face of God.

To each saint is confided a reflection of that visage and we know how much for example, Saint Theresa of Lisieux or Charles de Foucauld have related to our time the two aspects of kindness and of long suffering patience in regard to the divine mercy. To a little Carmelite of Tours, lay sister, must be confided fifty years earlier, this dream of the saints, to spread on earth the burning nostalgia of true adorers.

"Marie of St. Peter, this little unlettered and popular Bretonne, has no doubt taught us nothing but by the truth which she has seen, and by the manner in which she has lived and transmitted it, she has placed us once more before a reality which was no longer a reality for her time, and is still further not a reality for ours.

She has seen and summed up in a picture, full of sweetness and hope, the mysterious concordance between the Face of Christ and the divinity of God, between the disfigured Face of Jesus and the disfigured or destroyed image of God in the souls of men. Here is the whole reason and actuality of her message. (We indicate by this sign the passages borrowed from the chapters of the work.)

We would not know better how to sum up than by the conclusion of this book, the message of Sister St. Peter: to unveil and to appease, to imitate by her hidden life the voluntary effacement of the divine glory on the Saviour's Face, and to stir up in a prayer of reparation the response which the most sweet Mercy awaits from men's hearts, such is her whole life, her whole desire.

Sister St. Peter has known how to discern in the Holy Face a privileged place of spiritual convergence; a place where her desire of intimacy can expand itself. (To realize that which St. Theresa of Lisieux will call "heart to heart in awaiting face to face) place *par excellence* of her love for the humanity of

Christ, the Holy Face, being the token where she can recognize in the most expressive manner; finally it is for her the true visage of her humiliated suffering Saviour", it is by His bruises that we have been cured (Isaiah liii. 5). She can draw therefrom the sense of sin and the desire of salvation, which make but one thing for her, with the desire to imitate the effacement of the suffering Servant. "Thou will hide me, Lord, in the secret of your Face".

At the beginning of her life she wrote that which St. Therese often repeated, those words of Isaiah, "He is without beauty, without brightness" (Isaiah liii. 2). His Face was as if hidden; we have seen Him and we have not recognized Him, have made the foundation of my devotion to the Holy Face, or to express it better. "The whole foundation of my piety, I also would desire to be like Jesus, without brightness, without beauty, unknown by every creature" (Nov. Verba, p. 119).

Let us recall just two traits in the spiritual appearance of Sister St. Peter; on the one hand the manner in which her message is nourished by familiar expressions of Holy Scripture, the Fathers and the Saints; in the other hand, her unflinching obedience.

At once, she placed the work of reparation in biblical tradition, she discovers therein the most striking pictures. "Our Lord placed me at the same time in the spirit of that which was said, to Abraham" that if he found ten just men in the guilty towns they would be spared. When she wishes to describe the scandal of blasphemy she calls to mind "The betrayal of Our Saviour by Judas. I will consider with sorrow what an outrage the Holy Face of Our Saviour had received by such a perfidious kiss; or to show the value of a reparatory prayer." In the same way as in a kingdom one obtains all that one desires with a piece of silver marked with the Prince's effigy, so in the same manner also with the precious coin of the Sacred Humanity, which is the adorable Face, you will obtain everything by the offering of this divine coin or still further to eliminate the fear of passivity during prayer.

"Our Lord, who desired that I might follow His own method of prayer, put this comparison one day to my soul, that if the king invited me to His table, it would be very absurd if I should want to bring my dinner with me. Finally, when she wants to find a litany, it is towards the psalms that she turns herself spontaneously.

"May God arise and may His enemies be scattered, and may all those who hate Him flee before His Face."

One knows how her Prioress received Sister St. Peter: "My daughter, through obedience, go, and write that which you want to say, I have not the time to listen to you." As well as legitimate reticence in revealing that which was the ground of her prayer, difficulties in finding again divine communication in the midst of the requests of the porter's lodge, there was added for her the effort of a child ignorant of the art of writing and above all the impression of having to force her attention – Sister St. Peter bore with silence public reprimands in Chapter, penance, and prohibition against occupying herself with the work of Reparation. It seems that she may have had, through all this, a presentiment of the supernatural sense of her Mother Prioress's wisdom. She likes to compare herself to the ass of the Child Jesus, symbol of the humble resignation of her role, and of the imperfections which she felt in herself. She will often return to this theme in the instrumentality which assigns exact measure to her life; when she asks for pardon for her sins: "A workman cleans the instrument of which he desires to make use", or feels her fragility. The Lord always chooses the most feeble instruments in order to make His power shine forth further.

Tradition, obedience, in fine her realism is another guarantee of the truth of her writings. Like Therese of Lisieux, Sister St. Peter has a marked liking for realities and not consoling pictures; it is that which draws her towards the Holy Face and reparatory penitence. St. Therese explains this in quoting St. John of the Cross. "In order to find a hidden thing, one must hide oneself." Further, one will not find any illusion in Sister

St. Peter, who on being questioned, on the resemblance of a picture of the Holy Face, declares that "The Holy Face of Our Saviour has never been presented to her in a sensible manner." That which is precious to her in the Holy Face, is the reality of the saving love of God of which she can grasp in all His totality and His humiliation and not the discovery of a consoling picture.

One of Sister St. Peter's most beautiful titles to our veneration is the harvest which rose from her silence . . . Marie of St. Peter is dying. Everything has remained hidden; authority has demanded complete discretion until 1876. It is then that a little girl of Lisieux, three years before taking herself the name of Sister Therese of the Holy Face, inscribes her name in the oratory of Tours, in order to enter together with her whole family, after many thousands of the faithful, in the movement of prayers corresponding to Sister St. Peter's desire.

This should pose a last question for us.

Has not Sister St. Peter then, for us also, a role for the present time ?

Dictatorships have shown us the haste of crowds to feel themselves with the visage of their gods, and to transfigure their idols themselves. The cult of a physical, aphrodisiac beauty, the need of being immunized against all suffering, seems to have definitely placed again on the Saviour's wounded face the veil thrown by men. The folly of this sign erected for the despair of men is more scandalous than ever.

Blasphemies, omissions, rejections, divine response always borrows the same paths, as with the sacraments, God, in order to speak to all, chooses the most universally understood realities to reach the secret of souls, the most simple and human symbols; the Heart, the Face.

One will read in the last chapter of this book how the life and message of Sister St. Peter are more than ever of present interest.

Do not think that the choice of the Holy Face is arbitrary. Every soul can feel the truth of this in a double manner.

First of all because all love, if it wishes to be true, cannot bear an intermediary – heart to heart only finds its repose in face to face. “Now we see God with the aid of a mirror and in a blessed manner, then it will be face to face, now my knowledge is in part, then I shall know God as I am known of Him” (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

“Well-beloved, until now, we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested to us what we will be. We know that when the manifestation will be made we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.”

Love only develops in perfect unity, and only the Face of Christ, as the most real sign of its presence, can be the refuge where the demand of absolute unity is not frustrated. Finally, our life with God is as all life founded on a love. It only begins with the sharing of certain secrets. The Holy Face is one of God's most precious means to lead us to His secret. The secret of the King, that of the Transfiguration, the secret of the Servant, that of the Agony, “Man before whom one covers one's face, because He was disfigured, so much had He lost all human appearance; that becomes the secret of Perrine Éluère. The supreme manifestation of the divine Glory must show itself on the Face of Christ, these were the glory of God appeased, shining like the sun” (Mc. xvii. 2) because the beauty of a being is his face and because at the same time it is the reflection of his whole personality, there the supreme outrage must be borne. Cuffs, spittle veil; dishonour, scorn, and further still, oblivion which goes beyond God. The effacement of God, the last gesture, of men before death in order to suppress from their memory. He who, “having taken the condition of a slave, has appeared as a simple man, humiliating Himself, obedient until death” (Phil. xi. 7-8). Such is the secret of the Holy Face, such is that of Sister St. Peter, that of the forgetfulness of self so that the manifestation of God may be pursued on earth.

Immediation and intimacy, there is no life for the soul outside these two requests of charity.

May we be able to feel ourselves responsible for the picture which we offer of that divine Face, feel ourselves implicated in the Epiphany which the world awaits, and like exiles, to have a longing nostalgia for it. May Sister St. Peter help us here. This book tells us of her life, her prayer, her desire. May her example cause God not to veil His Face and that we may never merit the terrible warning of the prophets: "One day they will invoke the Lord, but He will not answer them, and on that day He will hide His Face from them because of the evil of their conduct" (Micah iii. 4), but may we be able, with the saints "The open face, to reflect as in a mirror the splendour of the Lord and to see ourselves transformed into this same image, ever more and more radiant, through the action of the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

Fr. BERNARD, B.R.O., *o.p.*

Le Soulchoir.

Part I

Pictures of Sister St. Peter

Chapter I

PERRINE ELUÈRE

Sister Mary of St. Peter has taken up the pen, arranged the paper. She is going to set herself to the task with her habitual resolution; with that tenacity of will which her bulging forehead shows, she being a little Bretonne. The jolt is less agreeable more specially by reason that at every moment the door bell will come to distract her from her writing, and as an attentive portress, Sister St. Peter will haste to listen with as much patience as possible to that which the "exterior world" voices wish to relate to silent Carmel.

Moreover, this work contains nothing which shall please her. Not that she feels an especial difficulty in translating her thoughts. She was so much in the habit of relating the divers states of her soul in the notes which her Prioress exacts from her. But these notes, which facilitate the Superior's discretion, whilst permitting the young nun to relieve her soul, are heavy with formidable secrets. Marie de St. Pierre relates more willingly, because it is undertaken in order to submit herself to obedience. A story of her childhood; as a young girl in the world; why cause these memories to be revived; these pictures which she has deliberately effaced? To hide oneself in Carmel, in order to live there in solitude, and then because people impose it upon you, to renew contact with the world, not only through the door whose watch has been confided to you, but as well through the memory of a former life, now done away

with ! But she is not one of those who rebel, whilst pitying themselves on their lot. She has been accustomed to exert all her will – and that not a small one, to the will of others.

More precisely; that of God of which the Superior's orders remain for her the most perfect and the most sure expression. Then without hesitation she writes the first sentence: "Despite all the repugnance which I feel in writing of things which concern me personally, I shall not cease to submit myself to obedience. And since you consider (Reverend Mother) that it would be useful for the glory of God, and for my humiliation, that I should write in all simplicity a little extract from my life, I will do it with the help of the Holy Face of Jesus."

One moment, her gaze fixed on the statuette of the Holy Child which she had obtained permission to keep in her porter's lodge, and amongst the distractions which reached her so strongly from the outside world; this helps her to find without ceasing the interior contact and to take up once more her soul's familiar intercourse with the Divine Child.

Because her days as portress do not, alas ! resemble any more the first days of religious life, then nothing occurred to disturb recollection and each day itself was only a part of prayer. What matters now is to most desire what He desires, even and above all that which is repugnant to nature.

Before beginning to write, Sister St. Peter has looked at the statuette; the poor representation of the Child who is in her soul, without picture.

"I have placed my pen in His little hand," she continues, "begging Him to desire to write Himself the precious graces which He has accorded me, and my sins which have offended Him so much, so that God, His Father, may be glorified through having caused so beautiful a fruit to grow in such a bad soil by means of His power." Therefore she hesitates but only a little. A new scruple has occurred to her, because she intends to tell the truth, the exact truth. She has so much uprightness and also lucidity, not to slightly mistrust some of her expressions. And therefore, that which she must relate,



those actions of a past life, become already a little confused in her memory. She likes to "Dot her *i*'s", and that one understands.

"I will be able perhaps to put something more or less. That is why, Very Reverend Mother, I disclose to you that you must not attach yourself precisely to the letter, but to the spirit of the matters which I shall relate to you and that will be quite sufficient to make known to you in what manner He has led my soul in His Ways since my infancy."

This preliminary point having been made, which is that of a lucid intelligence, it should not be taken too literally; Sister St. Peter has a good memory, and no doubt her imagination is not lacking in vivacity, but she exerts herself to direct it.

If sometimes she is carried away to exaggerate ever so little, it will never be to flatter the portrait.

She was born at Rennes, on 4th October 1816, the day noted for the death of our Holy Mother Therese. "She observes the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, whose name my mother bore."

From the start, she became Perrine Eluère, because St. Peter has been her patron since her baptism and the scene which she sees once more is a little square surrounded by rather old houses, which have now been destroyed. At the end it is closed by the massive building of the Church of St. Germain. In one of these little houses Perrine's father will shelter a family of twelve children, whilst carrying on his trade as master locksmith there also.

It is only one step from the house to the church and how many times has Perrine not made this short journey in order to disappear in the shadow of the low porch. How many times? But Sister St. Peter remembers at once that she has not always loved piety so much. The acts of her life in the world which remain in her memory are first of all those which she calls her "malice" I doubt moreover whether she did not smile to herself in remembering that at the age of four years, she was cured of scarlatina in drinking a little glass of cider. And without doubt she had her faults which made her disagreeable, she

affirms. Especially a little vanity, in remembering her help to a blind man who used to pass before her home. Again she is jealous of her little sister, angry, obstinate and very fickle. She seems to have been very lively. To her wet-nurse, who is coming to greet the Eluère family, and who had been the accidental cause of a burn scar which Perrine had on her cheek; this little scrap of a three or four year old girl remarked in welcome, "You have already burned one cheek, are you coming today to fry my other one?"

From earliest childhood, in close contact with the daily life of the old square St. Germain, bustling on market days with the coming and going of white coiffes and with colourful street calls, Sister St. Peter has kept the spontaneity of speech, the natural language and this gift of direct expression which the common people possess by instinct. If she was not one of those too good children of whom the good God does not usually make His great saints, one should not exaggerate "her malice". Sister St. Peter knows well herself that above all it was in order to humiliate her that her mother said one day in front of her: "Certainly, this little girl is not ours, certainly she has been changed by the wet nurse; it is not possible that our child could be as naughty as this one." Above all one must realize that she had not attained the official age of reason to understand her peccadillos. The humiliating remark of her mother suffices to make her reflect. At the age of six and a half, someone took her to confession and she undertook to amend her ways.

She did violence to herself. took her old blind man by the arm and led him in the street. She forced herself not to react against reprimands any more, and to accept willingly that which it repelled her to do.

Above all she began to acquire a taste for prayer and devotional practices. Without doubt that was not an easy matter. It is easy enough to make the Way of the Cross and with one's heart moved at the thought of JESUS' sufferings, to kiss the ground humbly at each Station. But on returning, when one

has generally blackened one's face in the dust of the floor, to hear oneself called "muddy nose" by a malicious little sister.

This used to put her feeble virtue to a too great test, Sister St. Peter confesses. How can one be perfect at the first try? One falls, one gets up again. But grace was already attracting her powerfully. She was only ten years old when, after a sermon, she felt the desire for prayer and exerted herself therein.

Moreover, Perrine's actual childhood ended very early. The workshop will soon succeed the scene of the family home. No trace of school remains in her narrative. She was there only two years to learn some elements of spelling, grammar, and arithmetic. But this will not prevent her later from writing with an exact precision and above all with that beauty of expression which one does not learn. Before she was eleven years old she made her first Communion, her heart touched by grace and a profound devotion. This finishes what she calls her conversion. And the change is so real that her Confessor is astonished at it and allows her to communicate again during the course of the year. (We are in 1827). From this time, it is evident that God has chosen this soul to make her yield to His designs. The young girl who is practising prayer in her childish way, forthwith finds herself attacked by a "thousand temptations. Her spirit is covered with darkness, her soul vexed by worry "because of scruples". Examinations of conscience which were never finished, confession neither reassured her nor consoled her. She no longer finds any liking for prayer.

And it is then, at twelve years old, that she has just lost her mother, recalling the example of St. Theresa, she begged the Blessed Virgin to take the place of the mother she loved so much. But this did not prevent the time of childhood from being shortened. If her school life continues some time yet, if she always goes to the great catechism – that whether she will continue to do for several years – a certain change however began in her interior life. Without doubt, the very Christian education which she had received from her parents was not

enough for her any more. The death of Perrine's mother contributed to change the spiritual climate and perhaps to determine the direction of her life. A more exact direction is about to succeed that of her parents. That of Perrine Eluère's confessors.

* * *

Sister Mary of St. Peter, portess of the Tours Carmel, must have smiled in remembering the different humiliations which her former Confessors had caused her to undergo. Her simple narrative, in passing over the details, allows one to have a glimpse of many things. It shows once more that prudence and human wisdom are also, and without their having always wished it, at the service of God's plans.

The child, tormented by scruples and interior sufferings, unbosomed herself to her Parish Priest. If he was the instrument which God used to deliver her from her worries, he did not however direct her in a definitive way. Without realizing too much that in which he was lacking, Perrine was looking for precise direction and perhaps one more attentive. Passing from sensible devotion to dryness and barrenness which she does not understand and which even led her to a certain slackness, she finished by obtaining from her father permission to change her Confessor.

Of the latter, Sister St. Peter has traced the most vivid portrait, without too much malice. "He was vicar general, and he had experience – but he had not the note of mercy for my soul" The direction appears to have been rather rigid. The direction removed his penitent from Communion and attached himself to fairly minute details. To this young girl of seventeen upon whom worldly attractions were beginning to smile, he expressed his personal ideas of feminine dress. "He was seventy years old, but his eyes were still excellent enough to notice whether I was dressed to his taste. He never wanted me to wear ribbons and he had sharp enough eyes to discover, one Sunday, that I had the stockings of the day."

Things were more difficult to bear, when Perrine remained more than eight days, without prescribing herself: her Confessor went to her home to seek her out. And as he was already informed of her conduct by the eldest sister the poor penitent found herself so to speak "confessed in advance".

One imagines the position. Perrine who had already been working for some years in a dressmaker's workroom, is no longer a little girl. At home, she feels some difficulty in submitting herself to her elder sister's authority, the latter having been entrusted with the direction of the home since her mother's death. It is certain that this elder sister, Françoise, could not have had an easy task. At the age of twenty, she had under her authority a gang of five boys about her own age, because the twelve children all followed one another at about a year's interval. Then Perrine came, six years younger than the eldest sister, then followed the little ones; a boy, two girls, two boys. One understands that Françoise had to enforce the principle of authority and neglected to weigh out her strictness. Anyway, there were frictions, and these thousand little trifles were enough to trouble Perrine. They led her to imperfections, whose gravity she no doubt exaggerated, but which nevertheless retarded the work of grace. Let us add that the meddlings of her sister Françoise and the rather too marked persistence of the Confessor were not made to smooth away the difficulties. The young girl is sufficiently clear-sighted and sensible to see that this priest's direction, whose goodness she appreciated, and who "never scolded her twice in succession", was hardly suitable for her soul. Despite excellent counsels, she was not becoming better, and was giving herself up to dissipation, becoming slack in God's service. If the general effect of these light faults was able to plunge Perrine into a very real perplexity, it is because she had the clear conscience of being called to a greater Perfection. Since infancy, she has known that God exacted a more than usual fidelity from her. Also she wished at any price to be converted – in her spirit this signifies – to find once more sensible devotion and the consolations of

yesterday. How, since no one was guiding her in this way, had she understood the meaning of spiritual privations of interior strippings? There remained to her recourse to the Blessed Virgin, her only Mother henceforth. In this spontaneous child-like devotion she will find once more that which she had lost, and even more. Having then abandoned her Confessor to return to the Parish Priest, "like a prodigal child", she says, she was admitted to more frequent communions than after a novena in preparation for the Feast of the Purification and a retreat, she promised to God an inviolable fidelity. In one aspiration, addressing herself to the Virgin who had helped her, she begged her to obtain for her a religious vocation. Would she have asked this if she had not one already? From this day, Perrine's perplexities will be centred, hesitating, around this vocation which she apprehended in her conscience. But one day as she was praying before the Virgin's altar, a priest entered the confessional: it was this assistant priest whose sermon had one day opened to Perrine the way of mental prayer. She thought that he made a sign to her to come. She entered the confessional, made her confession, and to her great astonishment – because she had not spoken of her her vocation – she heard these words addressed to her. "You desire to become a religious, my child, and in order to reach this, it appears to you that you have a mountain to climb. Have I not guessed well?"

The intervention of him whom Perrine calls her "unexpected consoler" will only be an episode however. The priest reassured her in approving her vocation. She already begins to have a glimpse of the realization of the desire of which she is just beginning to have a full understanding. And without doubt this hope was necessary in order to confirm her in her true road. One cannot help seeing in this a direct intervention of Providence; all the more because this priest's action was confined to this simple encouragement. Because if Perrine catches a glimpse of happiness and hopes to attain it soon, she is not however at the end of her troubles. Not without a spot of

melancholy, Sister St. Peter adds that she must first of all "pass through the hand of another spiritual father" who had not so quickly decided (as the parish priest) and who was forced to "work the five years at the destruction of the wall of my pride, and my self-love with the hammer of mortification."

It was only after this long delay that he found her worthy to dwell in the solitude of Carmel.

This director was the Abbe Panogh, Parish Priest of St. Etienne, at Rennes. Once more circumstances had determined the intervention of this new confessor, chosen by the parish priest of St. Germain himself, to replace him with Perrine. By little successive touches, simple incidents in her narrative, Sister Maire de St. Pierre makes known to us this "respectable ecclesiastic who was rendering great services to the Communities of the Diocese. He was enlightened in the interior paths, of the soul, and he had above all a special gift for recognizing vocations and directing them. He was known for that in the town." When a young girl confided her soul to him, she knew with whom she was dealing. But he prided himself on only sending to a convent those whom he was certain would remain there. Only – and this was to put Perrine's patience to a severe trial – he took a good time. His new spiritual daughter was quickly made to notice that he was very slow in taking a decision. When the young girl placed herself under the direction of the Abbe Panogh, she was eighteen years old. It is true that for her, he had to keep her waiting for five years. We already know that she learns dressmaking in her aunt's workroom, but it is certain that God had not waited for the definite direction which she will find with this priest, in order to take pains with Perrine's soul, one which already was not entirely in the common path. It is difficult to determine the exact nature of the supernatural communications which she believes she has already received nor the exact moment when they began to show themselves; but their existence and their intimate action is absolutely certain. It is also certain that, despite certain passing laxities of which the chief cause seems to have been

her inexperience of interior purifications, she led a profound spiritual life in the world. In the workshop, amongst her companions, who without fault were very little composed and recollected – it is not difficult to imagine the busy company of seamstresses – Perrine sought to preserve the presence of God in her soul's solitude. Her aunt, who knew this or guessed it, arranged a little place for her near herself. Already this corner of the workshop is a cell – she is all sweetness and cordiality with her companions. According to the testimony of one of her cousins, Jenny Benoit, no one ever saw her in a bad temper. When a slight disagreement had separated her from one of her workmates, she was always the first to make it up, asking her: "You do not want to be angry?"

Do not let us think of her as unsociable or stuck up; neither Perrine Eluère nor Sister St. Peter will ever be this. How had she attracted the sympathy and the confidence of her laughing companions, under the appearance and the bearing of a devout, solemn person? Because her influence in the environment, by her simple presence and by that mysterious radiance of souls united to God, has often produced astonishing results. It will even happen one day. This will be a little later – where she will make herself mistress of the interior life. In a little room in the paternal home, where one had access without passing through the rooms occupied by the family, she used to receive certain companions desirous of counsel or discretion, she will write later. But she will be forced to avow that this gossip was not about any other subjects than Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, the practice of virtue. She never speaks to her companions of what passes in the secret places of her own soul, but taught them how to pray, which was easy to her because she used to find great facility in practising it. This avowal, which she lets slip in her narrative, is immediately tempered by the remark, "That one of these young people make so much progress in so little time that she surpassed her young directress a great deal and entered religion before her." However, despite her already long experience of the

interior life, despite the regular practice of mental prayer and the communications of a supernatural order which she has already received, Perrine's new director seems to have wished to take matters back to the beginning again.

From the first connexion, he demanded from her a written statement of the state of her soul and proposed a way of life for her. It seems evident that this priest, who had experience of chosen souls, had been certain since the earliest days, but he did not intend to depart from the extreme prudence of his habitual method. For Sister Marie de St. Pierre, predestined to the prophetic mission which she will accomplish one day in suffering and total submission, the long edifying waiting of this severe postulate has been providential. For a soul called to some less high and exceptional testing, the slowness of the spiritual Father might perhaps have been useless.

They were no doubt necessary to the future trustee of a divine secret. Since Perrine's first compliance, the director repressed the generous but slightly impatient ardour of the future nun. When she begged him to occupy himself about her reception into some Carmel, he replied quietly that her passions are as yet only scratched, and that they must be immolated. His first counsels marked the starting point and the point of arrival; to know oneself and to know God, because the more one knows Him, the more one loves Him. And in order to cross over the nothingness of the creature to the All of the creator. He gives his penitent several counsels full of sense. "Be simple like a child, you must say all on this matter here; but no pouring out of confidences elsewhere because that is worthless. Never speak about your confessor nor about your penitences; go straight to God with a spirit of faith. No worrying going back over your soul. These useless turning back are the fuel for purgatory. Always have a joyous mien and do not be like those unhappy people who, in carrying the Lord's yoke, appear to be bearing a burden."

One sees the method and even the firmness of the matter, shows already that the holy priest will know how to apply it

with a calm strictness. It does not alter the fact that after having laid down for his penitent this straight line of conduct and appearing to have caught a glimpse of the high perfection to which she was called, he exclaims: "Ah, my daughter, the Lord is calling you to pass over such a beautiful road. See what will be the end of it; prepare yourself for God's great designs in your soul." Perhaps he would not realize he spoke so well; but it is certain that this exclamation has the note of prophesy, and that Perrine Eluère's last director in the world was God's chosen instrument in order to make her pliable to His great designs. And outside these, worrying goings back over her own soul, formally forbidden, I do not believe that Perrine has felt great difficulty in conforming herself to all his counsels. The spontaneity and simplicity of children has always been in keeping with her temperament. Discretion, she was already used to practising this in her aunt's workroom and in her intercourse with her companions. And her flights towards God, towards the Holy Virgin without deviation, direct and simple like those of the very young children, it would be difficult to ascertain the precise manner in which this young girl learnt from her director the matter of contemplation, properly so called. He used to lend her books treating of prayer and the interior life, and the lives of Saints.

This reading must have evoked questions on Perrine's part and explanations from her spiritual Father. But it is impossible to know more on this subject. On the contrary, we know perfectly that the method put into action tended in the very first place to assure the most solid, ascetic foundation to the interior life. That the most precise details abound: all was providential in this conduct and it is admirable that this priest, expert in the ways of the spirit, had methodically used up all the natural means of which man disposes, all that which in the contemplative life, released from human activity, in order to give free ground to grace and the motions of the Holy Spirit. Has he, from that instant, understood that the only one Master of the spirituality of this predestined young girl would

be and must always be JESUS, whose words she was one day to transmit ?

Under his direction she then began what she calls "her journey along the way of humiliation". One must observe that it is Perrine herself who has taken the initiative, and that her confessor confined himself, if one can express it, to fixing the itinerary and the stages of this journey which she felt herself driven interiorly to undertake. Since this epoch, the young girl is already no longer on the ordinary road and she speaks constantly of interior utterances and heavenly communications. Of what nature were these graces ? She herself, so as not to fall into illusion, had taken the decision to write down that which she was experiencing, and to entrust these notes to her spiritual Father. Composed by the graces which she knew in her conscience she had not merited she preferred moreover to relate them in writing rather than to "avow" them out loud. Sometimes, however, in order to humiliate herself, she forced herself to read the letter to her director before giving it to him. Now, one day, after having communicated, she saw her soul like a wall, or a pile of stones (as it was a long time ago, she did not remember the details very well). In this wall which threatens to come down, she believed she saw the picture of the humiliations destined to crush her self-love. Ah, reaction is less of fear than of love.

Knowing and realizing that pride and self-love impeded her union with God, she felt the desire of being humiliated arising in her. In her prayer, she asked for love and to suffer suffering and mortification, and having been already answered, she made her guide a partner in the ardour of her desires. "Do not listen to the cry of my nature," she said to him; "immolate my pride".

However, the present director did not hurry to accede to this demand. He was never in a hurry. He waited. Was this a simple passing fervour ? Was it the expression of a divine action ? However, he finished by saying to his penitent, "My daughter, I believe that Our Lord wishes to make you travel

above the ordinary paths." And he sent her before the Blessed Sacrament when Perrine will be obliged to consider what she could do in order to humiliate herself in the most perfect manner, then it remained to him to permit or to forbid. This was, moreover, the habitual method during five years, and not only, as she says, had Perrine to look for humiliations, but she even had to invent them. When he spoke of looking for humiliations, the aspirant to Carmel, did not only think of her bearing to her spiritual Father. The latter had also thought of sending her to two unmarried ladies, whom he had acquainted with the situation, and who inflicted little and great humiliations upon Perrine for which her soul was thirsting, but which crucified her nature.

The humiliations which God suggested to her, or perhaps that which her zeal and childlike imagination, attributed to God, tended chiefly to kill in her soul every trace of pride, vanity, self-love. The detail of it is sometimes amusing. It happened that she found herself authorized to go for a walk in the sun, sheltered under a big old umbrella, which was very torn. Other details of the same type aroused the laughter of her workroom companions. "It was indeed very amusing," she will say later to the Carmelites of Tours who are amused at her story. "Except," she adds, "for her who was paying the cost of the adventure." Wishing humiliations at all cost, she did not succeed in this without effort. She felt in her soul a powerful grace which constrained her but the struggle against nature did not therefore become less hurtful. "Ah, my father," she used to say, "what it cost me to walk on that road." And the priest, letting one catch a glimpse of his thoughts and his heart, used to answer her: "I assure you that it also costs me to be obliged to humiliate you, but be courageous."

However Perrine was hardly accustomed to seek for human succour. She found the necessary strength in prayer before the Most Blessed Sacrament where she loved to remain towards the middle of the day, when no one is there to adore Him. Certainly a devotion of a sensible character attaches her to the

Secret Heart of JESUS, to the Virgin, to the Holy Family, which will become one day the centre of her interior life. But her contemplation raises itself to more inaccessible regions at least in an intermittant manner. The Divine presence became perceptible to her not only in her prayer, "in the midst of her soul", but real illuminations already made her understand the Divine Will. "Our Lord," she writes, "prepared my soul for this life of sacrifice; and one day, after Holy Communion I had a vision, Our Lord having gathered my soul into His Divine Heart. I seemed to see there a great many people chained by a golden chain; they were all carrying a cross. Without doubt they were the souls of religious, because I recognized one of my friends who was in religion. I thought that I was chained with these souls and I prayed Our Lord "to choose to give me also a cross."

She understood, however, that one must wait in resignation and patience for the time which God alone would choose. But she believed she heard these words:

"When you have entered religion I will give you another cross to carry."

Sister St. Pierre was bound to never forget these words. More than once she thought she recognized the promised cross in such-or-such sufferings; until the day when, conscious of her mission, and in the suffering which she was enduring therein, it was no longer possible to doubt.

But apart from these graces, or exceptional favours of which she gave a faithful account to her director – her soul was wrought upon by God with view to her purification. "Our Saviour attracted me during a certain time to a most delightful kind of prayer, but He made me understand that this grace was going to be taken from me, I fell in a dry state, from Thabor to Calvary, according to God's good pleasure."

But Perrine, better instructed in the Divine ways than she was in the time of her childhood, understood now the reason and the necessity for these states of painful purification. She responded by generosity and suffered passively.

The reading of these fragments suffices to render an account of the young girl's interior state and of the supernatural work which was operating in her. And whilst the action of the Holy Spirit pursued her, initiating her soul by degrees to live habitually in the realm of supernatural gifts, Perrine pursued with tenacious fidelity. The ascetic work of active purification. The equable temper, the simplicity with which she continued to lead her daily life, of a little dressmaker. The affability of her social intercourse hid the sorrows which sometimes weighed her soul down. Being deprived of light and consolation she will not tell anyone the royal secret; nor even to her father who had a strong suspicion of his daughter's religious vocation, but had not yet been told of it.

Whilst managing simultaneously her working girl's life, her life of contemplation, and her life of ascetic humiliations, her love of God inflames, shows itself in zeal and carried these to the love of neighbour. In all those who suffer in some way she finds without difficulty and as by instinct the sufferings of JESUS, of Mary, of Joseph. She helps the sick, saves on her slight economies to multiply her almsgiving. "I used to give," she says, "something to Our Lord, something to the Holy Virgin, in the person of the poor." Her spirit of faith without deviations, that childlike faith recommended by her spiritual Father, permits her to justify in reality the poor succoured people to Him whom they represent; is it not also a simple kind of conventional piety which she uses when she writes: "I used to give to Our Lord". How had she been able to give to others since already He alone occupies her whole heart and soul?

A day of identification became still more easy to her and she rejoices in the occasion offered. A poor family composed of three people came to live besides the paternal home; a day labourer, his blind wife, a little boy four or five years old. Their habitation resembled the stable of Bethlehem; without wood, without fire, without bread – is anything further necessary? In a moment of ardent devotion to the Holy Family, Perrine cried out one day: "Ah, happy Family, if I

had had the joy, when you were on earth, of being there also. Assuredly no matter in what country you would have been, I would have gone to find you in order to have the honour of serving you as a little maidservant." Is her wish not accomplished? For her the Holy Family is at Rennes and lives in the place Saint-Germain. She is their little servant and will remain so until her entrance into Carmel. She visits them, helps them, comes to their aid in every way, material and spiritual. In them, it is really JESUS, MARY, and JOSEPH, whom she loves and serves. She is also truly the Servant of the Holy Family which she will be later, and until the end of her life. The donkey of the Child JESUS. Because during her whole life she will keep that marvellous gift of childhood which permits her to enter into the game, body and soul, and to contribute perfectly a natural disposition to the supernatural work of grace and gifts.

* * *

All these things which filled Perrine's life and some of which at least loaded her with a joy both natural and supernatural, did not render less impatient her desires to leave the world and to take shelter in the desert of Carmel. Her director never hurries. He replied peacefully to all her insinuations: "We will see that – God's times have not yet arrived." These five years of waiting can appear long to us. They appeared still more so to Perrine Elvere. Did her guide not want to do too much, to finish the work in detail? Such is certainly the first impression which one feels in the presence of this delaying strategy. Because the soul of this young girl was clear like pure water and the experienced view of the spiritual Father had seen the end from the first days.

His conduct appears moreover to result less from hesitation and doubt than from a possibly natural slowness, but certainly re-inforced by a methodical foregone conclusion.

Is one not permitted to discern the clear design of Providence in this? Not only must the future messenger of the divine counsels be immolated by mortification and humiliation, it is

important as well that from the beginning she was exercised in that heroic patience and total obedience which later allowed her to allow herself to be sweetly consumed by the interior flame of zeal rather than make a single sign which obedience had not commanded.

Sure of her vocation, she learns in suffering to repress impatience, which she knows legitimate, when the cold little words, "we will see about that", fall on her burning heart. And later, in the same way, sure of her great mission and burning with desire to carry it out, she will know how to suffer silently the feigned inattentions of her Prioress, the present hesitations and trembling counsels of men's wisdom, with the heroism of an authentic martyrdom ? But what to do whilst waiting ? To which saint devote herself ? She prays, burns candles, addresses herself to the Sacred Heart, to the Blessed Virgin, to St. Joseph, to St. Theresa and even – thinking without doubt of her own director to her different Confessors (whether they were canonized or not). Then one day, seeing the relics of St. Martin exposed in the chapel which is dedicated to him, she addressed to him this beautiful prayer :

"Oh ! my good St. Martin, see what my sorrow is ; I desire to consecrate myself to God in the religious life and no one wants to interest themselves in me and receive me. Ah ! I am sure that if you were on the earth, your charity would be touched by my position and you would help me." She did not know a great deal about St. Martin, which was the exact part of Gaul which he had evangelized.

With the confident simplicity of a child who has a sorrow, she asked him, however, to receive her in his diocese, "if there were nuns there". Because she did not know that there was a Carmel at Tours and had never dreamt of making enquiries. One day, it will appear that St. Martin, of whom she only knew of his great charity and generosity of heart, had perfectly heard her naïve prayer.

Already, at the time when she was addressing this prayer to him, she had been in contact with the Carmel on the occasion

of a journey to Le Mans in the company of her aunt. But if the welcome had been cordial, there did not remain any hope of ever being accepted in this convent. Furthermore, at heart, she did not feel herself called to this house "because there is a vocation of Order, but also of House", she will say later. She did not dare to insist with her director who had moreover fallen ill at this moment, she had the inspiration to make the pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de la Peiniere in her Chapel, situated six leagues from Rennes, and which belonged to the parish of Saint-Didier.

This pilgrimage has all the characteristics of a last entreaty. With that simple faith — that which moves mountains — Perrine wishes to obtain from the Virgin that which she pictures as a liberation. "I am like a bird shut up in a cage and who does not find a little opening where it can fly away. Her devotion to Mary is very great: it shows itself by all the signs of popular piety: rosaries, candles, almsgiving, doing nine days. Then, in a gesture which must sum it all up, "I do not wish to be obliged to work any more this winter at the clothes of vanity. Ah, I give you the tools of my work," and she puts a handful of needles and pins at the foot of the miraculous statue.

How she has prayed during these nine days. Heaven was not deaf to the cries of her supplication. The sensible devotion to which she had given herself up did not impede interior colloquies. God had made her understand many things. The Saviour had replied to her worries about the "dot" which had to be supplied. "Is not the vocation which I have given you more than the 'dot'?" But she believed that she also heard these words, which she will never forget: "Go to my Mother; it is through Her that I will answer you."

* * *

If the pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de la Peiniere had left a renewed hope in Perrine's heart, the young girl had too clear a mind not to see the realities. The obstacles which prevented her from leaving the world still existed. Furthermore, they

were of different kinds. Not only the slowness of her spiritual Father, at least his apparent refusal to make the necessary application, but still the question of the "dot" seemed to give Perrine to renounce Carmel. At a certain moment she was on the point of accepting entry into a Congregation of Nursing Sisters, notwithstanding the physical repugnance which she felt towards burying the dead and caring for the sick. But at this decisive minute, God Himself, will intervene. During the course of her prayer, Perrine heard an inner voice which said to her: "Someone is busy about your reception: you will be a Carmelite." She even thought that she heard "Carmelite of Tours". But what did this signify? Was it not an illusion? Tours did not furnish any precise picture to her, without doubt it was not an illusion; but this divine communication revealed simply to the future Carmelite something of which she was ignorant. That her Director had made an application, and that already it was crowned with success. Before leaving La Peiniere, Perrine had written a long letter in which she related to her spiritual Father everything which had passed in her soul during those nine days, then at the time when her pilgrimage was ending she had placed this letter before the Virgin, so that she might bless it. After reading it, the Confessor had immediately written to Tours. The choice hardly explains itself, because the Abbe Panager was not in touch with this Carmel. But, a strange thing, the Prioress of Tours had had at the same moment the intention of writing to this ecclesiastic whom she only knew by reputation. She wished to ask him for subjects. This coincidence must have necessarily determined an immediate acceptance.

As to the material question of the "dot" the young girl does not hesitate to courageously occupy herself with steps to complete the modest sum which she must furnish for her own support. These steps even led her to the Vicar General whom she had previously had as Confessor and who "was rich". She writes without malice. He did not refuse her a contribution,

neither one of those little humiliations which will amuse the Mother of the Carmel of Tours one day.

Another obstacle – this one of a family nature – had already been smoothed over, thanks to the good offices of M. le Cure of the parish of St. Germain. One knows that Perrine's mother had died when the latter was only twelve years old, and that the eldest sister had the responsibility of directing the household. This sister had been ill for some time, and this responsibility should naturally have passed into Perrine's hands. The locksmith Eluère was "of a somewhat cold and timid nature", had remained a widower. The Cure of the parish, knowing the situation and wishing to benefit both Perrine and her father, whom he considered "the best of his parishioners", busied himself with his marrying again. The excellent woman who became his second wife allowed Perrine to carry out her ambition.

Now the end of this waiting is coming quickly, having lasted five long years. Not only has Perrine's father given his consent, "because he knew how to sacrifice all to the Good God when he knew his will", but he will go himself to accompany his daughter and offer her to God. Before the departure she asked that she could return to the chapel of la Peiniere, for a novena for the effect of graces. Then there will be the good-byes to all that she loves and by whom she knows she is loved. The priest who has directed her vocation and who is sure of her perseverance gives her a last prudent counsel. "My little child, endeavour to walk by a quite ordinary way". She will try certainly, but God's wisdom often surpasses that of men.

One had anticipated confiding the young girl to a nun who had to pass through Rennes before going to Touraine. But as she had to wait, Perrine's father decided to shut his shop for several days and to go to Tours with his daughter. This slight delay, allowed St. Martin to show the reality of his intercession, because the day when they were finally able to start the journey was 11th November. Besides, as the journey in the coach lasted two days, Perrine entered Carmel on the 13th,

vigil of the day when the Carmelite calendar fixes the feast of all the Saints of the Order. In this manner, all those whom Perrine had invoked so often shared in her departure and in her arrival.

Chapter II

SISTER MARIE DE SAINT-PIERRE

The Tours Carmel in 1839

The monastery where Perrine Eluère entered on 13th November 1839 was one of the oldest Carmels of the Teresian Reform in France. Founded in 1608 by the Blessed Anne of Saint Bartholomew – companion of St. Teresa who died in her arms. The Carmel of Tours was rich in many and important memories. She who would one day be the Blessed Mary of the Incarnation, Mme Acarie, had been involved in its foundation, as in so many other foundations in France. Many of the great names of French Carmelite history are met with in the chronicle of its origin and its beginnings: Fontaines-Marans, Madeleine of St. Joseph (sent to Tours for eight months), Margaret of the Blessed Sacrament, daughter of Mme Acarie and Prioress at Tours when the first stone of the church was laid in 1619. It was also this latter date that the convent, placed originally under the patronage of Our Lady of the Angels, took that of the Incarnation or of Holy Mother of God. In fact one finds these two patronages in the ancient documents.

Anne of St. Bartholomew, who relates in her autobiography of the foundation of Tours, and the graces which she had received in this Convent, affirms with her habitual simplicity "At Tours I was very happy". The joy of a saint is in fact so permanent that it can create a manner of atmosphere, the presence of which remains always.

The Religious, chased from the convent since the Revolution, dispersed and imprisoned for some time, had been able to group themselves together, and, since 1798, to take up once more the regular life, first of all in one small private house,

then, in 1805, in an ancient convent which a benefactress generously had permitted them to occupy. In 1822, they were able finally to reoccupy their original convent. Despite the devastations, many precious things remained, amongst which the cell of Blessed Mother Anne and a miraculous picture representing the mystery of the Incarnation. This picture is still in the possession of the Tours Carmel, also the cloak which Anne of St. Bartholomew left there after her departure for the Low Countries, also a blanket belonging to Mother Madeleine of St. Joseph, first French prioress of the Paris Carmel.

When Perrine entered the Tours Carmel, the Community was occupying therefore the original convent of Anne of St. Bartholomew. This would not be for very long. The old house was putting an obstacle to urbanization projects which people thought of carrying out in Tours. Besides, more recent buildings were being put up, overlooking the house and garden, disturbing the regular life. The Carmel was no longer a desert hidden from the eyes of the world. But to leave this house where so many vivid memories remained, it was necessary to make a decision. The town was pressing towards carrying out projected works; offers for purchase presented themselves. They will finish by choosing a new site, they will draw up and execute plans. So well that in 1846, the Community will establish itself in the new monastery, that which still exists today. This after a preliminary sojourn of about two years in a private house. This weighty affair of changing house was entirely dealt with and brought to a satisfactory conclusion by the Prioress who received Perrine Elvere and the latter, as one will see, also took an active part in it.

In 1839, the Prioress of Carmel was Mother Mary (Angelique Elizabeth) of the Incarnation, a Bretonne like Perrine; she was born at Paimbœuf in 1795. Well worthy of the Blessed whose name she bore, she had been a great Prioress of Carmel; in her government, she knew how to unite a firmness chosen by her natural sweetness; and one often had the impression that the first had perfectly hidden the second. She was also of

a very great prudence; a prudence which must have sometimes recalled to Sister St. Peter that of her last director at Rennes, the effects of which she had felt during five years. When Perrine came to Carmel, Marie of the Incarnation was undertaking the duty of Mistress of Novices as well as that of Prioress. It is she who must form the young girl to the Carmelite life and – a still more delicate matter – understand and judge the extraordinary ways by which the little novice is being led, with hardly any delay. Let us say at once that of the Prioress has never departed from her prudent firmness, she did not resist long the supernatural charm which came from this little Sister with a childlike gaze and a heart burning with love. Even when her reason obliged her to systematic doubt, she believed in the depth of her soul in the supernatural origin of Sister St. Peter's mystical experience. Very soon, there was formed a tie of religious affection between the great Prioress and she who will be her little portress, a tie which will never be broken and where one and the other will find exactly what is necessary in order to accomplish their respective missions.

* * *

Arriving at Tours, Perrine does not delay visiting the town. Why interest herself in things which she was longing to leave? She hastens towards the Carmel where after rapid good-byes to her father, she was received with the habitual ceremonial, presented to the other Sisters and conducted before a statue of the Virgin.

Since that first evening – she entered at about five o'clock – a little incident marked the positions and delineated the personalities. At recreation, the hour for which had just sounded, the Nuns who welcomed the little newcomer asked her to sing. She is of medium height, rather irregular features; the straight bulging forehead, small nose and eyes, the projecting mouth, but the fresh complexion, the expression of sweetness and calm attract, despite the imperfections of the visage. What is she going to sing? Perrine does not have to ask; her voice is good

and the couplets which they were asking of her she had often sung beforehand, whilst awaiting the fortunate day of her entry into Carmel. The little seamstress of Rennes whose entire scientific and literary knowledge had been acquired in two years primary school, possessed a remarkable facility for composing little verses where sometimes, amongst the very conventional formulas, there occurred the unexpected expression, the exact work, the happy phrase. If the poetic form of her first strophe has nothing original, she expressed perfectly the thought, the sentiment and the hopes of the postulant, "Let us bless God. I am in a shelter after which I have desired for a long time. Here for God, I am going to live in tranquility, far from worldling, far from iniquity."

"I had this song in couplets," Sister St. Peter writes. "I was singing them with such a gay and happy air that no one thought of interrupting me."

But the Prioress, arriving unexpectedly during the recital, quickly seized the occasion to put her postulant to the test. "Well," she said to her, "you have certainly been in a hurry to show off your little talent." One guessed the icy silence which follows this remark. Then taking advantage of the moment, the Prioress pursued: "Let us see if you know anything else."

The little Bretonne did not falter; neither trouble, nor disappointment. "Oh, my Mother," she said simply, "I kept the best I had for you." And she finished her song with great tranquility. Thus from the first hour an attitude was taken up from which neither the Prioress nor the Sister will ever depart.

Sister St. Peter found herself immediately in her right place in this house of Tours. She had never been anywhere else, it was "the vocation to a special house", as she says. A temptation which she will encounter the following day to repack her little luggage, in seeing the difficulties and the complications of certain church ceremonies, is not of any importance. This ritual, whose secrets she felt herself incapable of assimilating, as well as the plaque of white iron pierced with holes which

serves as a confessional, she will in fact easily accustom herself to it, is it not sufficient for her to abandon herself like a child to the Good Mother who has conducted her to Carmel, through all the obstacles?

Moreover, the Noviciate into which she was introduced put her completely at ease. "There, I found again the Holy Infant Jesus, and the Holy Family, cherished objects of my heart." From the distance where we are today and in considering the interior life of Mary of St. Peter, one can indeed affirm that this loving devotion to the Divine Infant and to the Holy Family was the origin and the permanent foundation of the life of her soul. Practising the little way of spiritual childhood, well before it was written, the little way of spiritual childhood, it is to the contemplation of Jesus Child and of His Mother that she will return ceaselessly, even when God will have made her the trustee of the plans of His Providence; and it is in the contemplation of the Child nourished by His Mother that the union of her life with God will be finished one day here below.

The Carmelite vocation of which it is difficult to fix the moment and the occasion by precise facts, was however powerfully influenced by this devotion to the Holy Family practised in Carmel with so much fervour and familiarity. Perrine, at the time when she was a seamstress at Rennes, had read that St. Teresa "saw" one day the monastery which she had to found at Avila, guarded on the one side by St. Joseph and on the other by the Blessed Virgin, whilst Jesus remained in the middle. Nothing further was needed for the young girl to feel herself confirmed in her Carmelite vocation.

Introduction to Carmelite life

Perrine Eluères' religious career could in fact be summed up in very few lines. This career, moreover, was very short; entering Carmel of Tours at twenty-three years of age, Sister St. Peter will die there nine years later, in 1848, aged about thirty-two. Admitted to clothing six months later, her entry –

on 21st May 1840 – she made her profession on 8th June the following year. She had lived the regular life in silence, in effacement and in a recollection which nothing had come to disturb. But soon the Mother Prioress will entrust to her the office of Portress, which despite her repugnances, Sister St. Peter will carry out until her last illness. On the exterior, these few facts sum up her Carmelite career.

That which had been her soul's life, does not resume itself so easily; far from it, sometimes one hardly gets a glimpse of the summits of union to which she was held. However, the Carmelite formation of Sister St. Peter seems to have been done without great difficulties. She was predestined to Carmel by nature. A priest who was devoted to the messenger and to her Message, and who was living at the same time as the Sister, wrote of her towards the end of her life: "This new flower of Carmel has a singular relation with her Mother, in that the grit of her spirit is strong." And he adds: "She differs (from St. Theresa) in that her way is simple like that of a little child, carried in arms and sometimes being allowed to fall to earth, without however denying the grace which she had received."

NOTE: *Abbe Botrel. Uncedited text preserved in the archives of the Carmel of Tours.*)

This portrait drawn some time before the death of Sister St. Peter, merits to be retained in consideration. And from the very first is it not this "strong grit of the spirit", which Theresa of Avila was looking for in her postulants; this balance, this sound judgement which with the great Reformer one can consider as a natural disposition to the life of prayer in general and to that of Carmel in particular? It appears certain that the religious formation of Mary of St. Peter had only to be raised higher, to the design of heroism, a natural pre-existent quality. But the course of the written text is not less significant.

The Abbe Botrel, writing in 1848, that is, some twenty-five years before the birth of Theresa Martin, cannot question that in resuming the simple way in which Sister St. Peter had walked, he was condensing in a few words the doctrine of the

way of childhood, such as Theresa of the Child Jesus, will show one day, "a simple way like that of a little child carried in arms", and who yet knows how to recognize the merciful grace when God lets him fall.

That which the Abbe Botrel had known when the Sister's short career was coming to an end, she had been, no doubt at a lesser degree of perfection, since her entry into Carmel. Her way has not changed. "Always simple and naïve like a little child towards her Superiors, always submissive, always humble towards all and of a charity which covers everything" (Abbe Botrel).

Likewise we do not find any trace of hesitation in her Carmelite vocation. Not for an instant did she feel herself not at home in Carmel. The naïve recoil on the first day at the sight of the complicated ceremonies in choir was only a very slight temptation when one knows the treasures of energy and good sense which the little postulant already possessed. It is true that her long ascetical preparation in the world had made her perfectly flexible and already her practice of prayer and the Divine touches had disposed her soul towards the graces she was going to receive.

Let us add that the direction of the Abbe Panager seems to have been perfectly in the line of Carmelite discipline and that the guidance of the Prioress, Mother Mary of the Incarnation, only continued it. Before, as after Sister St. Peter's entry into religion, we find again the same reserve with regard to spiritual favours extraordinary, a cold and often humiliating reception when Perrine used to submit to the Director or to her Superior the communications of a supernatural order which she believed she had received. In the direction of the priest as in that of the Prioress there is reflected the caution with which Carmel regards extraordinary mystical states, above all when some perceptible phenomena is mingled therein. But the Carmel, which never hears of compromising when there is question of the essential and desires that an interior life may be stripped as much as possible of all intervention indeed from natural

powers, leaves however to each one a very great liberty as to the nuances of her spiritual life. It knows well that God works upon souls to His own and their own harmony. He does not cast them in one mould. The rigidity of His interior discipline tends to liberate the spirit as its sole end; and is it not the gift of the spirit which completes the personality of man in developing it along the line of his natural possibilities? Grace raises nature higher without destroying it; Carmel does not destroy nature, but prevents it from making an obstacle or substituting itself for the free action of the Spirit of God.

Sister St. Peter submitted herself easily to all the Carmelite discipline. From the earliest days, she was an example of observance and of regularity. Nothing gave her trouble. She was as pliant to the interior discipline as well as to the exterior ones. Still better: she understood that obedience alone could keep her from all danger of illusion and self-deception. She knew the value and the use of humiliations and reprisals which make nature cry out. She desired them. But her personality remained complete. In the inflexible frame of the Observances of the Order, she developed it, or rather she will allow God to develop it as it may please Him. And we see God taking pleasure in some degree in making the human personality of the young religious to open out, in using all the characteristics of her temperament. Even the deficiencies are turned to account.

Moreover these defects are more apparent than real. What does it matter that these two short years of schooling had not left her with any human learning; she will assimilate all the better the truths which the most cultivated reason would not know to attain by its own efforts. She will write all the better because no one has ever taught her. Do not believe her too readily, because no doubt the little Sister St. Peter exaggerates when she says that her Prioress will not find her intelligent enough to be admitted to the taking of the habit. Marie of the Incarnation could not be mistaken in this, because this uncultivated intelligence possessed evident natural

qualities of clearness – balance and vivacity – that gift an experienced Mistress of Novices should discern from the first contact. Other elements of the natural and witty personality of Sister St. Peter may urge her Prioress to prudence. It was indeed certain that in her intercourse with God, the young nun was following other paths, than the common way and that she showed in her way of doing things a vivacity of imagination and an ardour of feeling which might well have introduced dangers. It is this that having centred her entire interior life – indeed exterior – on the mystery of the Holy Family, and as she had accustomed herself of always entering fully into the imaginative game, she had composed a certain method which allowed her to live every moment of the day and even of the night with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph at Nazereth.

Everything there was thought of, in the smallest details, with the ingenuity of a child living in a world which is created to her measure.

From her taking of the habit, she consecrated herself to the Holy Family, and since then she considered herself as the little maidservant. "And everything I was doing in the house," she writes, "I was doing it with the intention of serving them." Let no one take this for a simple formula, nor even for a pious general intention. It had to do with a living reality. Sister St. Peter goes even further. Without doubt, the role of maidservant appeared to her too honourable. "I had yet one more ambition, it was to be the donkey of the Holy Infant Jesus." How can one not quote a text which shows the profound resonance which a simple imaginative game can have in Sister St. Peter's soul? "If the Prophet King regarded himself as a beast of burden, I have the greater right to qualify myself with this name – when I consider that the Son of God for love of us made Himself so poor that when He desired to make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He had to send His disciples to borrow such a poor mount. "Ah," I said to my Saviour, "now that you are in heaven, I want you to have a donkey on earth which may be entirely at your service and entirely for

you, and that you will lead it in the ways which will give pleasure to you."

This invention she made first of all as a game during recreation in the Novitiate, but the game went very far. Near a postulant "who had had one in the world", she made enquiries about the nature of donkeys; then, entering into the skin, so to speak, of her character, she wrote out a letter. "The Infant Jesus' donkey is stubborn, lazy, she only likes to walk in the little footpaths; but she has resolved to correct herself and her work will be to warm the Holy Child up again and to carry Him on His journeys, and indeed to render all the services she can to the Holy Family."

The audacious passing from the masculine subject to the feminine form of the rest of the phrase proves with a charming naïvety to what point the identification was already perfect.

Sister St. Peter possessed a gift common to children, great creative artists and to saints, to invent new forms and to embody therein the mysterious and immaterial inspiration which lives in their soul. There only remains this difference between those of the creatives of the child, the artist and the saint not embodying inspirations of the same kind, will not be lived on the same plan.

But the young novice had gone past to a great extent the game of a pious recreation, she wanted to have her identification with the donkey satisfied by her Prioress, to whom she belonged by obedience – to desire "to give her donkey to Jesus so that He may do with it everything He would wish." The Prioress' response shows at once both her goodness and her presence. "She answered no, and that I must say to this divine Child that only our Reverend Mother could lend Him her donkey – but she would not yet give it to Him absolutely." One will know later all the importance which this childish fancy of the donkey will take in Sister St. Peter's spiritual life and in the definite fixing of her true mission.

In awaiting one finds her occupied in living the programme which she had arranged for herself. "I go to choir, with the

Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph carrying the Holy Child to the Temple. prayer being finished, we are going with the Holy Family to Nazareth, but soon the clock sounds for the hours, and we are leaving for Egypt." As she organizes her days, she regulated all the details of a "month of the Child Jesus".

This method, which the young religious had invented for her personal use and which responded to her own tastes, does not cease to astonish by the great diversity of acts in which she implicates herself and by the good which it seems to offer to the imagination. She understood perfectly that the Novice Mistress had wished to study attentively the subject which she was practising. To examine this method a little more closely, and remembering Sister St. Peter's psychology, she would appear much more simple than one would have thought at first. It is evident that these different exercises were not of a rigid order or a fixed plan where one had to force oneself not to neglect any point. The method was not preconceived, she simply translated a life that was lived spontaneously and naturally. One would say willingly that Sister St. Peter did not arrive at her method from the exterior but from the interior. For her, the smallest details were translated into a reality which was living in her soul, sustaining and vivifying the multiplicity of those acts, a continual presence of God allowed Sister St. Peter to remain united to God, and as she had avowed, "to never lose sight of Our Lord". During the whole time that her postulancy and novitiate lasted her entire days "constituted only one prayer". What multiplicity of actions would have been capable of breaking this supernatural unity ?

However, the Prioress' discretion remained watchful, prudent, strict. She did what she could to assure herself of the inspiration which her novice was following. She restrained her, humiliated her. Above all, she tried to make her walk in a more ordinary way. "I did what I could to obey her," the young Sister writes, "but I soon found myself on the same road." It is difficult to determine exactly what this road was. The

Mother Prioress, seizing the opportunity which presented itself, wished to take the advice of a Religious versed in the things of the interior life. (NOTE: *This was the Reverend Father Viellecase, religious of Picpus, Director of the Great Seminary of Tours (Superior, later, of that of Rouen), who greatly esteemed Sister St. Peter.*)

Mary St. Peter unburdened herself to the Father with her habitual simplicity, explained to him her way of prayer and of allowing herself to be led by God. This Religious had reassured her: "Let Our Lord lead you. Tell your Reverend Mother that I am satisfied." Reassured without doubt and seeing confirmed the favourable impression which Sister St. Peter had made upon her since the earliest days of her novitiate, the Prioress nevertheless did not depart from her method of discretion. She continued to curb the Sister's impulses, to oppose coldness and feigned indifference, systematic humiliations to the burning confidences of her who was carrying the weight of Divine secrets in her heart. Her inflexible attitude, so much in the line of Carmelite tradition, was providential. Revelations or extraordinary divine communications will never have been surrounded with so many human guarantees. One must add that Marie of the Incarnation always knew how to join the rigidity of her direction to the affectionate goodness of a real mother. Sister St. Peter was never deceived about this.

The Prioress then continued to apply her method of presence in ceaselessly leading the Sister to the ordinary road. That is why she decided a short time after profession, to confide to Sister St. Peter the distracting duty of portress. One knows that in Carmel, this charge is carried out in the interior of the enclosure; but this does not prevent it from being fruitful with all kinds of distractions. The portress is the intermediary placed between agitation and peace. She who had no difficulty in making of her days "one whole prayer" will now find herself interrupted in her prayer to listen to the most unexpected matters. One day, a woman will come to ask for advice about her daughter's marriage. This duty as portress, Sister St. Peter

carried literally to the end. Sometimes the weight will become so heavy that she will ask for mercy. But immediately, repressing her nature's stirring, she will take up the Cross, "made for us, obedient until death".

Preparation for the prophetic mission

The life of Sister St. Peter's soul, which she did not dream of hiding from those who had to judge it, nevertheless retained a certain mystery for her superiors. For us also it is retained. One cannot arrive indubitably to determine with exactitude what the stages of her progression were. To what states of contemplation of mystic union had she been elevated? By what purifications was she led forward? This was the royal secret which must not be entirely revealed. It is certain, however, that God's action in the soul of Sister St. Peter can and must be considered under two different angles, or rather that this Divine influence in her tended towards two objects, without doubt subordinated the one to the other, but clearly distinct. One of these objects has for its end the person who, receives the gift; the second purpose goes beyond the person. When all is said and done, it is all of us who are the objects of this second purpose and it behoves us all – the example of Christ Crucified, Sister St. Peter was made obedient unto death. Obedient to the exactions of her duty, to the orders and the prohibitions of her Superiors, but before all that, totally obedient to the slightest motions of grace. There is no doubt that Mary of St. Peter was elevated very early to passive contemplation, without having ever neglected the struggles of asceticism. But if, in her relatively numerous writings, it is not possible to bring forward and follow the history of a soul which is progressing it must be that it was not her mission to show like the two Saints Teresa or like St. John of the Cross, a harmony of mystic doctrine. The way by which God was leading her must not be proposed to men. Neither was she destined to relate certain experiences of the life of union, as an

Angelo of Foligno or the recluse Mary of St. Teresa did, to show to the eyes of all the ineffable marvels which the Holy Spirit can work in a soul when He finds it entirely pliant to His most subtle motions.

The Abbe Botrel, whom we have already quoted and who seems to have understood well Sister St. Peter's road, has shown the close connection existing between the interior perfection of the little nun and her prophetic message. She was pure, in the deepest meaning of the word, that is to say, free from all attachments, and perfectly "dispossessed" as St. John of the Cross had said. Nothing in the world, neither men, nor her own self came to interpose itself between the light sent by God and the soul where it must be received.

"She was of such a purity that she appeared rather to read than to exert herself with her mind in relating God's workings in her. It is necessary for a soul to be closely united to God, to see this, in a twinkling of an eye, far into the depths of evil and into the treasures of the Divine Mercy, which shows her the plan of infinite wisdom and His goodness in repairing the evil and turning it into good. The Divine Saviour substituted Himself for souls – prepared beforehand to continue His mission on earth – on whom He imprints the traits of His charity for the others; for souls, finally, who have a mission to suffer for the world and tell Him its good and its evil. These souls are to God like His visibility continued on earth; they are to the world like its safeguard against the blows of divine justice at the expense of their life, often lessened by it and worn out with fears, which, united to these of JESUS CHRIST, draw down upon the earth a shower of graces". (Abbe Botrel, 1848.)

Mary of St. Peter's great mission, that which ruled all the management of her interior and exterior life, was to serve as God's instrument to remind the world of certain aspects of His providential plan. She had to be the human instrument transmitting to earthly ears the great voice of the Father.

This mission is that of the prophets. If one considers it under that angle, and since Perrine Eluère's youth, the manner in

which God had led her soul, one understands at least the exceptional character of her way and also that of the almost continued obstacles which human prudence did not cease to create to stop it. Mary of St. Peter seems to have had early a perception of her particular vocation, without however knowing the exact nature of her future mission. Whilst she was still in the world, being at prayer, she believed she had seen Christ showing a great cross to her, and that this would not be imposed upon her before her entry into religion. The young girl could not understand at that time what this cross would be; but already a certitude was growing in her; that one day she would have to endure a great suffering or to accomplish a painful task of exceptional bitterness. "The cross was very great".

On entering Carmel, Sister St. Peter continues to allow herself to be led by God Himself. A little later, to interpret this submission to divine motions, she will find this amusing but so apt expression. "The Child JESUS leads His donkey by the bridle of grace". But before being the donkey, she was, as one remembers, the servant of JESUS and of the Holy Family.

It is not without interest to notice how this theme of devotion, and also of that of the inferior life, modifies itself and enriches itself with the new elements. The very day of her profession, having made her consecration to the Holy Family, to which she added her dedication of her name as a Carmelite, Sister Mary of St. Peter and of the Holy Family wrote: "Being thus entirely devoted to the Holy Infant JESUS, in order to be His little servant, He soon inspired me to keep His sheep in the place of His divine Infancy and traced for me the plan of a little exercise in honour of the twelve mysteries and the twelve years of His Holy Infancy."

From this precise test it is fitting to remember that "the flocks" which JESUS confides to the keeping of Sister St. Peter and that it was God Himself who imposed this charge upon her and the way in which to acquit herself in it. These flocks, the categories of which the Sister gives details in her plan of

exercise, are "the flocks of Christ". It comprehends the universality of mankind, the Pope, and the priests, religious, kings, freemasons, actors, infidels, nations, heretics, and schismatics, Jews, unbelievers, hardened sinners, the lukewarm. Finally, completing the circle: the just souls. Later, God will make her pass to other mysteries in the life of her Christ; but it will always be He alone who will lead her. He was "The Director and the Master", and Sister St. Peter remarks that "this complication does not weary the spirit. I had only to follow the light of grace, without effort".

Moreover, Mary of St. Peter had perfectly discerned the new orientation imprinted on her interior life. The flock of whom she is constituted the shepherdess is only a first putting into practical effect of the mission which had been given to her and which she had undertaken to fulfil. Hardly had she entered Carmel, at a time when she was only a postulant, God made her understand what He was awaiting from her. She understood forthwith the reason for her Carmelite vocation.

The passage in which she related this divine communication is so very clear and explicit that it will suffice to quote it in full:

"But soon [God] made Himself heard by my soul – and made me understand to what purpose He had called me; a purpose which was well designed to give me a high idea of the sublime vocation [Carmelite] which I was proposing to embrace, and which looked only at the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Until then, all the communications which I had received from Our Lord had only the sanctification of my soul as their object" until then I had only worked for myself; I was charged only with the care of my own perfection. But on entering Carmel, entirely devoted to the needs of the Church and the glory of God, to the salvation of souls, the Lord wished to teach me this attachment, this spirit of sacrifice, this zeal for the neighbour's salvation, sublime and disinterested virtue which I did not as yet know. This then is what the Lord communicated to me on this subject. I have always considered

this first appeal from the Lord as the foundation and base of the work of Reparation which was bound to be communicated to me. It remains engraved upon my soul. But however, as I have not kept the written memory of it, I will be able to relate matters only approximately. One day, after having received Our Lord in the Holy Communion, He manifested Himself to my soul. It seemed to me that He was accompanied by an angel. He made me see the multitude of souls who were falling into hell. Our Lord told me that He desired that I might offer myself entirely to Him, for the accomplishment of His purposes, and I should abandon myself to Him for these same purposes that which I should acquire of merits in the new career which I was going to embrace; making me realize that He would have care of His interests, that He would make me share in His merits and that He Himself would make Himself the Director of my soul.

The angel urged me to consent to such a magnificent proposition and seemed to envy my felicity. I had a great wish to make this sacrifice to Our Lord; but I did not know whether it was He Himself who spoke to me, that it was necessary that I should have our Reverend Mother's permission beforehand." (NOTE: *This first communication was in December 1839. Perrine Elvere had been at the Tours Carmel since November of that year.*)

This communication does not seem to have been a vision of an imaginative kind. God "made Himself understood to the soul. He made clear – manifested Himself". He seemed to be accompanied by an angel whose presence Sister St. Peter perceived but did not see. At the moment when the postulant was receiving this communication she had no notion of the work of Reparation which would be revealed to her later and she did not have a prophetic view of it. That which was communicated to her was the certitude of being called, furthermore, under condition, to a mission whose object will be the salvation of souls. The fundamental acquiescence of Sister St. Peter is immediately obtained; but this will be the efforts which she will have to make to fulfil the way of living imposed,

which during four years will constitute the preparation for her prophetic role as messenger or ambassadress of God.

* * *

The condition which must be fulfilled by Mary St. Peter in order to make herself worthy of her mission was a total abandonment to God of all the merits which she would be able to acquire. When the postulant made known to her Prioress the communication which she had just received, and of that which Our Lord seemed to await from her generosity, the latter did not give her the permission for which she had asked. How could she permit a little postulant, whom she had not yet had the leisure to study and to control her spiritual life, to make an act whose importance and solemnity in the spiritual order could not escape her ? Furthermore, Sister St. Peter was not yet bound by Profession. So the Mother Prioress' response was full of wisdom. "The act which you ask me to make is not an ordinary act," she told her. "That is why, not having yet any authority over you, I do not want to advise you to make it. In consequence, I do not permit it." Evidently Sister St. Peter submitted. Nothing dispenses from obedience.

She had already been very well used to this attitude of perfect submission, but she was broken hearted, and with childish simplicity she returns to Our Lord and says to Him. "You do see, my good Saviour, that it is obedience which prevents me from doing what You ask of me ; but You see that bottom of my heart and You know that I give You all that I can give you."

Not only had Mary of the Incarnation refused the asked permission but, put on guard by her postulant's confidences, she soon told her to leave off these interior operations whose extraordinary nature must incite one to prudence. Sister St. Peter immediately remarks that JESUS HIMSELF, giving the example, wished to submit Himself to obedience, as she had done ; because after this day she hardly heard these interior words any more.

Temporary and moreover intermittent silence. Whilst waiting, God fashioned her to this form of the interior life in the measure of the Holy Infancy and the family of Nazareth. After Our Lord inspired her oft-times to reiterate her application to the Superiors, but the desired permission will not be given to her so soon. In the interval, the Carmelite formation of the young religious will be pursued with method on the part of the Superiors, with as much generosity and sane understanding on the part of Sister St. Peter. In one of her notes to the Mother Prioress, she has shown perfectly the essential of her interior life at this time and how God was leading her.

"Here, nearly, is my practice of every day," she resumes. Then she adds, "But to allow Our Saviour to lead me thus, I must die to everything which could please my senses. No going back upon myself, unless it is to humiliate myself profoundly, God alone, His will and His glory, this is my motto; and my practice these words, 'And He was obedient to them'. And these others, 'I have not come to be served, but to serve'. Our Lord made me feel very deeply my incapacity for any good and my profound misery. The Holy Child JESUS leads His donkey by the bridle of His Holy graces; I have only to obey and to renounce myself."

This magnificent theme leaves no doubt about the perfection of her Carmelite foundation; to die to everything which is according to nature, and to allow oneself to be led by grace, like a bridle; what other formula could better sum up the spirit of Carmel? But we know that something else still was necessary for Mary of St. Peter, destined by God for an exceptional mission. Every time that the Holy Spirit renewed His inspirations, arousing in the soul of the young nun the desire to make the act of total abandonment and to reiterate her plea, she opened out about it to her Prioress. These overtures, which she feared useless, only made her suffer much. One day she thought of a new way to try to obtain that which they were refusing her – in reality, Sister St. Peter used to say to herself, that which one is refusing to God.

She reminds herself of the game of the donkey. In the course of that recreation where novices and postulants had made a sheep fold for the Holy Family, the part of the donkey having been assigned to Sister St. Peter, the latter had the idea of making her ticket of election legal in some way, begging the Prioress to add her signature. Entering into the game, the Reverend Mother signed it, writing her initials upon it. For Mary of St. Peter, this was not just a little amusement: was not the ticket with her Mother's signature like a little contract authorizing her to reply to the interior appeal and to make the act of total abandonment? Despite her ingenuity, this little procedure did not entirely reassure her, and in order to have her heart clear, Sister St. Peter spoke of it to the Prioress. Since she had wished her daughter to be the donkey of JESUS did she not also desire to give her to Him without reserve? The reply which Mary of the Incarnation made is the expression of wisdom and perspicacity, recalling somewhat the bargaining of Abraham about Sodom; she would be very willing to "lend" her donkey to JESUS but not to give it to Him altogether. At least; not yet. It will then be in the exercise of obedience and renouncement of her own will that Mary of St. Peter will await the moment chosen by God.

The image of the donkey will serve again as the theme of the final scene, when Mary of the Incarnation will finish by yielding to the patient requests of the young religious. From the signing of the ticket of election until this day, nearly four years have passed. Sister St. Peter has the charge of "Portress" at the Tours Carmel. The Prioress, without having given up her prudent method, has no longer the apprehensions which she may have had before. She knew the Sister Portress' qualities of soul. Also, as the cares caused by the necessities of the house are very heavy for the Superior to carry, and that the portress is habitually the link between Carmel and the outside world, Sister St. Peter is acquainted with her Mother's pre-occupations. Very often the latter confided to her that the situation is difficult, that it is important to buy a property and

that money is lacking. She had even begged her to recommend this matter to the Infant JESUS. But in answer to her prayers, Sister St. Peter believed she had heard these words: "Give me the property of your soul". The Sister Portress understood perfectly. And as the Prioress was again speaking to her about her worries, she made this somewhat unexpected remark. "My good Mother, when one has no more money and when one has need of it, one sells one's donkey."

How to realize that? The Prioress had smiled. "Oh, well, my child," she said to her, "you will say to the Child JESUS that if I was rich, I would give you to Him; but as I am poor and have no money to build His holy house, I find myself obliged to sell you. Ask Him then to buy you."

If Mary of the Incarnation had accepted this proposition, it did not appear doubtful that impressed by the naïve assurance of the little Sister, she would have wanted to seize this occasion to render account of the spirit which was leading her and of the credit in which she seemed to rejoice near to God. She did not delay to be settled in her mind. Soon a letter that she had written in response to Sister St. Peter's indications brought in response a first alms of 500 francs "to build the Child JESUS' house". Sister St. Peter forthwith recites 500 laudate in thanksgiving. She was joyful, because the divine Child had just shown that He desired "to buy His donkey".

From that day, the Sister Portress found herself associated in the work of the transfer of Carmel. Supernatural lights as to the projected plans permitted her to facilitate the Prioress' decisions, even to direct them. She understood also that it belonged to her to furnish the stones for the new house in obtaining alms, "which were arriving from all sides". But, as she will soon realize, this will not be without great sufferings for her. The hour was going to sound when God would make Sister St. Peter understand that the blessings which she must attract upon the enterprise would be obtained by the work of Reparation for blasphemies of which she was going to be made the messenger. However, the purification went forward in

Sister Mary of St. Peter's soul. Often, the communications, the sensible graces ceased to gratify her. Very great interior sufferings are preparing her for her mission. Then suddenly, on 26th August 1843, in a first great communication, God showed her clearly the design which He had for her.

It is convenient to notice that at the moment when this first communication was made to Sister St. Peter, she had not yet obtained the formal permission to make the act of total abandonment for which she had begged for during the four years. The "sale" consented to by her Prioress remains diverted, as the other two alternatives made formerly by the Sister. A first time, on the occasion of the renewal of her vows, she had written out a little act in which she begged JESUS to take entire possession of her person. The Superior had approved the act. But as Sister St. Peter had not explained herself on the nature of this donation, she soon understands in the light of an interior illumination, that she had "stolen a little", her Prioress' consent who has only seen in it an ordinary consecration.

Another time, on the Feast of the Annunciation, in union with one of her Sisters who like her had a devotion to the Holy Childhood, she resolved to consecrate herself to JESUS on this feast of His Incarnation. She wrote the act in the terms of a total donation, but so as not to give alarm, charged the other Sister to give it to the Prioress for her approbation.

Soon taken by remorse, she ran quickly to confess her deceit to the Reverend Mother. The first communication of the month of August, coming unexpectedly before the act of total abandon, has almost the sense of an urgent claim. On this subject Mary of St. Peter expresses herself with her usual frankness. "Our Lord," she says in alluding to this communication, "had made me show to my Superiors, if I can express myself thus, of the plan of the edifice which He wished to construct on my soul's terrain; I want to speak of the work of the Reparation." For her, everything has become perfectly clear; the work to be undertaken, is the great cross which was

presented to her before her entrance into religion. And the condition to fulfil before being capable of receiving divine lights was the act of total abandon for which she had made great efforts to obtain the authorization.

On the other side, the divine insistence became more pressing. The Prioress took the Superior's advice in communicating to her that which Sister St. Peter had confided to her. Finally the permission was granted and Mary of St. Peter wrote her "Act of a perfect donation to the Most Holy Child JESUS, according to the discretion of His Will over me, for the accomplishment of His designs to the glory of the Holy Name of God."

The act was made at midnight on 25th December 1843. One reads this capital phrase:

"I make to you the entire abandonment of myself and of the feeble merits which I have been able to acquire since my birth, and also of all those which I could acquire until my death."

Sister Mary of St. Peter and Carmelite prophecy

One should not consider this act of total abandonment as a goal or end. Mary of St. Peter's interior life will pursue its progression by all kinds of purifications and successive illuminations.

Sometimes, a simple phrase of her narrations, even a single word, determines us with regard to the reality of her ascent, without however permitting us to discover the way and the consequence invested with a well defined and exactly prophetic aim, the instrument of which God wished to make use to warn the world, she will continue to the end to submit to suffer a divine travail tending to make the instrument more pliable and better adapted to the purpose which it must serve.

The act of total abandonment in some way freed the voice of God, who was going to speak by the mouth of the religious. It is the condition and the commencement, let us remark, in

consequence of Sister St. Peter herself, that God had exacted from the first, as well as the personal consent given since the first days, a free consent of Superiors, because these latter were called to take a great part in the work which Our Lord wished to build "in the poor ground" of the soul of the Religious.

This work is a prophetic work. It is for the world, for Christianity, not for Mary of St. Peter herself. Having received it, she must transmit it. The idea which is readily entertained about a prophet and prophecy is not always complete nor even very exact. The prophet is not essentially a man who predicts the future. This element of prediction can sometimes be added but it does not constitute prophecy itself. "Prophecy", according to St. Thomas, "is directed to the knowledge of the divine will" and this truth, instructs us in the faith, but also it governs and directs us, according to the verse of the psalm: "*Emitte lucem tuam et veritatem tuam, ipsa me deduxerunt*". *Ila*, *Ilea*, qu. 71. *Ibid* qu. 174.)

At the heart of all prophecy and composing it, there is then the contemplation of a divine truth, destined to enlighten and to guide. It would be necessary to add that this truth can present itself to the prophet under the aspect of a particular application inscribed in the course of time; but even in this case – because divine truth is indivisible – this particular aspect refers to an eternal truth, true in all times and for all. He adds to this general meaning of the word a more especial sense, because the prophet, in the real meaning, is "he who speaks in the name of another."

It remains none the less, that in the wider meaning of the word, every Christian can and ought to consider himself as a prophet because all have received – and even twice – prophetic unction; at Baptism and at Confirmation. If all have not the charisma which makes them speak and prophesy, they possess or can possess the graces and gifts which permit them to contemplate the divine truth interiorly. Splendid faculty, no doubt used in all its plenitude rarely enough; and which exacts

in order to produce all its effects, an orientation of life organized principally in view of the supernatural. But if one considers prophecy of this kind, it becomes easy to understand why Carmel is often attributed to a prophetic order. If an ancient tradition of the Order attaches it in some way to the prophet Elijah and to the sons of the Prophets, it seems evident that there is at least an intention and connection by spirit.

Carmel, one knows well, possesses a double end. With it there is not question of two distinct and even opposing objects, of which one would be at the service of the other, as contemplation can help and vivify the works of mercy, principal object of certain religious institutes. At Carmel there is only one single end, but it is two-fold. The one proceeds to the other, "Vivit Deus". Carmel ordered to silent contemplation, holds itself motionless before the living God. But the zeal which inscribes itself as its motto "*Zelo Zelatus sum*" makes it an obligation to share with others, be it contemplation itself, or the fruits of that contemplation.

The zeal of Carmel can indeed translate itself in many ways; but if it wishes to remain in its true tradition, it will always remain on the level of contemplation. Sometimes, sharing the mystic experiences which it has seen in the secret place, with men of good will and upright spirit, it will show them the "way" which leads to perfection, the itinerary which guides us in the "Ascent", of the symbolic mountain of contemplation and of which God is the summit. But, be it that it may take the form of a path, an ascent or of the little way, this zeal will always have for its object to fix or to apply the contemplative doctrine of Carmel.

At other times, more often, not having received from God the special mission to speak or to write, the contemplative of Carmel will content herself with becoming embodied in all meditated Truth in all its plenitude, and to live it in her mind, in her heart and even in her flesh. In the silence and secret of the cloister, ignored by a world whom it raises in an invisible way, Carmel supplies by the intensity and ardour of its interior

life, for the deficiencies of love amongst mankind. To the regard of God alone, it re-establishes without ceasing an equilibrium or balance which is at each moment endangered by the negligences or the faults of everyone. It will be the victim offered voluntarily in union with Christ who "remains in agony until the end of time". Silent and solitary, its attitude is composed by a whole number of actions where the contemplated Truth expresses itself. And in this sense, if he is completely faithful to his vocation, the hermit of Carmel is a prophet of action. Finally, and in certain rarer cases, responding to some more particular election from God, the contemplative of Carmel will reveal to the world certain secrets. Certain forgotten unknown or misunderstood aspects of the providential plan. But as the truth transmitted has been first of all contemplated by the means of a mystic union, it has been delighted in and seen by the contemplative as living and existing reality, the prophet's words will have the resonance, vibration, the incommunicable word of witness.

Whatever then may be one of these forms in which Carmel's zeal shows itself, it remains prophetic, being first of all the perfect fruit born of the superabundance of the gifts of Wisdom, Intelligence, and Knowledge. This Pascal's definition confirms itself. "To prophesy, it is to speak of God, not by proofs from outside, but by immediate interior impression."

* * *

By her apostolic zeal as by the contemplative union of her soul to God, Mary of St. Peter found herself perfectly in line of Carmel's great traditions, one must remark however that if she had not received from God the mission to show forth some doctrine, she had been called to practise the two other forms of Carmelite prophecy; she was at the same time the silent victim offering herself for many others, and she who "speaks in the name of God". The two forms, first of all complete each other and mutually sustain each other, one and the other drawing all their living strength in a faultless contemplative life, and in a very high contemplative union to divine mysteries.

The first divine communication, when the idea of making an act of total abandon was suggested to her, shows perfectly the harmonious fusion which should operate between prophecy in a strict sense and prophetic action translating itself by a simple style of life. This act of abandon was, in fact, the condition of the prophetic charisms which God wished to give in view of realizing a work. But for Mary of St. Peter, it was the act by which she made herself a victim in the place of a great many souls. And the first consideration which presented itself to her mind is clearly apostolic, the desire to save, by her abandon without reserve. The souls who are falling or meriting to fall into hell at every moment. And, let us believe – it is as much to become an absolutely pure victim as to allow herself to be moulded to a prophetic role, that Sister St. Peter did not cease to pursue till the end of the labour of active purifications and to suffer those of passive purifications. Mortifying and humiliating herself ceaselessly, she bore a multitude of crosses, small and great, that she was worthy of the severe and reticent reception from her Prioress, the burden of being portress (exercised during a certain period in a temporary residence, without enclosure) the doubts, the hesitations, the refusal of Superiors, of her Archbishop. She was literally torn to pieces by two opposing forces: that which pressed her to cry out the divine truth and that of heroic obedience constraining her to be silent.

She suffered the martyrdom of knowing the divine words reduced to silence, the merciful action of wisdom blocked by the scanty prudence of men.

To all that was joined the sufferings of the "nights", if which certain short but oft-repeated phrases in St. Peter's notes show is the existence, although the detail may remain hidden. All these purifications were preparing for the ascensions of soul, of which certain fragments let us catch a glimpse of the quality. Rendering an account of her interior dispositions to her Prioress and to Superiors who desired to assure themselves of the spirit which was leading her, she wrote,

probably in 1843, may be four years after her entry into Carmel:

"First of all, I have no merit in prayer, because it is natural in my soul. I talk completely naturally with this divine Saviour, as a child would do with his father. Here is my method of prayer which Our Lord gave me one day. I do not know if it is by interior words or by a light. Empty your soul by recollections, purify it by an act of contrition. Then in the next place, fill it with God. But as it is useless to continue to pour into a vase once it is full, so also it is useless to want to load the soul with new acts, and new thoughts when a single one fills it and occupies it."

After having described a state of prayer in which she found herself, "sheltered in the Sacred Heart of JESUS" and enriched with His merits, she adds:

"I am often fixed on this kind of prayer which is not entirely supernatural, only I feel that the powers of my soul are sheltered by the Sacred Heart of JESUS: then Our Lord acts in me and I in Him; distractions are rare because the imagination is captive. But when I am thus close beside Our Lord and that He wishes to communicate something on the subject of the work of Reparation to me; He Himself causes a second working in my soul; I feel that I cannot act any more. It appears to me that my own spirit humbles itself to make way for that of Our Lord. Then my soul hears His interior word. In this state the soul finds itself in God without knowing how she entered there."

This fusion in God, she states that she experiences it rarely; but she adds that her habitual prayer was made in the Heart of JESUS:

"It is impossible for me to meditate for a long time, first of all because I have not the mind for it, in the end this attraction which comes from the Heart of JESUS draws my soul into Him and I find myself in this divine sanctuary, enclosed like a little child is in the womb of his mother. Then the will and the affections to all, and my poor soul finds itself released from the struggle. It is Our Lord who has called me to this method of

prayer. At the beginning I used not to dare to follow this attraction, in the fear of not making my prayer well, in not following my method. But Our Lord who desired that I might follow His, suggested this thought to my mind one day, that, if the King invited me to his table, it would be ridiculous that I should want to carry in my dinner with me."

From this long citation, it is right to remember two things above all. The first, that since her earliest youth, Perrine Eluère had been used to following with docility the interior movements of the Holy Spirit, and that this passivity in submitting to the divine action had been approved many times by her different directors. The sequel of the text says in fact that her superiors had recommended to her not to fear and to follow the way which the Holy Spirit was opening before her. One knows besides that already at Rennes, her last confessor, whilst striving prudently and ceaselessly to direct her in the methods of the ordinary way, had well understood that his spiritual daughter was being guided by God Himself in the ways of the Spirit. In giving free play to the supernatural gift, how had not this suppleness and docility, led the soul of Sister St. Peter to the plenitude of mystical union?

But this same text also shows what was the state of her soul at the time when she was receiving the communications which she will be charged to transmit:

"I feel that I cannot act any more; it appears that my own spirit is prostrating itself." This simple statement gives to the nun's prophetic communications an exceptional value of certitude and of supernatural purity. The depth of the soul where the divine work is taking place, where she perceives the divine thought, is not the region of illusory perceptions nor even that of the constructions of natural reason. It is to the pinnacle of the spirit that God communicates His Spirit. The Carmelite formation of Sister St. Peter – Theresian and that of St. John of the Cross – as well as the clarity and certitude of her expressions, do not leave any doubt as to the mystical state in which she found herself in receiving God's message.

The natural powers no longer act, their exercise is suspended, life is dissolved into that of God.

It goes without saying that the silent word of God, when it is received into a soul entirely united and perhaps transformed into it, preserves all its force, all its original purity. And in this sense, the quality of the soul's mystical union, also makes the quality of the communication which is received. But if such is the state, if one may say, the first time of the prophetic message with Sister St. Peter, it would remain to understand what was the arrangement allowing it to be heard by us. Mysterious working, the laws of which one would not know how to define with an entire certainty. How can divine truth, perceived without speech, simple force and interior immaterial certitude, make itself manifest in myth, itself creator of forms and words ?

It is in this obscure passage, and how secret, of the pure supernatural in sensible forms, of divine silence to human speech, that the psychology of the prophet intervenes. And on this psychological plan, singular analogies are got rid of (with all the difference which analogies always bring), between the birth of prophetic forms, those of the forms of artistic creation and those of the forms which people the world that children like. In the three cases, we find an interior force, a life which would not know how to produce the simple rational work of intelligence and its logics; an indistinct and indeterminate life but which causes to appear, without the intervention of reason, the forms of depth or attitudes which will express it in incarnating it. We believe that to the prophet, as to the truly creative artist and to the child, these forms and deeds are given and that it is not until after a blow that reason can control these forms in bodily structure or verbal, in order to judge their worth of expression. This seems well established for the working of artistic creation, but it is also for the working of the prophecy such as it appeared to Mary of St. Peter. Even the formulas of the prayers of Reparation like "The Golden Arrow" will be suggested to her. They form themselves in her,

they are given to her, and they arise without the help of natural reason that this is astonished after the shock of a work which figures there "in hell" Guided by the sole natural light of her reason, Sister St. Peter would never have pronounced it. Thus in the same way, although on quite another plane, the artist will be able to astonish himself by a form which he has just created under the pressure of that indetermined and ill defined force which one calls poetic inspiration.

But the bearing of Mary of St. Peter also approaches, and perhaps further still, that of a child. How can one be surprised at it when one knows the life of spiritual childhood which was hers and the devotion, or more exactly the almost perpetual contemplation of which the Holy Family and the Child JESUS were the objects ?

As children interpret by their actions, their games, the world which they create for themselves and which corresponds to their desires, as they live it with their whole being. Sister St. Peter was living and showing loved and contemplated truth through her actions. This truth and this love, spiritual realities, pressed her irresistibly. From these little apparently insignificant facts, is shown the life of her soul in such a spontaneous way. One recalls that being portress, she had the joy of opening the door to carpenters who reminded her of Joseph and his apprentice JESUS.

The courtyard of Carmel having not yet been quite built, there appeared one day a little donkey pulling a chariot therein. At once Sister St. Peter began to pat her brother the donkey, who represented for her the one who carried JESUS and MARY on the roads of Egypt. At Christmas time, they tell us again, she showed her joy in every way with radiant visage, she gazed at the Child, took Him in her arms, "making little endearments" (because, she will write one day, JESUS loves endearments). She used to sing and dance. The Prophet King, he also used to dance, to show the spiritual joy which pressed him ; and like Sister St. Peter he was one day identified as a beast of burden.

It is perhaps not without interest to notice that Sister St. Peter had not always had the exuberance which she showed in Carmel. According to the testimony of a Novice of the Nevers Carmel who knew Perrine Eluère and was one of her companions in the workshop, the young girl at that time was very reserved and silent. "She was loved generally by all those who knew her, and they held her to be a saint. One would have said that she was always in a state of prayer, so much did she appear to be absorbed in God." (NOTE: *Letter of Mother Camille des Scraphins of the Carmel of Nevers, on 15th January 1849 – Archives of the Tours Carmel.*)

At Carmel, if she observed the silence of the rule with exemplary fidelity, remaining united to God still more closely than she had been in her aunt's workshop, the style of life had however changed. Why, and under the influence of what interior impulse? When a communication from heaven inflamed her soul and heart, she betook herself to her Prioress to confide the secret to her, as she had to do, by obedience.

But the communication is "recited with the Sister's ordinary volubility", as the Mother Prioress expressed it during a conversation with M. Dupont. This habitual volubility, which had succeeded the little seamstress of Rennes' habit of silence, was confirmed by what her Sisters in religion had called "her talent as a versifier" what abundance and with what facility. Couplets succeeded couplets, even a rosary. Often they could make one smile. What did it matter? In their way, they show an interior pressure, an indistinct but irresistible call to rhythm, form, words.

Let us add finally that for the prophet, the artist and the child in the creation of their own forms, it is their entire being which finds itself implicated. Each prophet to his style, like the creative artist and the child. In her message, Sister St. Peter used a style which belongs to her. It is so much more living than she could have learnt it, so much more direct than any personal research which interposes itself between inspiration and expression. It is so much more true that it expresses

entirely what she was; so much the more clear and precise because her interior certitude was greater; so much more living because of the breath of the Spirit which was animating her.

*

NOTE: *What is the reason that amongst people who are very simple and without great literary culture, there is often found this facility of expressing oneself in round couplets ? Sister St. Peter was going to open the door to the workmen who were building the new Carmel, said to the Sister who had to accompany her :*

As obedience
Rules our actions;
Let us in diligence
Open to our masons.

In French this rhymes better:

Puisque l'obéissance
Règle nos actions:
Allons en diligence
Ouvrir à nos maçons !

Part II

The Message

Chapter I

WARNING

At the head of her first account and before undertaking it, Sister St. Peter writes:

"I declare in the truth and simplicity of my soul that only the glory of God alone and the accomplishment of His most holy Will urge me to make known that which I believe Our Lord has communicated to me in His mercy in regard to the Work of the Reparation of Blasphemies. I am therefore going to speak in the simplicity of my soul, having little capacity, and difficulties in expressing certain things which I have seen, or heard, or understood. I declare further that if only a small lie was necessary to obtain the establishment of this Work, certainly I would never consent to utter it, because God is Truth; I have the firm confidence that He Himself will defend His cause, because He has promised it to me."

The message of Sister St. Peter in fact arranges itself in several parts or groups of communications. Each group has been related separately. These narratives are the transcription which the Sister made of the notes which she used to write to submit to the Prioress about the lights which she believed she had received. In writing them, Sister St. Peter was obeying an order. When she had to make known to her Superior that which had been imparted to her in prayer, Mother Mary of the Incarnation habitually refused to listen to her. She dismissed the Sister by a little sentence, always the same. "My daughter,

by obedience, go and write that which you want to say; I have not the time to listen to you." However, sometimes, above all when the communication was short. The Prioress used to listen; and thus it is that certain things have not been written in her narrative. In her narration, Mary of St. Peter inserts in the written text the summary of these oral communications. One must also understand that these notes were drawn up under rather special circumstances. The Sister portress, dismissed by the Prioress, but still under the influence of emotion, used to write things down as they came to her, at one stroke, as if she had said them. Furthermore, ceaselessly interrupted by those whom she had to welcome, and by the obligations of the rule of life from which she never dispensed herself, she strove to find the necessary time in the interval of her numerous occupations. It goes without saying that the sign of divine message did not attach to everything that Sister St. Peter has written.

Some elucidations, certain applications to historical events may be considered as the expression of a personal thought of the Sister. She explains clearly at the beginning of her first narrative. "I cannot bind myself to alter nothing in relating these communications. I beg therefore for indulgence for my rough and homely style, and not to attach too much to the letter, but well to the foundation, the essence of things." It is therefore in this spirit that the message ought to be read and heard. That which could have bearing on the contingencies of the times and of a society moreover belonging to the past, and only that which is of moment today, "the essence of things".

The different groups of communications form a very coherent whole, the logical end and graduation of which it will be easy to notice. The lights received by Sister St. Peter in the space of several years, have not ceased to finish and to state precisely in order to form in the end a unique and complete whole. It has appeared necessary to transcribe here the essential parts of the message, as far as possible without commentary, even

passing over very often the reflections of Sister St. Peter. In this way, it will present itself in all its force and in all its light.

* * *

The authentic supernatural character of these revelations is proved by an important mass of human guarantees. On several occasions they were examined, minutely examined, by people whose prudence seems to us almost excessive. At the time when these examinations were made, a great number of Catholics who had been tainted by demi-rationalism, had the tendency to reject all supernatural manifestations *en bloc*. Besides, Sister St. Peter herself only recalls these communications with the prudence in which the tradition of Carmel and the doctrine of St. John of the Cross had no doubt formed her. She does not assert this and says: "The things which I have seen or heard, or understood." That which it seems can be affirmed with certitude, is that, in the important communications, the perceptible does not occur until afterwards, and that there is no question of visions of the imaginative order. A little incident will allow one to judge of this. One day someone brought to Tours a picture representing the Holy Face. Sister St. Peter, whose opinion one desired to have as to "the resemblance", simply stated that "The Face of Our Lord has never been shown to her in visual manner, but that the picture expresses well the idea she has pictured to herself of the suffering Face of Our Divine Master."

NOTE: *A letter from Mary of the Incarnation corroborates this fact. On 17th January 1848, the Prioress of Tours writes to the Reverend Mother Prioress of the Abbey of Blois:*

"I have received with much gratitude the two copies of the Holy Face, made by one of your dear daughters, our dear Sister to whom I gave some days ago that which you destined for her, is very satisfied with it, but as she has seen nothing, materially speaking, of the gift which Our Lord made her of His adorable Face, she admires, contemplates but does not correct the engravings which they present to her."

Moreover, it seems of little importance to determine what

was the exact nature of these contemplations. Was their supernatural depth mingled with certain natural elements? The attitude of Sister St. Peter would remove from these added elements, if even they ever existed – every kind of danger. Has she not in fact applied to the letter the recommendations of St. John of the Cross in this matter.

“Even if the soul holds that which she hears to be so certain and so true, and cannot prevent herself from having this passive interior contentment, she should nevertheless refrain from believing and give the consent of reason to that which her Spiritual Master will say to her and command, although that may be very contrary to that which she feels.” *The Ascent*, book II, chapter 26).

In the last analysis, it is the life and the person of Mary of St. Peter herself which forms the best guarantee of the supernatural authenticity of these communications. Her heroic obedience, her faultless humility, her uprightness and her natural simplicity, as well as the habitual profundity of her interior life, confirm her testimony.

Chapter II

THE GREAT COMMUNICATIONS

The blasphemies of the Holy Name of God

Before transcribing her letters to the Mother Prioress, to gather them into one single narrative, Mary of St. Peter recalls the communication which was made to her a month after her entry into Carmel and in which Our Lord had demanded from her an act of total abandonment of her person and her merits. As one has already said, this communication of 1839 is about the origin of the Work of the Reparation. But this first prelude to the great communications was not the only one. Some three and a half years later, a new conviction and a new direction are given to Sister St. Peter in view of the mission with which she will be charged. In a note dated in April 1843 she shows how, put on guard by her Superior against a tolerably improbable lack of docility to the graces of her youth, she apologized and begged Our Lord to guide her as of yore. "Then my soul was extremely agitated, my imagination was like a fiery steed which I could not control; but Our Lord in His goodness, heard my prayer, dictated by obedience. I do not know whether it was on the morrow, on awaking, that I heard an interior voice which said to me: 'Return to Thy Father's house, which is none other than my Heart.'"

"These words put my soul at once into a great calm. Having betaken myself to prayer I was united to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and I believed that I heard Him say these words to me: 'Apply yourself to honour my Heart and that of my Mother, do not separate them; pray to them for yourself and for sinners; then I will forget your past ingratitude and I will allow you more graces than before because you are more closely united to Me by your vows'."

Thus, since its origin, the Holy Virgin found Herself associated in the work which was going to operate in Mary of St. Peter and by her. However, several months will still roll by before the first precise communication. During these four or five months, whilst applying herself in honouring the Hearts of JESUS and Mary, Sister St. Peter will pass through a dark night. The darkness, the temptations, a great hunger for God will make her endure interior sorrows which will prepare her for her mission without any doubt. And it is then, on 26th April 1843, that the Lord will make known to her with certitude that which He awaits from her. There is the narrative related in a letter to the Prioress:

(Letter of the month of August 1843.) "On the 26th day in the month of August, there was a terrible thunderstorm; I have never felt the justice of an angered God as in that moment. Also, prostrated to the ground, I offered ceaselessly Our Lord Jesus Christ to His Father, for the expiation of my sins and for the needs of Holy Church; one of my sisters went through the same thing, and it is not without use that I may say what was the first impression of what I was going to relate.

"The evening of this day of storm, during prayer, I placed myself at the foot of the Cross and I approached Our Lord to ask Him what was the subject of His wrath, and to speak to Him a little while about this storm; then He changed His guidance towards me, that of trials, and He spoke to me, nearly or about these words: 'I have heard your sighs and your weeping, I have seen the desire that you have to glorify me, a desire which does not come from you. It is I who have caused it to be born in your soul'. Then He opened His Heart to me, sheltered there the powers of my soul, and I believed that I heard these words: 'My Name is blasphemed everywhere; even children blaspheme.' Then He made me see how this appalling sin grievously wounded His Divine Heart, more than all the others. Through blasphemy, the sinner curses Him to His Face, openly attacks Him, destroys His Redemption and pronounces his condemnation and judgement on himself, He

made me consider how blasphemy is like a poisoned arrow which perpetually wounds His Divine Heart; then made me understand that He wished to give me 'a golden arrow', to wound Him with delight or to heal the wounds of malice which sinners inflict upon Him.

"Here is the glorification which Our Lord dictated to me, despite my great unworthiness, for the reparation of blasphemy of His Holy Name, and that He gave it to me as a golden arrow, telling me that every time I say it, I shall wound His Heart with a wound of love."

THE GOLDEN ARROW

"May the most holy, most sacred, most adorable, most incomprehensible and ineffable Name of God, be for ever praised, blessed, loved, adored, and glorified, in heaven, on earth, and in hell, by all the creatures of God, and by the Sacred Heart of Our Lord JESUS CHRIST in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Amen.

As I felt a certain astonishment in my soul at Our Lord's saying to me, 'in hell', He had the goodness to make me understand that His justice was glorified there.

"But let us return to our subject. Our Lord having given me this arrow, said to me, 'Pay attention to this grace, because I shall ask you for an account of it.' At this moment it seemed to me that I saw graces coming from the Sacred Heart of JESUS, which had been wounded by this arrow, in order to convert sinners. Then I said: 'My Lord, do you then charge me with blasphemies?' But Our Lord did not reply to me. I, feeling my weakness and fearing the demon, begged the Holy Virgin to look after me well and that Her Divine Son would confide in me, and I thought that God was angered because of the blasphemies of which the town was guilty.

"Since that communication, I have felt my soul completely changed; it has been totally occupied by Our Lord, to glorify the most Holy Name of God, Our Lord has inspired in me a little exercise of reparation joined to that praise of the golden

arrow, to make reparation by twenty-four adorations the blasphemies which are uttered at every hour of the day, Our Lord has had the goodness to make known to me that this exercise was very pleasing to Him, but He desires that this devotion should be spread. Our Lord has made me participate in the desire which He has to see the name of His Divine Father glorified; and it appears to me that like the angels who ceaselessly chant the Sanctus, I must apply myself to glorify His Holy Name; that in doing this exercise, I would accomplish the order which He had given me to honour His Divine Heart and that of His Holy Mother, because they were equally wounded by the blasphemy.

"I understand also that, the more a thing was pleasing to Him, the more the demon rendered it bitter in order to disgust the soul, but if one is faithful to it, it becomes more meritorious. Our Divine Saviour gave me those instructions to sustain one in the combats which must deliver me to the demon because of this work which He wishes to destroy, as Our Lord has made known to me, but his efforts will be vain."

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Since that day, Sister Mary of St. Peter occupied herself in glorifying the Holy Name of God, making the adorations which had been suggested to her. More was necessary. The communications which she used to receive were not for her alone. A work must be propagated. A beginning of the diffusion was begun by a new communication made on 29th September of the same year, on the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel. The prioress was ill and Sister St. Peter was inspired to advocate a novena during which the Community would recite the prayers for reparation of blasphemies. These prayers had been submitted to the Mother Prioress, who had finished by authorizing Sister St. Peter to practise this exercise. She also permitted the novena, and her health became better on the ninth day. It goes without saying that none of the Sisters knew the origin of the prayer which they were reciting. However Our Saviour did not cease to occupy the

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little Sister with the reparation for blasphemies and to press her to have these prayers propagated, when on the following 3rd November a new message came to state precisely the mission confided to Mary of St. Peter. She related it in these terms:

(Letter of 3rd November 1843) "Friday 3rd November, I had the happiness to make my Holy Communion for the accomplishment of the designs of the Sacret Heart of JESUS, according to the desire which Our Reverend Mother had said a year ago: that each Friday two nuns would communicate for this intention.

"As soon as they had exposed the Blessed Sacrament (it was the first Friday) Our Lord gathered the powers of my soul into His Divine Heart and made me understand that He desired that the devotion of reparation might be printed, spread, and that it might be the Community which would render Him this service, since she desired the accomplishment of His Heart's designs and was praying for that, that it was just that she might have the honour of giving birth to this devotion. Afterwards, something extremely extraordinary took place in my soul, which it would be very difficult for me to convey in words. My soul was in this divine JESUS, like a fiery furnace; it seemed to me that for some moments, it had left my miserable body to be reunited in God. She found herself happily lost, annihilated in God, then she felt ardently that God was her beginning and her blessed end.

"My soul could not longer act, I only said interiorly: My God, how wonderful are your works; you are not a hidden God; I would have willingly said 'It is good to be here let us make three tents to hold captive the three powers of my soul.' This is what I have experienced during the Holy Mass. Having had the joy of receiving Holy Communion, I took the liberty to pray to Our Lord in this way: 'Now my Lord, that I am closer to you, if you would be pleased to repeat to me that which you said to me at the beginning of the Holy Mass.' But I felt that Our Lord did not wish this at that moment. Then I

felt myself to be united to that which He was effecting in my soul through this annihilation of which I have spoken. After some moments Our Lord seemed to tell me that the silence which He had maintained was to make me understand that it was not in my power to hear this interior word when I wished, and that the extraordinary operation which I had experienced during the Holy Mass was a proof that it was indeed He who was acting in my soul, and that if it had been another spirit, the demon, I would not have been in that state of nothingness.

"After this little lesson, Our Lord made me understand nearly or about these words. 'My daughter, you have offended me more, you have wounded my Heart more than all your sisters together in putting an obstacle to my designs upon your soul; now strive to surpass all in love and in zeal for the interests of my glory. Have confidence, it is not in order to trouble you that I have laid bare your faults to you; have confidence, I will forget them all. Here are the two reasons why I have made use of you:

(1) Because you are the most miserable.

(2) Because you have offered yourself to me for the accomplishment of my designs; this offering has won my Heart. Be humble and simple, make known your wretchedness, that will serve to my glory.'

"He made me understand also that He wished to sanctify me, and that the reparation of blasphemies would be printed and spread. Until then He had told me to ask my Superiors for the printing of these prayers; but in that moment He wished to give me the assurance that I would have the consolation of seeing His desire accomplished.

"This is nearly or about that which took place. This communication has produced in me a profound sentiment of nothingness and of scorn for myself."

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Always desirous of spreading the prayers and practices of Reparation with which she had been inspired, Sister St. Peter

insisted that the Mother Prioress should have the prayers printed.

Whatever it cost her to renew ceaselessly the demands which she thought troublesome, she dared however to pray the Superior to cause the Community to make a new Novena of Reparation. "Permit me to ask you this again in the name of Our Divine Master," she wrote in all simplicity, but the Prioress redoubled her vigilance. Wishing doubtless to understand whether the Sister's insistence came from a too human eagerness, she reprimanded her in chapter, imposed a penance upon her, and forbade her to occupy herself again with the work of Reparation. However, let us notice that the Novena which was asked for was made by the Community.

As to Mary of St. Peter, she accepted the correction in all humility and forced herself to obey it. Not being able to occupy herself any more with the work, she felt herself urged "to put it into the hands of Our Lady of Prompt Succour". And since that had not been forbidden to her, she continued to allow herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit. One must remember that at that date Sister St. Peter had not yet obtained the authorization to make the act of total abandonment. On 20th November, the eve of the renewal of her vows, she believed that she felt the presence of the Infant JESUS in her soul, who was pressing her to renew her demand. Permission was not yet accorded to her this time; but as she remarks, "God was no doubt pleased with her good will and approved her obedience", because He continued to communicate His designs to her. Indeed a new message was given to her four days later. She relates it in these words:

(Letter of 24th November 1645) On 24th November, Feast of Our Father, St. John of the Cross, Our Lord communicated to my soul, despite my extreme unworthiness, and He made known to me more clearly what His designs were on the subject of the work of Reparation for blasphemies of the Holy Name of God. I am going therefore to tell nearly or about that which has passed in my soul.

"During the whole of the Mass, I was engrossed by Our Lord in seeing how guilty is the universe. I heard Holy Mass and made my Holy Communion in reparation for the outrages committed against God, which is my usual practice since Our Lord applied me to repair the blasphemies of the Holy Name of God, His Father. I felt a great consolation in thinking that through Holy Communion, Our Lord comes into my soul in order to make Himself that reparation which can only be worthily made by His divine Heart. Also when I received Him, I began by giving myself to Him, annihilating myself in His Heart then, I let Him perform in my soul the office of Mediator between God and men. But in this Communion on St. John of the Cross Feast Day, as soon as Our Lord had entered my soul, He took possession of my powers, and He made me hear about or nearly, these words. "Up till now, I have only shown you the designs of my Heart, little by little, but today I desire to show them to you in entirety. The universe is covered with crimes; but the breach of God's three first commandments has angered my Father. The Holy Name of God blasphemed and the Holy Day of Sunday profaned, putting the summit to the measure of sins. These sins have mounted up to the throne of God and provoke His anger, which will burst out if one does not appease His justice. At no time have these sins been so great. I desire, but with a strong desire, that an Association, duly approved and well organized, may be formed in order to honour My Father's Name. Your Superior is right not to wish to do anything about this devotion which may not be solid, because otherwise my design would not accomplished."

"Here is about or nearly the Commission with which Our Lord charged me to convey to my superiors, but I felt repugnance in accepting it because I had never heard tell whether there might be in the Church an Association for the object of which Our Lord was speaking to me. Then I said, 'Ah, my God, if I was sure that it was you who was speaking to me, I would not have the worry of telling these things to my Superiors.' Then Our Lord told me, 'It is not for you to make

this test, but for them. I have already communicated enough to your soul in order to make myself known; have I not given all that I have promised when I made myself understood by your soul in the same manner in which I am doing at this moment? Take care because if, lacking in simplicity, you put obstacles to my design, you would be responsible for the salvation of souls. If on the contrary, you are faithful, they will embellish your crown.' Our Lord made me understand by this, that by means of this work of Reparation, His design was to have mercy on sinners. It appeared to me that in finishing, He spoke nearly or about these words to me: 'To whom shall I address myself if it is not to a Carmelite nun who, because of her state, must ceaselessly glorify my Name?' Here, my Reverend Mother, however imperfectly, is what I believe Our Lord made me hear, because my soul was all lost in God and seized with a great dread.

"Our Lord put me at the same time in the spirit of that which was said to Abraham; that if there were found ten just men in the sinful towns, they would be spared; and it appeared to me that in favour of the souls who would apply themselves to the reparation of blasphemies and of contempt against the majesty of God, He would appease His justice and give grace to the guilty. Here is the essence and the formation of all that Our Lord has made me understand on the subject of the work. I declare very humbly and truthfully, my Reverend Mother, that with the grace of God, I have spoken to you in the greatest simplicity of my soul:

"Here is what I give to you, Our Lord's commissions, as His little servant; I leave all these things to your good judgement and to the wisdom of Mother Superior. For me, here is my little house near to you; the Holy Spirit, which enlightens Superiors, will make known to you if it is He who has dictated to me that which I have written. I have no attachment to these things. I only add faith in them as much as my Superiors will approve them. Meanwhile, I am going to keep myself tranquil, glorify-

ing the Holy Name of God in union with the Holy Infant JESUS."

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The following communication, which occurred some fifteen days later, passes from the general to the more particular; from the guilty universe to France. If the widespread evil was coming from France, ought not reparation also to take birth in that country? From the order of intention, the message which follows passes to the order of execution.

(Letter of 7th December 1843) "My soul is in great dread with that which Our Lord has just made me understand during prayer, and He has charged me to transmit it to my Superiors without fear of being mistaken. I am going to do so in all simplicity.

"Our Lord, having sheltered the powers of my soul in His divine Heart, made me see how much He was angered against France, and that He had vowed to avenge Himself against her in His wrath, if they did not make reparation of honour to His divine Father for all the blasphemies of which it (France) was guilty, making me understand that He could no longer remain in that France which like a viper was rending the bowels of His mercy, and that He would still suffer patiently the scorn which they directed against Himself, but that the outrages offered to His divine Father provoked His wrath; that France had exhausted the breast of His mercy until blood; that is His mercy will give place to His justice which will overflow with the more rage because it will have waited longer. Then completely dumbfounded, I said, 'My Lord, permit me to ask you, if they make that reparation which you desire, will you pardon France again?' He answered me, 'I will pardon once more; but note well, once more.' And as the sin of blasphemy extends over the whole of France and is public, it is also necessary that this reparation would extend to all the towns of France and be public. Woe to those who will not make this reparation."

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For Mary of St. Peter, the end of this year 1843 was marked by several important matters. She learnt that in Rome there existed an association for the glory of the Holy Name of God, approved by a Pontifical brief dated 8th August 1843. She saw in this a confirmation of the authenticity of the messages received.

How could she still doubt that this work was not of God? About this same time, leaflets of the Association were printed at Nantes and distributed. Many people were already saying the prayers of Reparation.

Let us add that Sister St. Peter had finally obtained the authorization to make the act of total abandonment of her person and her merits. The communications began once more in February 1844, following one another fairly rapidly, and never ceasing to state precisely the aim and the methods of the work in creating this. For some weeks, Sister St. Peter had been occupied interiorly in glorifying God, and in repairing the outrages committed against His Name. Here is the message which she received on 2nd February.

(Letter of 2nd February 1844) "Today, the day of the Presentation of JESUS in the Temple, it was my turn to make my Holy Communion by vow for the accomplishment of the designs of the Sacred Heart of JESUS, and this good Saviour had the goodness to communicate Himself to my soul, despite my unworthiness.

"The time before the last when He spoke to me, He was fully angry against France; I myself was overcome and I was weeping. But today He filled my soul with joy in making me see the satisfaction of His divine Heart, at the sight of the zeal and the desires of His children for His budding association. In the same way as His Holy Mother has adopted the Archconfraternity, He adopts that of the Reparation; they must go together, the one to repair the outrages committed against God, the other to obtain pardon, the one to JESUS, the other to Mary. But Our Lord has made me understand that the Association that He was desirous to establish in France had

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two aims; in the first place for the reparation of blasphemies, in the second place for the sanctification of the Holy Name of God, to expiate blasphemies and work on the Holy day of Sunday, which are the principal sins which provoke God's anger against France. Thus one will join to the rules of the Association in Rome, that the associates will not work on the days forbidden by the Church, and will not work at all, but will contribute all their efforts to prevent work on these holy days. It appears to me that Our Lord desires that this Association may be under the patronage of St. Martin, St. Louis, St. Michael, in the next place that each associate says every day a Pater, Ave, Gloria, and that act of praise which Our Lord gave me under the title of the 'Golden Arrow', with an invocation to the holy Patrons. But on Sundays and feast days they will say the entire prayers of reparation, to repair the outrages committed against God on those holy days and to ask for pardon for the guilty. Our Lord made me see this Association like an army of valiant soldiers who are going to unite themselves to Him, as their head, in order to defend the glory of His Father. He desires that their name should correspond to the nobility of their function, and He made me understand that for this reason the Association should have as its title 'The Defenders of the Holy Name of God'. He also made me comprehend that each associate should wear a cross on which would be engraved on the one side, '*Sit nomen Domini benedictum*' and on the other side, '*Vade retro Satana*'. He will give a special virtue to this divine weapon to combat the demon of blasphemy through the mouth of sinners. Each time they will hear blasphemies, they will say that which is written on this cross, thus they will wage war against the devil and will render glory to God.

"It also appears to me that Our Lord has made me understand that the devil will make all efforts to destroy this work, which comes from His divine Heart. It seems to me that I should wish to give the last drop of my blood for this holy Association. Our Lord made me understand that He had not

said anything for a long time because that was not necessary; but that He never did anything that was of no use; but that it was necessary today and He made me see the difference between the French Association with that of Italy because of work on Sundays. Oh, if one knew the joy this budding association gives to JESUS. People would be eager to augment the joy of His Heart, and to enrol in this holy militia of which He is the King, to fight the enemies of the Holy Name of God with His Cross and submit them to His empire.

"There, my Reverend Mother, are the lights which I have received about this Association. I submit these things to your judgement as I have already done. I can be mistaken; but the Holy Spirit which enlightens the Superiors will not deceive them; that is why I speak without fear and in all simplicity."

(Letter of 25th February 1844) "Our Lord desires with yet a very ardent desire, that this work may be established, as He has made me know, because He always applies my soul to reparation and to have compassion with the grief of His divine Heart at the sight of the outrages committed against His divine Father, and Holy Church, His Spouse. I seem to hear this divine JESUS address these words to us, from the depth of the Tabernacle: 'Oh, you who are my friends and my faithful children, see if there is any grief like to mine. My divine Father and my Church His Spouse, the object of the delights of my Heart, are despised and outraged by my enemies. Will no one rise up to console me in defending the glory of my Father and of His assaulted Church? I cannot remain in the midst of this ungrateful people. See the torrents of tears which flow from my Eyes. Will I not find anyone to dry them by making reparation to the glory of my Father and in asking for pardon for the guilty?'

"Here, my Reverend Mother, are the feeling which God puts in my soul, and which makes Him feel that interior grief which the glorious Heart of JESUS cannot feel anymore.

("Here is yet another thought which makes a great impression on my heart; if a King is scorned by a strange power,

or only his ambassador, at once people rush to arms; the honour of the prince must be avenged. Troops are raised, the death of a great number of soldiers counts for little. And now that the Holy and terrible Name of the God of armies, the King of kings, is blasphemed, despised, and His day profaned by an infinity of sinners, and no one is worried about it, they do not think of it.) But now Our Lord JESUS, the envoy, the Divine Son of the God of battles, the divine ambassador of the Kingdom of Heaven who is demanding reparation of honour for His divine Father, or that He will declare war and menace France with His wrath. Have we to weigh our choice? Since God has inspired the Sovereign Pontiff to pledge the faithful to form associations in order to repair blasphemies in the same month that Our Lord has communicated this devotion to us, I beg you, very humbly, Reverend Mother, to entreat Monsieur the Archbishop, to be pleased to engross himself in it.

"Please give him cognizance of everything extraordinary which has taken place in my soul since the feast of St. Louis, King of France, on the subject of Reparation. Our Lord will give him light to know His will in this matter. If you desire, Reverend Mother, to examine with Monsieur the Superior, it is not against humility that I may write to His Lordship as I desire to do, I entreat very humbly the permission to do it. Then, I will have done all that will have been in my power for the accomplishment of the work of the Reparation, which, despite my unworthiness have been revealed to me. But I will not write to His Lordship except when I feel my soul to be under the realm of grace, because I do not want to make use of my own mind, which is capable of nothing. I will only make use of Our Lord's pen if I can express myself thus."

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The authorization to write to the Archbishop was granted. Having been informed by the Superiors of the communications made to Sister St. Peter, Mgr Morlet, in his turn caused the leaflets of the Association to be printed and recommended them to the parish priests of his diocese. However, the Associa-

tion was not yet established, as Sister St. Peter had hoped. The communications continued to follow one another fairly rapidly.

(Letter of 27th February 1844) "Allow me to relate to you, in all simplicity that which occurred today in my soul. After Holy Communion, Our Lord told me to present myself to Him in the name of France and to receive Him in the kingdom of my soul in the capacity of King, offering Him my Communion for the crimes of which France is guilty and above all against His divine Father and His Spouse Holy Church. After having received this divine King, I applied myself with vigour to pray to Him for our Country. Then He communicated Himself to my soul and He made me understand that He was entrusting France to me, that He was making me His ambassador, to treat of peace with Him; that then it was necessary that I remain at His Feet in the Blessed Sacrament, in great humility, praying for France and for the establishment of the work of Reparation. Then He made me understand to weigh well the obligations of the charge which He was imposing on me and that when an ambassador leaves a kingdom, that this was a sign of war. Our Lord wanted to make me understand that I was not to retire voluntarily from His presence in the Blessed Sacrament, where I must remain in spirit in the name of France. Then, I said something like these words to Our Lord: 'My God, I give myself entirely up to you for the accomplishment of your designs; work in me according to your Holy Will.' And I prostrated myself with my face to the ground, adoring God's designs, who made use of all there was of the most poor and the most miserable in His works, and I accepted the charge which God was imposing on me, begging Him to make me suitable for His designs and Himself to accomplish them in me. For this adoration of JESUS in the Blessed Sacrament, here is what JESUS has bestowed on me these many days.

"Whilst coming out of choir to go to apply myself to my occupations, I leave my heart and my spirit at the foot of our good Saviour and from all the parts of the house where I find

myself, I strive to gaze at Him and to keep Him company. Here is the interior exercise which Our Lord demands of me, and He desires that I may be there, at His Feet, in the name of France! This is something like, Reverend Mother, what has occurred in my poor and sinful soul."

(Letter of 16th March 1844) "Since the last letter which we have sent to you, it seems to me that Our Lord has gathered me into Himself on two occasions and has worked in me in an extraordinary manner. I am going to tell you how as best I can; do not attach yourself to the letter, but right to the foundation, to the spirit of things.

"It appears to me that during the Holy Mass, Our Lord, having gathered me into Himself, made me see the horror of the sin of blasphemy. It seemed to me that He was saying to me: 'You cannot understand the malice, the abomination of this sin. If my mercy did not hold back my justice, it would crush the guilty, and even inanimate creatures would avenge themselves about it: but I have eternity to punish it.' Finally, He made me understand the excellence of the work of the Reparation, how much it surpassed all other devotions, and that it was agreeable to God, to Angels, to Saints, and to the Church, but that I must not be worried if, in applying myself to it, I did not feel a sensible devotion therein, making me understand that the devil would give me a distaste for it. Then, it appeared to me that this divine Saviour was saying to me: 'Oh, if you knew what degree of glory you would acquire in saying only once *Mirabile Nomen Dei Quod est* . . . in the spirit of Reparation for blasphemies.'

(NOTE: *The admirable Name of God which is above every Name, let us adore Him.*)

"The second communication that I believe I had received from Our Lord was during the evening prayers. I was feeling so many miseries and imperfections in my soul. I approached Our Lord with confidence, uncovering my poverty to Him. Then He gathered up my soul and He made me understand that a good rich man is full of joy to meet a really necessitous

poor man and that He solaced him with great joy; that His goodness, His charity, were great enough to relieve our miseries when we approached Him with confidence. He made me see effectively that I was poor enough, very miserable, and that I was not profiting from His graces; but after all that in His Mercy, He wished earnestly to give me pardon for them. Then I begged from Him the pardon of my faults, which He granted to me, then saying to me: 'A workman cleans the instrument of which He desires to make use.' He made me see that a Carmelite must be stripped of the old man, detached from all, that she should love sufferings and humiliations and be filled with zeal for the glory of God and of the Church, and of charity for the salvation of souls.

"This divine Saviour told me that I could not acquire these virtues by myself but that He who was pardoning me could easily put these virtues in my soul if I prayed to Him about it. Then it seems to me that Our Lord was saying to me. 'Do you consent to walk in my ways?' I answered, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He said to me: 'Close your eyes, throw yourself into my Heart; I give you for ornament the cross and the thorns of this Heart; do not conceal it from yourself. You are called to a great perfection; think of me and I will think of you; occupy yourself with my affairs and I will occupy myself with yours; and consider this day as one of the most beautiful of your life.' Then I renewed my vows and I have taken the resolution to begin a new life."

(Letter of 9th May 1844) "You know that Our Lord, a little time ago, told me that He was charging me to pray for France. He gave me that order again, telling me to guard His sheep in France of whom He was the Shepherd, and that He was choosing me that day to be His little shepherdess; that He was giving me the mysteries of His most holy life for demesne and that I must draw from His divine wounds for His sheep; finally that He was giving Himself to me like a gold mine in order to pay the debts of France to His Divine Father, which is owed to His justice, giving me for that permission to take

the great treasures of His Heart. Then Our Lord made me realize that I should take care not to act like the lazy servant of the Gospel who did not value the talent that he had received, and that He would demand an account of it from me; that it was easy for me to take from that gold mine, which He had dug by His labours and His sufferings. Here is the essence of that which I believe Our Lord has made me understand, Reverend Mother, I believe that Our Lord wants very much to find someone who, by means of prayers, will cause Him to have mercy on France."

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Let us not forget that Sister St. Peter is at the same time the messenger of God for the Work of Reparation, and herself a reparatrix. She is the passive instrument and voluntary victim; under this double title, she must continue to undergo the sufferings of purifications in order that the instrument may be supple and the victim perfectly pure. Also, during about two months – from March to June – the lights which she is receiving tend above all to delineate her double role, in rendering her entirely docile to interior inspirations, and at the same time worthy to appear before God as the ambassadress of France. The last letter of this first revelation unveils, as much as it can, God's work in the secret of a soul.

(Letter of 6th June 1844) "I am going to give you an account, as you have ordered me to do, of what has taken place in my soul since 16th March, the day when it seemed to me that Our Lord was saying to me: 'Do you desire to walk in my ways?' Being submitted to His good pleasure He gave me His Cross and His thorns. Then this divine Spouse stripped me of everything of the senses and threw me into darkness, temptations and poverty. The Work of Reparation is like a fire burning within me which makes me suffer more or less according as it pleases the good God. In all my prayers I ceased not to ask the Lord that He may deign to save France, and to establish in all the towns of the Kingdom His work of Reparation, and to this end to raise up apostolic men. You see well, my sweet

JESUS that, poor and miserable creature, I can do nothing for this work; be pleased therefore to transmit into the heart of someone who can do you this service, all that I am suffering. On the day when I was deputed by vow to make the Communion to the Sacred Heart of JESUS, Our Lord wished to give me a little consolation, in pity for my weakness. He made me feel His Presence, raised up my soul, and during about two hours it was lost in Him. Then, in this so delicious calm, I thought I heard His sweet voice, which was saying to me something like these words: 'My child, courage and confidence; engrave these words in your heart. Oh, if you knew the profit for your soul which is suffering these sorrows, you would thank me for having given them to you. I came to visit you, but not to remain with you in a perceptible manner. You will drink the chalice, but console yourself, although you will not see me, I shall not be far from you, because I will hold the chalice whilst you are drinking it. After this trial, I will cause you to taste my consolations. You have well merited these griefs because of your infidelities, however it is not to avenge myself for them; it is only through goodness that I give you these sufferings.' Then I took the liberty of asking Our Lord if the crown which I was making for Him in order to glorify His Name and honour His mysteries was agreeable to Him. He told me: 'Ah, that anyone does for my glory is a delightful dish for me.' He made me promise to make this exercise when I would be powerless to say my prayers.

"After these two hours of consolation, I returned to my state of suffering.

"Sometimes, Our Lord made me feel that it is necessary for me to have recourse to His Holy Infancy. I was bearing a flow of the griefs which He bore then; because He had a great desire to work for the glory of His Father, and yet He was suffering the infirmity and weakness of infancy. He waited in silence for the hours marked by His Father's Will. Since that inspiration, I have applied myself entirely to the Child JESUS. I place the work of Reparation in His Hands and, imitating

His example, I will await in silence the times of God, only desiring His Holy Will."

(Letter of 19th November 1844) "It is about eight months since Our Lord communicated Himself to me on the subject of this work of Reparation; He was leading me by a way of dryness, darkness, and temptations. However, I have continued, by the grace of God to make reparation to His divine Name for blasphemies. But I confess that I have fallen a little into Satan's snares, who was doing all he could to disgust me with it. After being humiliated before God with my negligence, begging Our Lord to be pleased to choose a more worthy instrument, this divine Saviour, despite my unworthiness, then desires to favour me with new lights, in letting me know the harrowing state in which blasphemies put Him, the desire which He had for the establishment of this work of Reparation for the glory of His divine Father. Our Lord made me understand that it is necessary to pray unceasingly to God by the merits of His Son, and the desire for His glory which He had when He was on earth, to obtain this work for the glory of His Name. This divine Saviour made me understand that men are not capable of understanding the injury which God receives though this sin of blasphemy; and He made me realize that these sinners pierce Him to the heart and make of Him a second Lazarus covered with wounds. He invited me to imitate the dogs who consoled the sufferer in coming to lick his wounds. He made me understand that I would render Him a great service by using my tongue every day in glorifying the Holy Name of God, despised and blasphemed by sinners, without considering whether this exercise was giving me interior consolations, but to think that it was healing His divine Wounds and giving Him great satisfaction. It seemed to me that He was saying to me: 'Strive with all your efforts for the establishment of this work. I give you all my merits to obtain it from my Father. Ask in my Name and it will be granted'."

By this date of November 1844, it appears that all the first

part of the message may be complete. Everything which ought to be communicated on the very fact of the sins which demand Reparation has been said. Other directions, as to the nature of the means of reparation, will be the object of a new group of communications.

On 19th November 1844, Sister St. Peter ends her first narrative in these terms:

"It is in the Sacred Heart of JESUS that I have found this work of Reparation; it is also in this divine Heart burning with zeal for the glory of His Father, that I place it, through the hands of the most Holy Virgin and of the glorious St. Joseph, under the protection of the Angels and Saints, imploring the divine mercy of God, who has deigned to make use of such a vile instrument.

"I declare with simplicity, for the greatest glory of God, that it is I myself, Sister Mary of St. Peter of the Holy Family, unworthy Carmelite, who has received these lights about the Work of Reparation of blasphemies, despite my unworthiness, and that I have written them in this actual exercise book, by obedience to my Superiors and for the great glory of God, and also for the acquittal of my conscience; because I tremble at the sight of the mission which God has imposed upon me. It must save many souls, if God's designs are accomplished, I declare also that I have spoken in the truth and simplicity of my soul, and that I would swear on oath, if it was necessary for the glory of God. Now, I believe it to be useless to keep these letters, which I have copied exactly; that is why I am going to burn them."

The adorable Face of Christ

Preparation

Between the end of the first group of communications, having treated of blasphemy and of the transgression of Sunday rest, and the group which is going to follow, nearly a year has passed (November 1844 – October 1845). This period of abatement – if one can call it thus – divides itself into two parts.

It is divided, in June 1845, by an important event: the interview which Sister St. Peter had with the Archbishop Mgr Morlot. In two letters to the Mother Prioress, the Sister summed up this period:

"Since the last letter of the first account, dated 19th November 1844," she writes, "until 17th June 1845, the time when I had the honour and the grace of speaking to our worthy prelate, I received few communications on account of the Work of Reparation."

On 11th October 1845, which marks the beginning of new communications, she writes again: "Since the time when I have had the grace of speaking to our worthy prelate, I have not experienced anything extraordinary on the subject of the Work of Reparation."

If the communications have not entirely ceased, they have not added any new element. But during all this time, Sister St. Peter has been, it appears, submitted to very intense interior purifications. She summed them up very briefly in two letters.

"Oh," she writes, "how my soul was suffering at that time (of the interview with Mgr Morlot) I was then suffering an interior martyrdom which only God knows. I could not eat any more. I could not live any more."

As to the period which followed the interview, Sister St. Peter has described it in her letter of 11th October 1845:

"This divine Spouse has hidden Himself from my soul and He has put me back again into the consideration or very simple meditation on my last end. I have gone down into the depth of my sinful and criminal soul, and there, Our Lord has caused me to understand the depths of my nothingness, by means of vivid enlightenment. I have also seen my numerous sins, so much faithlessness to His graces and all my ingratitude. I have seen with a great certitude that I was only a shadow of a Carmelite, and that I was very far from being one in reality. After these vivid illuminations, I threw myself at the Feet of Our Good Saviour, recognizing myself as guilty and I confessed my sins to Him. I also made a little survey of conscience to my

Confessor, and I have taken the firm resolution of beginning an entirely new life, in favour of those lights which Our Lord was giving me on my miseries and on my nothingness. It appeared to me that it was my sins which were the cause why the work of Reparation remained unfinished. That is why, my heart crushed with grief, I have begged Our Lord to be pleased to choose another instrument for the accomplishment of His designs, who might be worthy of Him.

"After these lights, Our Lord has permitted that I may be tried by temptations. I only felt evil dispositions in myself. If Our Lord had not upheld me with His holy grace, I would have committed many faults. Then, in the next place, my inward sorrows are augmented by the privation of sensible grace. Oh, how painful this state is ! I do not speak here of the deprivation of inward consolations, but of a grace of an interior movement which bears the soul to good and to God. It appears that in this state, the soul has lost grace ; she is as if dying. "Lord," I cried, "sustain me because I am falling into decay ; I am dying." I hardly dared make my Communion any more, having nothing except a frozen heart to offer to my divine Spouse. Also I could no longer glorify the Holy Name of God ; this exercise of reparation only aroused disgust and bitterness in me. And yet in the depth of my soul, it seemed to me that the good God wished that I might remain faithful to this exercise. Finally, today, Reverend Mother, I took the resolution of coming to you to open my soul before going to Holy Communion, because I could not decide to go in that state. However, I retraced this step and thinking of Holy Communion, I said: "This Bread of the strong will sustain my courage," and in awaiting the Holy Mass, I took my Crucifix with faith, thinking that He alone could heal me ; remembering that this divine Saviour had told me that the act of praise which He had given me under the title of "The Golden Arrow", sweetly wounded His divine Heart. I said this act of praise of the Holy Name of God ten times, and I took the resolution to make my Holy Communion in reparation for all

the blasphemies uttered against the Divine Majesty."

Despite the inward griefs which weighed her down, Sister St. Peter did not allow anything to appear on the outside. She bore the spiritual sufferings in silence, and this torture of not being able to give herself up completely to the work which had been supernaturally assigned to her. The interview which she had had with her Bishop had not produced the result for which she was hoping. Mgr Morlot, whilst showing himself as very fatherly, had not wanted to establish "The Association". It only remained to Sister St. Peter to obey and to be silent. And since God Himself, as she says, had put her back once more in "the prayer of consideration of very simple meditation", she will have complete leisure to abandon herself to her zeal for the salvation of souls and to the exercises which she had always practised with the simplicity and ingenuity of a child.

A fragment of text makes her live again before our eyes. She is speaking of the time when the Carmelites were occupying for a time the house situated on the Place Saint Gregoire, whilst awaiting the completion of their new convent in the Rue des Ursulines. There was no grill, and the Sister Portress was, it appears, besieged by the visits of people who wanted advice, counsels, or consolations from her. The little Portress appears to have been already popular. But not intending to let herself be overcome, here is how she coped with it. "As these good people," she writes, "seeing that this little Bretonne, simple like them, understanding perfectly their language and their sorrows, striving to sweeten them by the voice of religion, they went away content; but soon they returned and brought their neighbours to me. Despite the charity which I had for them, I excused myself from receiving them, so as not to remove from me the spirit of silence proper to our holy vocation. Our Lord gave me the means to satisfy them, and further that of soothing them in their illnesses, inspiring me in a devotion which consisted of carrying on the Gospel of the Circumcision."

Therefore the Sister began to make the little sachets containing a leaflet on which she had written the short Gospel of the Holy Name of JESUS. At the end there was this distich: "When JESUS was named – Satan vanquished was disarmed". Instead of giving advice to visitors, the Portress gave them a sachet, and allowed the virtue of that Name to operate, "Which causes every knee to bend, in Heaven, on earth, and in hell."

For the intentions of those who specifically desired to give some reward, Sister St. Peter had placed a purse in the hand of that statuette of the Divine Child which she had always near her in the Portress' lodge. She used to say to them: "Give to JESUS whatever you wish: it will be useful for Him to buy some swaddling clothes. In her mind, these swaddling clothes were corporals.

(NOTE: *This devotion was officially approved after Sister St. Peter's death, thanks to M. Dupont's intervention. The leaflets were printed and the whole community occupied itself in making the sachets, a devotion through which one still obtains real graces in our times.*)

If one wants to recall that at this period, the "little Bretonne" had already formidable deposits and certain designs of the divine justice and that at the very moment when she was welcoming her visitors, her soul was suffering in the crucible of passive purifications, her human and naturally good attitude takes its whole value. She "understood perfectly their language and their sorrows". Is it not through this quality of love of one's neighbour that one recognizes the authenticity of divine love in a soul and the reality of her union with God?

The message

After these months of inward sufferings and of God's silence, other lights are going to be communicated to Mary of St. Peter. She gives account of them in these phrases.

Veronica

(Letter of 11th October 1845) "After having received this God of love through Holy Communion, I said to Him with

faith, 'O divine and heavenly Physician, I place my soul in your hands.' This divine Saviour, following upon this, made my soul feel the effect of her prayer in recollecting herself in Him, for Him to cause her to forget her griefs, and this divine Master made me understand that His divine will was always that I should occupy myself in the exercise for the reparation for blasphemies, despite the efforts of the demon who desired to hinder me by filling my soul with troubles and repugnances, because he desired to destroy this work if it was in his power. Then Our Lord transported my soul on to the way of Calvary, and vividly presented to me the pious office which St. Veronica rendered to Him, who, with her veil, wiped His most Holy Face which was then covered with spittle, with dust, sweat, and blood.

Then, our divine Saviour made me understand that the impious, by their blasphemies, actually renewed the outrages done to His Holy Face; and I understood that all these impious creatures hurled against the Divinity, against God whom they could not attain, fell like the spittle of the Jews upon the Holy Face of Our Lord, who made Himself the victim of sinners. Then our divine Saviour made me realize that I must have the courage of St. Veronica, whom He was giving to me as protectress and model; she, who went so bravely through the crowd of her enemies. Then, I understood that Our Lord was saying to me that in applying oneself to the exercise for the reparation of blasphemies, one was rendering to Him the same service that the pious Veronica had given to Him, and that He would regard those who were rendering it to Him, with the eyes of the same complaisance with which He looked at this holy woman at the time of His Passion; and I saw that Our Lord had much love for her. That is why He told me that He desired that she may be especially honoured in the Community, telling me to ask of Him whatever grace we would desire, because of the service the pious Veronica rendered to Him, and that He promised to grant it. It also seemed to me that Our Lord was telling me to ask Our Reverend Mother to let



this be known to the Sisters who, at this time, were doing an act of reparation in saying in honour of the life of Our Lord, a certain number of times the act of praise to the Holy Name of God called "The Golden Arrow". Our Lord made me understand that He was favourable to this devotion, letting me see that He had made use of me as a worthless instrument in order to introduce this devotion into the Community, which being practised by good souls, rendered honour to Him.

At the end of this communication, the Mother Prioress asked of God, through the intercession of St. Veronica, the grace of being able to acquire a piece of land, the acquisition of which by others would have entailed a downward view upon Carmel's garden. This grace was obtained afterwards and against all expectation.

God is the head of His Christ

(Letter of 27th October 1845) "This morning, in coming to prayer, Our Lord took possession of the powers of my soul. He caused me to enter into His Divine Heart and He made me to see and understand admirable things in letting me know His admirable purposes in the work of Reparation.

"It is here, Reverend Mother, that I have great need of the Holy Spirit to direct my pen, because I do not know how to write what I have seen and heard. Here then is nearly that which I believe Our Lord has communicated to me. Our Divine Saviour, having gathered all the powers of my soul into His divine Heart, He made me apply myself with great intensity to the contemplation of His adorable Face, and He made me understand by the light of His divine rays that this august and Holy Face, offered to our adorations, was the ineffable mirror of the divine perfections which are enclosed, expressed, contained in the most Holy Name of God. After this intellectual sight which God has given me, but which it is impossible for me to express, if it is not in the words of St. Paul which I read lately and which have vividly impressed me because I have realized in these words that which I have seen in this light: 'God is the Head of His Christ'. And I have

understood by this communication that, as the Sacred Heart of JESUS is the perceptible object offered to our adorations to represent His immense love in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, so also the adorable Face of Our Saviour is the perceptible object offered to the adoration of the Associates of the Work of Reparation, to honour and venerate with a profound respect, this Holy Face covered with opprobrium by the blasphemers who attack the Divinity of which it is the image, the mirror and the expression; and by the virtue of that Holy Face, offered to the Eternal Father, one can appease His wrath and obtain the conversion of the impious and of blasphemers. This devotion is not contrary to the work; it cannot but be of advantage to it. Our Lord has also given me another light in making me see that the Church is His mystical Body and the religion was the face of this Body. Then, He caused me to see this Face exposed to all the enemies of His Holy Name; and I saw that all the blasphemers and the secretarians renewed all the opprobriums of His Passion against the Holy Face of Our Lord. By virtue of this divine light I saw that the impious who utter bad words and blasphemed the Holy Name of God were spitting upon the Face of Our Lord covering it with mire, and that all the blows which the sectarians were giving to Holy Church and to religion, were the renewal of the many blows which Our Saviour's Face had received and which they were doing against this divine Face, in making great efforts to destroy the divine works.

"Following upon this vision, Our Lord said to me: 'I seek for "Veronicas" to console and adore my divine Face, which has so few adorers.' And He made me understand once more that all those who would devote themselves to this work of Reparation, would be doing through this the work of the pious Veronica.

"Finally, Our Lord said to me: 'I give you this Holy Face in recompense for the services you have rendered to me the past two years. It is true that you have done few things; but your heart has conceived great desires. I therefore give you

this Face in the presence of my Father, in the virtue of the Holy Spirit, and in the presence of the Angels and the Saints. I make you this GIFT through the hands of my Holy Mother and of Saint Veronica, who will teach you to adore it.' Finally, Our Lord said to me, 'By this Holy Face, you will work miracles.'

"This divine Saviour made me understand at the same time the desire which He had to see His Holy Face offered to the adoration of His children, as the object of the devotion of the Associates of the Work for the Reparation of blasphemies. He seemed to invite me to make His adorable Face known. At the end, Our Lord made me understand that the grace He had granted me that day was the greatest that He could give me after the grace of the Sacraments, and that He had prepared me, in working the ground of my soul by the great interior sorrows which I suffered a short time ago. He made me realize that He never tried His children beyond their strength. I understand also that He was delegating St. Louis, King of France, as Protector of this Work of Reparation, because of the zeal which he had for the glory of His Name, and the pious Veronica, because of the service she had rendered Him on the way of Calvary in soothing His adorable Face. After Our Lord had given me these vivid illuminations on the Work for the Reparation of blasphemies, He said to me: 'Now, those who will not recognize my work therein, it is because they will close their eyes.' At the end of this communication, I felt a little disquiet about the truth of this matter, on account of its length; but Our Lord reassured me, telling me that He had many means of communicating Himself to souls and that He was accommodating Himself to my feebleness; that I ought to have already the experience that He was imparting Himself to my soul in this sweet and peaceful manner. It is as a tender Father who gives me His orders and makes His desires known to me. But for that it is necessary that my soul should not be agitated by any passion; a great joy or a great grief which cause the least agitation, hinders me from receiving these

lights from Our Lord. But when, through pure goodness, He makes my soul understand, all that happens so sweetly and impresses itself so much on my soul, I cannot do more than apply myself to that which my divine Master has shown me to be if His good pleasure. He makes me realize all that He desires that I should do. For a time He leads me in delightful valleys; then He conducts me through arid deserts, according to the needs of His poor sheep and for the spiritual wants of my soul. I have considered that it was not useless to make known in a few words the manner in which Our Lord was leading my soul, so that one may be able to judge better these lights which I believe I receive from Our divine Saviour. May His Holy Name be blessed for having so much care for a miserable sinner."

The effigy of the Prince

(Letter of 29th October 1845) "After having taken the betrayal of Our Lord by Judas as the subject of my prayer, I considered with grief what an outrage the Holy Face of Our Lord had received by such a perfidious kiss, and it seemed to me that Our Lord was inviting me to kiss the picture of His Holy Face with much love, in spirit of reparation. After having made various acts, I felt inwardly that Our Lord was drawing me to Himself. I obeyed this secret touch of grace. Then this divine Saviour wished to instruct me on the excellence of the gift which He had made me in giving me His adorable Face; and, further, He had the goodness to come to terms with the feebleness of my spirit by a simple comparison.

" 'In the same way,' He said to me, 'as in a kingdom one obtains all that one desires with a piece of silver marked with the effigy of the Prince, so also with the precious coin of My Holy Humanity, which is My Adorable Face, you will obtain all that you desire in the kingdom of Heaven, by the offering of this divine coin.'

"And these precious lights which I am obliged to express by these words which I have just said in order to make me under-

stand, took me right out of myself. I felt an interior working which it is impossible for me to express.

"Then, I begged Our Lord to have the goodness to instruct me and to render that which I was experiencing a little more intelligible to my poor spirit, because the powers of my soul were as if suspended. Our Lord permitted that in this condition, my soul should incline itself towards the piece of land which our Reverend Mother had told me to ask from Our Lord. It appeared to me that I ought to buy it by the offering of the Holy Face and Our Lord told me that before a year had passed, we would be in possession of it. He assured me of it adding, not to worry myself as to how that could come to pass.

"REMARK: Several months afterwards, effectively, this matter, which appeared hopeless, was renewed. The proprietor, who beforehand had been moved by nothing, came himself to offer his land on conditions with which Our Superiors were satisfied, and some days after having signed the deed of sale, he died suddenly. This grace filled me with fear, because I regarded it as the perceptible sign of the grace which I have received from Our Lord, in the gift of His Holy Face; and I tremble in thinking of the account which I will have to render to God if I do not use and value this divine talent for the glory of God and the salvation of souls."

Survey and interior enlightenment

Sister Mary of St. Peter continued to be concentrated on the contemplation of the mystery of the Holy Face. Even when the communications did not directly deal with the work of Reparation, they enlightened the soul of the Sister, causing her to penetrate yet further into the mystery. On 30th October 1845, we find the account of one of these contemplations, and later still, on 21st January 1847, on a date on which Sister St. Peter had habitually applied herself to other subjects of contemplation, one finds the same theme again. We give here the two fragments in succession, despite the deviations of dates.

(Letter of 30th October 1845) "Dost thou remember, O my soul, the divine instruction which thy divine Spouse has given thee today about His adorable Face ?

"Dost thou remember that this divine Head represents the Father eternal who is not begotten; that the mouth of this Holy Face represents the Divine Word begotten by the Father; and that the two eyes of this mysterious Face represent the reciprocal love of the Father and of the Son – because these divine eyes have both one same light, one same knowledge, and produce one same love, which the Holy Spirit represents. Contemplate in His locks of hair the diversity of the adorable perfections of the Holy Trinity. See in this majestic Face the precious instrument of the Saviour's Humanity, the image of the unity of God.

"Therefore, it is this adorable and mysterious Face of the Saviour which the blasphemies are covering with fresh opprobrium and renewing in some manner the sufferings of the Passion in attacking by their blasphemies the divinity of which it is the image."

(Letter of 21st January 1847) "This good and tender Saviour caused me to hear complaints about His slighted love in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar through Christians' want of faith; and, happily, He bound my heart and my soul to His Feet so that I might keep Him company in this neglect, in adoring continually His most Holy Face, hidden under the veil of the Eucharist. Yes, it is by means of this august Sacrament that JESUS, Our Saviour, desires to communicate to souls the virtue of His most Holy Face, which is then more shining than the sun in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

"He promised me once more to impress His divine likeness upon the souls of all those who would honour it; and Our Lord made me see, in a manner equally simple and just, by a comparison, the the impious by their blasphemies were attacking His adorable Face and that faithful souls were glorifying it by the praises which they were rendering t His Name and His Person. The merit is in the persons, but the glory which accom-

panies them is in their names. He made it shine when they pronounced them. The merit or demerit of a person passes in his name. The most Holy Name of God expresses the Divinity and contains in itself all the Creator's perfections. From that it follows that the blasphemies of this Sacred Name attack God Himself. Now, let us recall these words of JESUS: 'I am in my Father and my Father is in me'. Through the Incarnation JESUS made Himself passible and it is He who has suffered in His Adorable Face the outrages committed by blasphemers against the Name of God His Father.

"Our Lord caused me to see that there was something mysterious in the face of a man of honour who has been scorned. Yes, I see that his name and his face have a particular unity. Look at a man distinguished by his name and his merit, in the presence of his enemies. These have not raised the hand against him, but they load him with injuries, they interpolate bitter derisions against his name instead of the titles of honour which are his due. Notice then what passes on the face of this injured man. Would you not say that all the insulting words coming from his enemies mouths are referred to his face and make him suffer a veritable torment ? One sees this face covered with blushes, with shame and confusion. The opprobrium and ignominy which it suffers are more painful to bear than the actual torments in the other parts of his body. Well; here is a feeble portrait of Our Saviour's Adorable Face outraged by the blasphemies of the impious. Let us picture to ourselves this same man in the presence of his friend who, having learnt of the insults which he has received from his enemies, strives to console him, treating him accordingly to his dignity, doing homage to the greatness of his name, qualifying him with all his titles of honour. Do you not see then the face of this man feeling the effects of the sweetness of this homage and these praises ? Glory rests upon his face and beams, over his whole face, making it resplendent. Joy shines in his eyes, the smile upon his lips; in a word his faithful friends have cured the sharp pains of that face outraged by its enemies. The glory

surpasses the opprobrium. This is what Our Lord JESUS CHRIST's friends do by reparation. The glory they render to His Name rests upon His august visage and rejoices His Most Holy Face. But one must honour it in a quite special way in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

"Reverend Mother, this comparison that Our Lord has put before my eyes has given me great joy of spirit. I now see very clearly that the blasphemers make the Saviour's Face suffer and that those who make reparation rejoice and glorify it. I have never before made this so true observation; that a man's face is the place where glory and ignominy rest. I am therefore going to devote myself anew to honour the Name and the most Holy Face of Our Divine Saviour, who invites me to this in such a touching manner."

The image of God in souls

(Letter of 3rd November 1845) "Our Lord continues to instruct me on the subject of His Holy Face with reference to the work for the Reparation of blasphemies. This divine Saviour made me understand that He had resolved to make the virtue of His Adorable Face known, in order to imprint God's image afresh in souls, that which sin had effaced in a great number. Finally He showed me in the apostle St. Peter an example of the power of His Holy Face. He turned it towards the unfaithful apostle and he became penitent. JESUS looked at Peter, and Peter wept bitterly. In the light of God, I saw that this adorable Face is like the seal of divinity, which has the power of imprinting once more the Image of God in the souls which apply themselves to it. It is this insight which inspired me to salute this most Holy Face in these words:

" 'I salute you, I adore you and I love you, O adorable Face of JESUS, my well Beloved; noble seal of the divinity, I apply myself to you with all the forces and powers of my soul, and I beg you very humbly to imprint in us once more the image of God.'

"Reverend Mother, if these lights come from God, this work

is truly the work of Reparation; because man is invited to redress the outrages committed against God, and by a return of love, God promises to restore His Image in our souls by applying to them the power of His Adorable Face. What a mystery of love. Then let us wipe the Saviour's Divine Face, soiled by the spittle of blasphemers, and this divine Master will wipe ours, dirtied with the spit of sin.

"Here then, Reverend Mother, are the lights and the impressions which Our Lord gives me. It seems to me that He has great designs of mercy for souls in laying bare the virtue of His Adorable Holy Face. In this precious GIFT, we have an infallible means to allay the wrath of the Heavenly Father, angered against blasphemers. We will beg Him to take one look at the Face of His Divine Son, and the thunderbolt will fall from His Hands. 'O God, our protector, look upon us and cast one glance upon the Face of your Christ'."

Lucifer leads the troop of blasphemers

(Letter of 5th January 1846) "Here is very nearly what Our Lord made me understand (yesterday and today). This divine Master made me realize that the land which we have bought for His Divine Father through the offering of His Holy Face, was perceptible figure of the land of the living which we ought to buy for a great number of souls, by the divine and mysterious coin of His Adorable Face. (NOTE: *An illusion to the piece of ground bought by the Carmelites: see letter of 29th October 1845*). Finally, this divine shepherd showed me a flock, telling me that He was making me the shepherdess of it. He made me understand that His poor sheep, were corroded by the serpent and that I must lead them to graze upon the ground of His divine mysteries so that they might find their healing therein and that I must place them in the adorable wounds of His Sacred Heart, in marking them with the effigy of His Holy Face. Our Lord made me realize that I would have much to suffer because this flock of blasphemers were in a special way under the leadership of the prince of demons. Our Lord made

me understand that Lucifer willingly left to other demons the leadership of other kinds of sinners, as for example the unchaste, the drunkards, the avaricious. But blasphemers were his cherished flock. 'It is he,' Our divine Saviour told me, 'who gives you so much repugnance for this work for the reparation of blasphemers. But do not fear; St. Michael and the Holy Angels will protect you. With my Cross which I give you to use as a crook, you will become terrible to the demon, by means of this weapon.' Finally, Our Lord made me comprehend that it was because of this mission that He had withdrawn me from the world and called me into His Holy House; and because I used to feel a certain inquietude about the truth always fearing illusion, Our Lord said: 'Be at peace, Satan has too great a fear of the Cross to mark his workings with it.'

"In one of my meditations, the date of which I have forgotten, Our Lord reminded me of that which I had neglected in praying for the conversion of blasphemers, letting me see that I had allowed the demon to tempt me with mistrust in His mercy. He seemed to say to me: 'Did I not give you the example of praying for them when I was on the Cross?' And He made me realize that He had great designs of mercy upon this class of sinners and He wished to make use of me as an instrument despite my unworthiness, for the accomplishment of His designs. Our Lord made me know that this work was about blasphemies, of the Holy Name of God, but also other blasphemies uttered against religion and against the Church, however it refers especially to blasphemies of the Holy Name of God."

The countenance of France

(Letter of 23rd January 1846) "I cannot restrain my tears after what Our Lord has just told me after having received Him in Holy Communion. Here are Our Saviour's terrible words:

"The face of France has become hideous in my Father's sight; it provoked His justice, offer therefore the Face of His Son which delights His Heart, to draw down His mercy upon

France; without which it will be chastised. There is its salvation; that is to say in the Saviour's Face. See this proof of my goodness towards France, who repays me only with ingratitude.'

"Then I said: 'Lord, is it really you who gives me these lights?' Our Lord answered me: 'Would you have been able to obtain them in the last Communion which you have made? That is the express reason why I have left you for eight days in such profound darkness, to cause you to discern my design.'

"Eternal Father, we offer you the adorable Face of your Beloved Son, for the honour and glory of your Holy Name and for the salvation of France."

Persistence and divine promises (*Veronica and the good thief*)

(Letter of 8th March 1846) "Permit me to open my poor heart to you, wounded by a sword of sorrow, because of the new attention which Our Lord gave me this morning about His precious Head crowned with thorns and upon His adorable Face which is exposed to the outrages of the enemies of God and the Church. He made me hear once more His sorrowful laments. And this divine Saviour made me understand that He was seeking in our house for souls to heal His wounds in making reparation for the outrages committed against Him, and in applying to His sacred Wounds the wine of compassion and the oil of charity. And it seemed to me that Our Lord was telling me that if the Community applied itself to this work of Reparation, He would give it a kiss of love which would be the pledge of the eternal kiss. It also appeared to me, Reverend Mother, that Our Lord told me to thank you for that which you have already done for Him in this work for the reparation of blasphemies, and that He urges you to continue. I had difficulty in taking the resolution to speak of these things because I feared illusion, and I said to Our Lord that despite the desire which I had to see Him glorified, I had however never wished to say a thing which might be merely the result

of my imagination. But it appeared to me that Our Lord pressed me to plead His cause and to ask for Him a soothing of His cruel pains. For nearly two hours I felt the perceptible presence of this divine Saviour in my heart. 'My Saviour,' I said to Him, 'please choose a more worthy instrument, look for a Teresa or a Gertrude.' And the sobs and tears have soothed my poor heart a little. This day was for me full of anguish, because it appeared to me that Our Lord made me realize that in taking part in His griefs, sharing them with Him, He was soothed therewith.

"Oh, my good and Reverend Mother, I ask this grace of you, for the love and consolation of JESUS, that you may desire to send to some of our houses, the prayers for the reparation of blasphemies which are so pleasing to Our Lord, I have repeated them twice during today, begging this divine Saviour to receive them as the precious perfume which St. Mary Magdalen, who loved Him, poised on His Head, a few days before His Passion."

"Here is nearly, Reverend Mother, what has happened in my soul. During five weeks Our Lord has not worked anything extraordinary in me; only I was always devoted to the reparation for blasphemies, hoping for the beginning of this work, but always in a great peace, busying myself with the flock which Our Lord has given me to guard. Thus, every day, I lead it to graze in the divine pastures of the life and Passion of the Divine Shepherd, who has given His life for his sheep, in order that none may be lost."

(Letter of 12th March 1846) "It is in order to obey Our Lord, who I believe has commanded me to write that which He imparted to me after this morning's Holy Communion, that I am going to submit the following enlightenment to you.

"Our Lord made me understand that two people had rendered Him a special service during His Passion. The first is the pious Veronica who had glorified His Holy Humanity in wiping His adorable Face on the way to Calvary. The second is the good Thief, on the Cross, who from there as from a pulpit spoke up to defend the Saviour's cause, confessing and

glorifying His divinity whilst He was being blasphemed by his companion and by the Jews. Our Lord made me understand that these two people are two models for His defenders in the work for the reparation of blasphemies; the pious Veronica the model for those of her sex, who are not appointed to defend His cause by speaking out loud, but to wipe His holy Face in making reparation for the blasphemies of sinners by prayer, praise and adoration; but that the good Thief was the model of His ministers who should loudly and publicly defend His cause in the work of reparation.

“Finally, this divine Saviour, made me observe the magnificent recompenses with which He had rewarded these two people; the one by giving her His divine portrait, the other by giving him His kingdom, so pleasing to Him were the services which they had rendered to Him during His Passion. Finally Our Lord promised me that all those who would defend His cause in this work, by words, prayers or writings, He would defend their cause before His Father and that He would give them His Kingdom; and it seemed to me that He was saying to me, that on His part He would promise all assistance to His ministers who would plead His cause in this work, and that He promised to His spouses who would apply themselves to honouring and wiping His Holy Face, in making reparation through this work for the blasphemies of sinners, that at their death He would wipe their souls’ faces in effacing the mark of sin and that He would give back to them their first beauty.

“Finally, it seemed to me that Our Lord said to me: ‘Write down these promises because they will make more impression on souls than all that you have already said about this work, because of the interest, interest which I do not condemn, because I gave my Life to merit the Kingdom of Heaven for them.’

“It also appeared to me that Our Lord said to me: ‘If you desire to keep these matters secret, without wanting to speak about them, you are committing an injustice.’ Our Lord spoke to me thus because I was hesitating to believe this communica-

tion; because I always fear that I am mistaken.

"Here, nearly or thereabouts, my Reverend Mother, is what has passed in my soul. These last illuminations have taken me outside of myself; I feel an interior sorrow and a fire which devours me. I have only to prostrate myself before God, adoring His divine designs upon a wretched nonentity."

(Letter of 23rd March 1846) "Permit me to continue to give you an account of the lights which I believe I have received from Our Lord today. He told me to make them known to my Superiors.

"This divine Saviour made me understand that the Work for the Reparation of blasphemies was born of Him and of the Church, His Spouse; that it is necessary, from the beginning, to produce the divine authority from which it originated, so that it may have life and that it may be well received by the faithful, without which it would not have any success. Our Lord told me also that it was necessary to make known His desire to see this work established, making its nature and its precious advantages known to them. And He said to me: 'All those who will undertake this work and who will truly devote themselves to it will not die the eternal death. I will defend their cause before my Father and I will give them the kingdom of Heaven. Do not be astonished at these promises because this work is of the essence of charity, and those who have charity have life. Moreover, I will grant them the graces of preservation.'

"Our Lord has made me these magnificent promises twice now. May they be received with thanksgiving for the greatest glory of God and the salvation of the associates of the Work of Reparation for blasphemies. May the Holy Name of God be blessed."

The profanation of Sunday

(Letter of 4th October 1846) "Permit me to render to you an account of the sad presentiments which I have felt since this morning, after a message which I received from Our Lord at Holy Communion.

"You know, my good Mother, that it is several months during which I have experienced nothing extraordinary. During this time of trial Our Lord has deigned to purify my soul by great inward sufferings, and I did not feel His presence any more. But today, as soon as I had received Holy Communion, this divine Saviour made me realize that He desired that I remain at His Feet. I obeyed. Then He made me understand these sad and frightening words:

" 'My justice is provoked because of the profanations of the Holy Day of Sunday. I seek a Victim.'

"I answered, 'Lord, you know that my Superiors have given me the permission to abandon myself into your Divine Hands; do with me as it will please you. But whom am I, Lord? Is it really you who speaks thus to my soul?' Our Lord answered me: 'You will not be in doubt for long.' In the end, it appeared to me that Our Lord approved the act of abandonment which I had just made to Him, and He caused me to comprehend that He was going to take a new possession of my whole being in order, in some way of suffering Himself in me to appease His divine justice. Finally, Our Lord ordered me first of all to go to Holy Communion every Sunday in a spirit of honourable amends and reparation for all the works which are done on this holy day which is consecrated to Him; secondly, to appease the divine justice ready to strike, for the conversion of those who betray their office, and finally to obtain that they prevent works on the holy day of Sunday. As well, it appeared to me that Our Lord was inviting me to offer His Holy Face to His Divine Father, in order to obtain mercy.

"This is nearly or just about, most Reverend Mother, what has happened in my soul. Let us hasten to appease Our God, because I see the justice of God ready to burst forth upon us; the arm of the Lord is raised, my Reverend Mother. I abandon these matters to your judgement, but I pray you to notice one thing which touches me considerably and which makes me desire the establishment of the Work of Reparation more and more; that is that all the messages which I receive from Our

Lord for more than three years past treat on the same object; Our Divine Lord always complains of these two things: the profanations of the holy day of Sunday and the blasphemies against the most Holy Name of God.

"Oh, how I long for the beginning of this work of Reparation, which Our Lord has asked of me so often; in order to appease the wrath of God and to prevent the punishments which are threatening us. However, my good Mother, you know that I submit these desires to the will of my Superiors."

* * *

After having transcribed this letter, Sister St. Peter adds a remark that the chastisement announced by Our Lord in this last communication would not be long in coming to pass. Indeed, some time after, a great flooding of the Loire put the town of Tours in danger. Sister St. Peter saw in this trial a first execution of the threat. However well-founded this interpretation may be. However, one must remark that the Sister at once added: "An interior light makes me realize that other punishments are prepared for us; this time it will not be any more the elements which will be the instruments of God's wrath, but the malice of rebellious men."

Words of mercy

(Letter of 25th October 1846) "After Holy Communion Our Lord made me see that as yet the cup of Divine justice had not been entirely poured out upon us. I saw other punishments which had been prepared to satisfy Divine justice. At the sight of these, I said to Our Lord: 'O Sweet JESUS, if only I could drink the rest of that cup, so that my brethren may be spared.' Our Lord made me understand that He accepted my goodwill, but that I was not capable of emptying that cup, because He alone was able to drink it. This divine Saviour, on seeing my sorrow, made a sign to me to enter His divine Heart, which He had given to me in His extreme mercy as a vase worthy of being presented to the Eternal Father to receive the wine of His wrath, making me understand that by passing through

this holy channel it would be changed for us into the wine of mercy.

But He does not wish to injure completely the rights of justice, if I can thus express myself, He wishes to make a concession between His justice and His mercy, and for that end, He asks for the establishment of the Work of Reparation for the glory of His Holy Name. Yes, Our Lord will disarm the wrath of God His Father, if He offers a reparatory work on our behalf. Is it not the least thing, O Sweet JESUS, that we may repair by our prayers, our groans, and by our adoration the enormous sins of which we are guilty against God's Majesty? Here, my Mother, is the prayer which Our Lord has put in my mouth and which I repeat without ceasing.

"Eternal Father, look upon the Divine Heart of JESUS which I offer to you to receive the wine of your Justice so that it may be changed for us into the wine of mercy."

"Our Lord made me understand that each time I should make this offering, I would obtain a drop of this wine of God's wrath, which, as I said above, on falling into the divine Vase of JESUS' Sacred Heart, would be changed into the wine of mercy. Be pleased, my good Mother, to pledge my Sisters to make this offering often because alas! who am I, myself, a vile nothing, to be a barrier capable of arresting God's anger?"

"Reverend Mother, I do not know how to tell you the impression this communication has made upon me. I am charged once more to entreat Mgr the Archbishop about the work of Reparation. My conscience will be at peace when I have placed at His Lordship's feet the work for which I believe I have received a special mission from Our Lord. My soul is extremely afflicted, but I am full of confidence in God. He will draw good from evil, if His designs are accomplished; and I have the interior conviction that this work will be for us a bulwark against the bolts of divine justice. O consoling thought; the Sacred Heart of JESUS will drink this bitter chalice, and His sweet and Holy Face will appease God's wrath."

For the salvation of a great number

During about five months from the date of this last note, the communications had a less general character or at least they do not seem to deal directly with the Work of Reparation. Sister St. Peter hears these words:

"I desire this work of Reparation; be certain that it will establish itself; but the fruit which you carry is not yet at its maturity." Our Lord let a glimpse of other punishments be seen. Whilst awaiting that the predicted danger might be made more clear, Sister St. Peter found herself drawn to pray and suffer for her own purification and for the salvation of a great number.

On 18th November 1846, she writes: "Our Lord continues to press me urgently to pray and suffer for France. 'Just as,' He said to me, 'I am loaded with the whole world's sins, I desire that you may take upon yourself all the sins of France. I will suffer in you in order to appease my Father's wrath, and I will give you all my merits to acquit its debt.' I entered into Our Lord's intentions, and I saw myself covered with crimes. I asked pardon from Him with the same shame as if I had committed them myself. Another day, Our Lord told me that He was charging me with France, and as I had great difficulty in believing that Our Lord would make use of such a vile instrument for so great a mission, He then said to me: 'As in the order of my Providence I give such and such a king to a certain kingdom in order to govern it, can I not also, in the order of grace assign a certain kingdom to a special individual so that she may take care of its spiritual needs?'

(NOTE: *The salvation of France was one of St. Teresa's great aims when she founded her Reform and Our Lord also pressed blessed Anne of St. Bartholomew to pray for this intention.*)

" 'It is because of this that I award France to you. Pray for it; sacrifice yourself for it. I give you once more my sacred Head; to offer to my Father to appease His anger. Oh, if you knew its powerful virtue, here is the reason; it is because I have taken upon my Head all the sins of men, so that my

members may be spared. Therefore, offering my Face to my Father; this is the means of appeasing Him.'

"In the communications which I receive from Our Lord, my Reverend Mother, I follow the counsel which you have given me, to bandon myself into Our Lord's Hands so that He may do with me whatever will please Him. When Our Lord once more charged me with France, I replied, 'Desire it much, my divine Master, but permit me to say to you, that it is on condition that you will be its Sovereign; because if your divine Father sees you seated on the Throne of France, assuredly He will not strike it.'

"Now, my Reverend Mother, I receive Our Lord in all my communications in the name of France and I give Him my heart for Him to use as a throne. Then I salute Him and I adore Him as sovereign, begging Him not to abandon a nation which gives alms to make His Holy Name known in idolatrous countries; and all that I suffer, I beg the Holy Infant JESUS to suffer in me to appease His Divine Father. I also beg Him to perform all my actions in me, uniting myself to this Divine Child with whom at this time I have quite a special union; in this way I suffer with Him in awaiting the time appointed by His Father for the establishment of the Work of Reparation. Sit Nomen Domini benedictum."

(Letter of 22nd November 1846) "Despite my unworthiness I have received a new communication about the Holy Face of Our Lord. Here is the substance of that which Our Divine Saviour made me understand:

"My daughter, I take you today for my steward. I place my Holy Face once more into your hands, so that you may offer it without ceasing to my Father for the salvation of France. Make use of this divine talent. You have in this that which can settle all the needs of my household. By this Holy Face you will obtain the salvation of many sinners. Nothing will be refused you by means of this offering. Oh, if you only knew how pleasing to my Father is the sight of my Face.'

"Our Lord then gave me certain lights upon France's future,

which made me redouble my zeal for our Fatherland; and I made use of the means which Our Lord has made known to me. I offer ceaselessly the adorable Face of Our Divine Saviour to the eternal Father, for the salvation of France and to obtain through this the establishment of the Work of Reparation. But I occupy myself peacefully with all this, following the workings of grace."

But God did not cause her to pray solely for the salvation of France. Other souls were confided to her, sinners, the dying. Our Lord pours upon her, "the torrents of most precious graces". But how can one explain these things? "It is not in my power," she writes, "a divine language cannot be written by a poor idiot." Nevertheless she will try.

(Letter of 21st December 1846) "Our Lord made me see the multitude of souls which are continually falling into Hell, inviting me in the most touching manner to help these poor sinners, in making me realize the strict obligation of the religious soul towards these poor blind people who are precipitating themselves into the eternal abyss, the eyes of whom He would open by His mercy, if charitable souls asked grace and mercy for them. Our Lord told me also that if He would demand an account of their temporal goods from the rich, which He had confided to them in order to help the poor, with what much greater severity, He would demand an account from a Carmelite, a Religious, rich in all the treasure of her Spouse, possessing the immense treasury of merits of His Life and His Passion, what use she had made of them, and if she had taken from these treasures which are open to her in order to help these poor sinners. Then Our Lord said to me:

" 'My daughter, I give you my Face and my Heart, I give you my Blood, and I open my wounds to you; draw from them and pour it out. Buy without money, my Blood is the price of souls. Oh ! what a grief for my Heart to see the remedies which have cost me so dearly, scorned. Ask from my Father as many souls as the number of drops of Blood that I shed during my Passion.' "

"Another day, Our Lord showed me His Holy Cross, telling me that He had given birth to all His children on this bed of pain, making me understand that it was through carrying the Cross for love of Him, and through prayer that I would obtain the salvation of those who are dead to grace, whose resurrection He desired so ardently. Oh, what yearning I see in JESUS' Heart for sinners' salvation ! What an acute knowledge He gave me of the efficacy of prayer offered for these wandering souls ! But what will I say of the view Our Lord gave me of His Wounds and His Blood ? Ah ! let us press these divine wounds by an ardent prayer and this Precious Blood will flow in abundance on poor sinners.

"Another day, Our Lord placed my soul at the gate of Eternity, or rather at the gate of time, that I might help dying sinners to prepare for that all-important voyage from time to eternity. Oh, when one considers that God's justice is always working upon the guilty, and that one can plead their cause, and appease the Sovereign Judge, with what zeal one should flee to help those condemned to eternal death, and who have perhaps still one hour of life in which the divine mercy, which has been implored for them, may touch their hearts ! I feel myself strongly urged to pray for these poor souls.

"Now, Reverend Mother, I will speak to you of a protecting wall, which Our Lord caused me to see; a mysterious wall which is protecting France against the darts of divine justice. Oh, how this vision has filled me with gratitude towards God's immense mercy ! Our Lord made me understand that this wall which went up to heaven was the devotion which I was making every day, undoubtedly joined to the prayers and merits which so many pious souls are offering to God for the salvation of France; which consists in offering the Adorable Face of Our Lord to His Father one hundred times, in honour of the mysteries of the Life and death of this divine Saviour, offering in particular the merits of each of these mysteries for the salvation of this same France. Our Lord told me that He gave me this vision in order to encourage me to perseverance."

(Letter of 10th January 1847) "During a little more than three weeks, Our Lord has disengaged me somewhat from the great business of France to occupy myself continually in the service of the poor dying souls. I accompany the Most Holy Virgin as her little servant near the travellers from time to eternity. Our Lord made me realize that He had given me to His Holy Mother for that mission.

"Oh, what a beautiful work of charity about which I had never thought; but the time has come when I ought to work more than ever for the salvation of souls.

"One word of Our Lord consoles me, fortifies me and enlightens me, here it is. 'Oh, if you knew the gift of God! Our Lord gave me light on these divine words and I began to understand it, this precious gift of the Father. Oh, what can I not obtain for myself and for my brothers, if I know how to avail myself of these infinite merits, which are unknown to the greater number of men! "I sanctify Myself for them," Our Lord said to His Father, Let us then offer to this divine Father, for the salvation of our souls, all that our Redeemer has done for us; let us seek in this divine treasure for that with which to enrich our poverty.'

"O gift of God which I have not appreciated for so long, henceforth you will be my unique treasure, every day I will discover new treasures in you. Here, my Reverend Mother, are the lights which Our Lord has communicated to me at this time; you observe that if Our Lord often charges me with the salvation of souls, He also teaches me the way to save them."

* * *

Sister St. Peter has summed up all this period of her life in a note of 7th March 1847. At this date, the communications dealing with the Work of Reparation are going to be resumed.

"You know," the Sister writes, "that during several months Our Lord has occupied me in different ways with the salvation of souls. He caused me to work sometimes in one field, sometimes in another, according to His good pleasure. Finally, He put me in retreat for fifteen days and He forbade me to come

out of it until He called me. During these days, as I have told you, He made me see all the tares that I had myself in the field of my soul and I made confession of my faults. But here is what Our Lord's voice makes me hear. He has recalled me, making me understand that He was giving me anew the Mission for the Work of Reparation for blasphemies. It is now three times that He has invited me to this. It is sometime ago since He assured me that this work would be established. This has put such a great confidence into my soul that, if I saw earth and hell obstructing this work, I would not cease to hope in Him whose arm is all powerful. Moreover Our Lord told me that He permitted the demon to thwart His work to try the confidence of His servants.

"Today Our Lord has told me, 'Rejoice, my daughter, the hour approaches of the truth of the most beautiful work which may be under the sun. (NOTE: *Because this work is the essence of charity, etc* - Cf. page 000). Offer my Heart to my Father to obtain it.' How many times Our Lord urges me to pray with ardour for that; and how I was thinking of the obstacles which present themselves.

"It is the mist which falls on a lovely day, and He told me to abandon myself once more into His Hands to suffer interiorly and exteriorly all He would wish for the accomplishment of His designs in this work. And He observed that I was only a feeble instrument in His Hands, which He was wielding at His pleasure. That is certainly true, because it is several months since I occupied myself with the work of Reparation, not because of indifference, but because Our Lord was occupying me with other things. I cannot work at this object except by a special grace from Our Lord: WHEN HE WILLS AND AS HE WILLS. Now, I feel that I have received this grace into my soul; that is why, with the direction of Our Lord, who is going to direct me, I can do nothing except by His own spirit. Sit nomen Domini benedictum.

Sequel of great messages

On 14th March 1847, Sister Mary of St. Peter sent to the Prioress the following note:

"Permit me to render to you an account of the sad impressions my soul is feeling. Today after Holy Communion Our Lord made me understand that the disasters with which we have been struck were only the fore-runners of these which Divine Justice is preparing for us, if people do not appease God's wrath. And He has shown me the sins of blasphemy and the profanations of the Holy Day of Sunday under the emblem of two pumps with which the sinners who were rendering themselves guilty by these actions, were drawing waters of His anger upon France, and in which it threatens to be submerged if they do not set up this work of Reparation, which in His mercy He was giving to France, as a way of Salvation.

"Finally, Our Lord told me that these sectaries whom they call communists, had only made one inroad and He added:

" 'Ah ! if you knew their secret and diabolical machinations and their anti-Christian basis. They only await a favourable day to set fire to France. Beg earnestly therefore for the establishment of the Work of Reparation to Him who has the right to set it up, in order to obtain mercy.'

" 'But, my Divine Master,' I replied, 'my Superiors have already asked for it.' 'That does not suffice,' Our Lord said to me. 'It is you who are the instrument that I have chosen and who must ask for it in my name and on my behalf.'

"Here is nearly what I believe Our Lord has made me realize. I see clearly that those expressions of fire and water of which Our Lord made use are emblems to express the catastrophes with which France is menaced."

* * *

One recalls to oneself that in the month of October in the year before Our Lord caused Sister St. Peter to foresee the imminence of certain troubles, of which natural elements first of all and then "the malice of rebellious men", would be the instruments. The Sister believed she had seen the realization

of this menace in the flooding of the Loire, then in a "communists' conspiracy", which desired to make itself master of the town of Tours. It is to this attempt that the previous letter makes allusion. But now, the threat is specified; and the whole of this new group of communications will be centred round a new danger.

It goes without saying that the communism which the following letters deal with must be put in its historical setting, in the middle of the nineteenth century. One was on the eve of a revolution and the word covered many diverse theories. Very well, all this belongs to the past; and what do the political ideas of that time matter to us? That which remains perfectly up to date, is the essential malice, always the same, manifested in Marie de St. Pierre's time in political forms which no longer exist. This essential malice has been perfectly described by Sister St. Peter in these words: "the secret and diabolical machinations and the anti-Christian principles".

(Letter of 29th March 1847) "Today, after Holy Communion, Our Lord has, I believe, charged me with a new mission of which I should be terrified if I was something. But as I am nothing but a feeble instrument in the Lord's powerful hand, I am in perfect peace.

"Our Lord has commanded me to make war against Communists whom He has told me are the enemies of the Church and of His Christ, letting me understand that the greatest number of these lion cubs were born in the Church, of which they now declare themselves the cruel enemies. Then Our Lord said to me:

" 'I have made known to you that I hold you as an arrow in my hands. I am now going to send this arrow against my enemies. To combat them, I am going to give you the weapons of my Passion; my Cross of which they are the enemies, and the other instruments of my Passion. Go towards them with the simplicity of a child and the courage of a soldier. Receive for this mission the Blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.'

"Then I prayed to the most Holy Virgin to be pleased to be the trustee of these divine arms which Her Divine Son was giving me. She is compared to the Tower of David, from where a thousand bucklers hang. Our Lord has given me other lights upon this subject which it would not be easy for me to recall. 'Lord,' I said, 'form my hands to the combat and teach me to make use of your instruments.' Our Lord said to me: 'My enemies' weapons give death, but mine give life.' Here is the prayer which I often say for this end:

" 'Eternal Father, I offer you in the camp of your enemies the Cross of OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST and all the instruments of His Holy Passion, so that you may put division among them, as your well-beloved Son has said: "All kingdoms divided against themselves will be ruined".' ✓

"Here is nearly or thereabouts, Very Reverend Mother, what has passed in my soul. I abandon myself into Our Lord's hands. He will do with me as He wishes; I am all His and do not wish to have any other will than His. I follow the lights of His grace step by step in order to walk in His ways."

(Letter of 1st April 1847) "Our Lord always continues to press me to make war against Communists. He gives me grace and light for the combat. The instruments of His Passion supply me with arms; and His admirable Name which is so terrible to demons, and that of His Holy Mother, supply me with cannon-balls. But in order to impel me to the combat against His enemies, whom I see to be so redoubtable in God's light, here is the sad secret which Our Lord has revealed to me: ✓

" 'The soldier,' He said to me, 'who knows the reason of the war to which he is called, and who knows the injury which has been done to His Prince, is then armed with intrepidity against his enemies to avenge this affront. Well, my daughter, it is this band of communists which have torn me from my Tabernacles, and have profaned my Sanctuaries. They have laid hands on the Lord's Anointed. They will not succeed in their aims. Have they not committed the crime of Judas? They have sold me

for money. This knowledge must not be fruitless in you, because I only give it to you in order to animate you for the conflict. Act with a spirit of simplicity; because if you want to reason too much, you will not be a suitable instrument in My Hands. Think rather of the glory which the Heavenly Court will render to Me of having combated agaisned such enemies with such wretched instrument'."

(Letter of 6th April 1847) "I have entered the lists to fight against God's enemies. Calm has returned to my soul since I have received the flag of obedience, if I can express myself thus. I am in safety under this standard and I do not fear the demon any more. Our Lord gives me grace to set up my battieries. Today after Holy Communion, He promised to give me a cross of honour, wich He told me would open Heaven to me. If I was faithful in these struggles, He promised me the gold of charity as well.

"I understood that this was some trial which Our Lord in His mercy was reserving for me and that He would give me the grace to suffer with patience and love. May His Holy Name be blessed. But let us return to the fight, my Reverend Mother, because after having fought against God's enemies with all my strength during these three Feast Days, I have only contrition. But I explain myself; it is that I fear having made some imprecations against them. I know well that the holy King David did so in his Psalms (108 for example), but I do not know if that is permitted to me. Finally, I have said all that with which Our Lord has inspired me; if it is wrong and I am mistaken, I will not do it any more. I am going to tell you that I begin by placing my soul into Our Lord's hands, I pray Him to draw His bow and to discharge His arrows against His enemies. Then, I begin to fight by means of His Cross and the instruments of His Passion, as He has taught me.

Here is my inquietude on account of the imprecations which, if it is wrong, I have said these words hundreds of times; but I had no intention of wishing them any harm. I only wish that against their malice and their passions, I only wish to destroy

the old man in them. It is that which I told Our Lord. Here then is what I say:

"May God arise and may His enemies be scattered, and may all those who hate Him flee before His Face.

"May the thrice holy name of God overthrow all their designs.

"May the Holy name of the living God divide all their sentiments.

"May the terrible name of the God of eternity annihilate all their impiety.

"I say many other things about it, and when I have thoroughly beaten them, I say.

"I do not desire the name of the sinner, but that he may be converted and live.

"Father, forgive them, because they know not what they do.

"I perform this exercise without strife of spirit, and with a great felicity, because I let myself be led by the grace which guides me. Therefore, Reverend Mother, judge if I ought to continue this. I will await your decision. I believe that it is the General of the adversary who wishes to give me an alert (the Devil)."

After having well understood the spirit which inspired Sister St. Peter when she was receiving all these divine communications, and transmitting them, one cannot do better I believe, than to transcribe simply the pages which end the narrative. In these lines, written in 1847, Mary of St. Peter gives as well a cursory view of the whole of the Work of the Reparation, as she had believed herself to be inspired. This glimpse permits one to understand the general scheme of the different groups of communications.

"Now," she writes in 1847, "I believe that it will not be without use for God's glory if I say something of my interior, so that one may discern more easily the spirit which leads me. I will speak under God's grace, in simplicity and truth.

"The way by which Our Lord leads me is very painful to nature, because this divine Saviour exacts a continual and interior mortification from me. I have very rarely received

spiritual consolations and all the communications which I receive from Our Lord are for the most part of a nature which makes me suffer, because they so often show me God's justice made angry, eternal loss, and all France's sinners on the edge of an abyss. This work of Reparation which I have borne for nearly four years, with the pains that only God alone knows because He Himself is the author of them; the work by which it seems to me that God would give grace to France, as He has promised me. However, terrible times are approaching and the Work of Reparation has not become visible.

"O my God, arise, it is your cause as well as your own which we pray you to defend. Hide France in the secret of your Holy Face, and give mercy to it for the glory of your Holy Name."

"Yes, in the light, I believe firmly that the future of France depends on this work. I see it always bound to France as a means of Salvation which God has chosen in His infinite mercy. This I would want to give the last drop of my blood in order to obtain it; because then God would be appeased because of this reparatory work, and many souls would be saved.

"Here are the sentiments which God inspires in me and which I make known for the discharge of my conscience. I declare also that no one in the world has given me the idea of this work, but God alone, and that I was perfectly ignorant that there might be at Rome a Work like that which Our Lord was communicating to me. I only knew about it a long time afterwards by a quite special dispensation of Providence. I declare also that I have never been influenced by anyone in asking for the establishment of this work, but on the contrary, and thanks to God, I have had the happiness to receive from our wise and worthy superiors reprimands and humiliations because of this new devotion.

(NOTE: Cf. *Devotion to St. Veronica (Oratory of the Holy Face)*.)

"I declare further that the liaison which one will find in the succession of these communications is of grace and not of my imagination, because at each light I was receiving from Our Lord I quickly made a little extract which I sent to our Mother,

in order to be helped, and I only thought of praying God to accomplish His designs. I did not even desire to have conversation with our Very Reverend Mother, because I felt a great embarrassment in making these lights known.

"When Our Lord charged with this mission, I asked two things of Him, which He has had the mercy to grant me; first, that of never having feelings of vanity because of these communications, and the second: not to be known as God's instrument in this work.

"Our Lord, who Himself directs my soul in this way has great care – if I can express myself thus – to make known to me my misery and my nothingness, that it would not be possible for me not to be covered with shame at the sight of these singular graces and my continual ingratitude. I leave to my worthy Superiors the care of occupying themselves with the establishment of this Work of Reparation. For I myself, my mission is to submit to them all the lights which I receive from God and to pray for the accomplishment of His great designs for the glory of His Name. That is what I have done in copying the letters written in this narrative. *Sit nomen Domini benedictum.*

"Seeing the work developing little by little in each communication, one can judge it better, and it will be easy to see whose is the powerful hand that by His grace and His infinite mercy has cultivated such a beautiful fruit in such a bad soil; which soil bears the thistles and thorns of sin after having been watered so many times with the divine dew of grace.

"The work, as one sees it in these two narratives has two ends; the reparation for blasphemies and the reparation of the holy day of Sunday profaned by work. In consequence, it embraces the reparation for the outrages committed against God and the sanctification of His Holy Name. Now one will perhaps ask if the devotion to the Holy Face ought to be united to the work? Yes, it is its riches, and its most precious ornament, because Our Lord has made a present of His Most Holy Face to the work, to be the object of the devotion of its Associates, so that this adorable Face which is in some way despised and out-

raged anew, as He complains Himself, by the blasphemies of sinners, that it may be, I say, honoured and revered with a most profound respect by a special cult.

"In the second place, Our Lord made the GIFT of His most Holy Face to the Work so that its Associates might become all powerful with God by the offering which they ought to make to Him of this august and Sacred Face, whose presence is so agreeable to Him that it infallibly appeases His wrath and brings His infinite mercy upon poor sinners. Yes, when the Eternal Father gazes upon the Face of His well-beloved Son, which has been bruised by blows and covered with ignominy, when He looks upon that sacred Head which has been crowned with thorns, emblem of the sins of men which He has taken upon His Head to save His members (as He said one day) this sight, I say, moves His compassionate feelings.

"Let us strive to profit by so precious a GIFT and let us pray this divine Saviour to hide us in the secret of His Holy Face during the evil times.

"O God, our protection, look upon us, and turn your eyes upon the Face of your Christ" (Psalm 83. 9)."

CHAPTER III

THE MESSENGER

The unity of the communications which we have just transcribed, and of which the inner harmony is evident, began on 26th August 1843. Sister St. Peter had been in religion for four years. It will be only two years later – in October 1845 – that all the previous communications will crystallize about this image of the "HOLY FACE", the truly central part of the Message. But it seems very certain that the prophetic and supernatural message had been prepared for a long time beforehand. Let us admire God's action and the ways of Providence in view of forming the personality of its prophet, and in leading her to the expressing of the divine warning.

This long preparation dates back, no doubt to the years of Perrine Eluère's childhood, but one can say that, along the whole course of her brief existence, we are witnessing a gradual evolution of a devotion to the sorrowful Face of Christ, bringing about the harmonious attractions of the attractions of grace to the pure supernatural, the lights of piety to those infused free gifts and of charisma. One recalls the practice of the Way of the Cross in the parochial church of Rennes, or the little girl blackening her nose in kissing the ground, but where above all, she was following JESUS step by step in His sorrowful way, really mingling with the crowd of executioners and pitying women. As she will live the mysteries of Christ's Infancy, she has lived those of the Passion, with an intensity that suppressed time and distance. The reality of her faith made her present at the mystery; she was meeting JESUS, weeping over His distress, wiping His soiled Face; so much so that in a great transport of love she was able to exclaim: "Did you see, my Divine Saviour, that one day I, at least, would love you and be all yours?"

This devotion to the tortured person of Christ and His humiliated Face did not cease to grow ever more deep whilst Perrine lived in the world, as well as the desire to carry the Cross with JESUS and to weep with Him with the sorrowful Virgin of the Peiniere (NOTE: *a local shrine*), a devotion which must gradually be transformed into authentic contemplation.

It is not doubtful that on Perrine Eluère becoming a Carmelite, far from abandoning her devotion to the suffering Christ, she was enlightened in some way in the light of the great Biblical texts and in which Isaiah's prophecies must have struck her. But it is difficult to specify the exact moment when the powerful images of the Prophet, which she cites in her Litanies, had directed more specially her meditation on the outraged Face of Christ, and the prophecy of Yawel's servant. The Reverend Mother Theresa of St. Joseph will write this phrase at a later date: "No circumstances of the Passion has been so clearly announced by the Prophets, nor so minutely reported by the Evangelists (as the ignominious outrages committed against JESUS' VISAGE. All these details have not been set down in Scripture without God's particular plan. They exhort us to give a place apart to the humiliations and sorrows of His most Holy Face, between the different mysteries of the Redeemer's dolorous Passion."

Now, Theresa of St. Joseph was Sister St. Peter's companion in the Novitiate. Later as the Prioress' secretary, she alone knew with her the little Sister Portress' secret; and one can affirm that, on becoming Prioress in her turn, she was the interpreter of Mary of St. Peter's mind, the devotion of whom she spread with zeal. It is also very probable that during her Priorate, Isaiah's prophecy was added to the mural paintings of the Tours Carmel.

During the few years which followed the Novitiate, certain details allow us to establish that the contemplation of Christ's Sorrowful Face had been a familiar theme in Sister St. Peter's life of prayer, before the communications. She passes the rest of the morning in prayer (for the Duke of Orleans) before a

picture of the Ecce Homo, she offers her headache (reciting "Christum pro nobis spiris coronatum". NOTE: *Christ is crowned with thorns for us, come let us adore Him.*) She believes she hears JESUS, who asks of her: "If you had met Me in the way to Calvary, would you not have been very ready and unembarrassed to help to carry my Cross and to wipe my VISAGE?" And later: "See the streams of tears which flow from My eyes!"

Her contemplation, where there may still remain certain natural elements, remains often directed towards the mental view of the Man of Sorrows, and this discretion is accentuated, by means of a more precise supernatural intervention, since the 1843 communications. But it is in October 1845, after a year of meditation and interior suffering, that Sister St. Peter receives in a more special light, communications which it would be difficult to consider as the graces of ordinary prayer. In the account which she gave to her Prioress, she used a new expression and said: "Our Lord has strongly urged me to the contemplation of His Adorable Face, and He has made me understand by the light of His divine Rays."

It is reckoning from this communication of 27th October 1845, that Sister St. Peter makes use of the dedication "The Holy Face", consecrated later by the Briefs instituting the Archconfraternity. At the same time, we will find theological precisions in the following communications, which are well above the natural intellectual capacity of the little Sister Portress. Instructed by the Holy Spirit since her infancy, Perrine had received the knowledge of the divine words: "Whosoever sees me, sees the Father". She had understood the "Gift of God", made to men in the person of the Incarnate Word.

Drawn very early towards Christ's Humanity, finding her habitual dwelling in His Heart, she contemplates His Face with Love, knowing that "By JESUS" human eyes, God looks at us, and by His Sacred Mouth, God speaks to us. (NOTE: *R. P. Tonqueded*). If it was given to her to tell the world once more that "By His bruises we have been healed" (Isaiah) it was to

raise up a legion of "Veronicas" for the Saviour, who adoring Him night and day apply to His bleeding Face the veil of their love. (NOTE: *Canticle to the Holy Face composed by Sister St. Peter*).

Part III

The Work

CHAPTER I

MESSAGE OF MERCY

The facts and their meanings

One would wish to remember that since the first preparatory communication about the Work of Reparation (in 1839) Our Lord had given this order to Mary of St. Peter: "Apply yourself to honour my Heart and that of my Mother; do not separate them." The role of the Blessed Virgin, in the general economy of Reparation, is going to be defined further by a series of contemplations or illuminations which form the crown of the Message. Nothing would make it easier to understand the drift of this last collection of communications than to place them in the chain of the historical events of Sister Mary of St. Peter's life. One must not think, evidently, that at the time when these exact marial communications took place (in June 1847) that they may have been a novelty in the Sister's spiritual life. One knows her habitual devotion so to speak congenital to the Blessed Virgin, the Infant Jesus, the Holy Family. Let us add that in a note in January 1847, Sister St. Peter writes that "her interior occupation is no longer the divine Maternity", which proves clearly that before that date, there had been unrelated marial contemplations. But one must go up higher, despite her entreaties, Sister St. Peter had not always succeeded in causing the Work of Reparation to be established as Our Lord seemed to desire.

In 1845, having lost all hope of convincing Mgr Morlot, she understood that prayer was her only recourse. And it is towards the Blessed Virgin that she habitually turns. Each day, she used to recite the rosary to obtain the establishment of the Work and the salvation of France. Before the imminence of a danger of which she had presentiment, and the supernatural certitude that she possesses a remedy which people do not want to use, she cried: "Oh, how I suffer on account of being the only trustee of something so important to the whole of France. Holy Virgin, appear to someone in this world and let them know that which has been communicated to me about France."

More than a year went by. But on 1st September 1846, the Mother Prioress of Carmel, made known to M. Dupont (the Holy Man of Tours) a communication which Sister St. Peter had just related to her, and which had struck her very much. M. Dupont noted the words the Prioress reported. Our Lord was then saying:

"My Mother has spoken to men about my anger. She showed Her breast and said: 'Let yourself be moved by this breast which has nourished you and let it pour forth blessings on my other children.' And then, full of mercy, She descended to earth. May we have great confidence in Her."

Nineteen days later, the Blessed Virgin appeared to the little shepherds of La Salette. Was this Mary's response to Sister St. Peter's anguished appeal? "Appear to someone in this world." Had the apparition of La Salette been seen in anticipation by the Sister portress of the Tours Carmel, when she related the words of Our Lord on 1st September. "My Mother has spoken to men. She has descended to earth".

Told of the apparition some days later by M. The Cure of Corps, M. Dupont immediately saw the connection and did not doubt that the Sister's communications and the apparition of La Salette had a same object and mutually confirmed each other.

On her side, when she heard of the event of La Salette, Sister St. Peter wrote: "I render thanks to you, O divine Mary, for

having given me these two little shepherds, like sounding trumpets, to make rebound on the mountain, in France's ears, that which had been communicated to me in the solitude of Carmel.

The first person to whom God made His voice heard was a little shepherdess who had been consecrated to the Holy Child JESUS to guard His sheep on Carmel's mountain, and who was entirely given up to Him for the accomplishment of His designs. The two other persons to whom the Holy Virgin made Her voice heard are two little shepherds who were guarding their flocks on the mountain of La Salette, Maximin and Melanie. These three little missionaries of JESUS and Mary are charged to make known to France the great calamities with which it is threatened, on account of transgression of the Lord's Commandments, above all for the crimes which seem to attack God directly, the horrible blasphemies and the profanation of Sunday, the day consecrated to Him. But all three are charged also to announce pardon and mercy if people return to God through penitence. These three persons are working together for the same mission; however, each one does his part according to his calling; the little shepherdess of Carmel is charged to pray, write and keep silence in her solitude; the little shepherds of La Salette, on the contrary are charged to speak out loud on the mountain's summit, and to appear in public before the eyes of an innumerable multitude of pilgrims who are coming from all over France to hear their prophecies. Soon everyone will be told about the crimes with which God is reproaching them and the divine wrath aroused against them; they are terrified, they are asking what they will do to disarm the justice of God, which is ready to strike.

"Console yourselves," says Mercy to them, "the shepherdess of Carmel knows the secret of appeasing justice; come and visit her. Like the shepherds of La Salette, she will tell you that God is extremely angry against His people on account of blasphemies and the violation of Sundays; that during four years she has heard the storm which threatens France; but God, in His infinite mercy, puts your destiny in your own hands. If you

desire that it may be happy, offer to God's justice a reparatory work for these crimes mentioned by Mary, the divine Shepherdess, and you will obtain mercy. Then you will see milk and honey flow from the midst of God's mountain. Because the Most Holy Virgin Mary is a mysterious mountain who, by the excellence of Her election is raised above the angels and the saints, these "mountains of God". However, do not have a presumptuous confidence; let us pray, pray and weep for our sins; because a time is coming when France will be shaken in its foundation, this time is not far off. Then she will tremble; but she will not be engulfed, if the reparatory work appears in this kingdom's towns, before the Lord's eyes, and that which must disappear will only be lightly wounded."

* * *

This harmony of narratives and the general interpretation of them which Mary of St. Peter gives already shows the relation which must exist between the first communications about the Work of Reparation, and those which will follow. Since this time, the role of Mary's universal meditation is perfectly clear to the mind of the Carmelite nun.

But if her natural reason, enlightened by faith, does not doubt this great truth, more specific spiritual insights will come to affirm this certitude, and give her all the strength of an interior evidence. For the rest, in the light of these Marial contemplations, Mary of St. Peter will discover in some way the essential foundations of the power and the necessity of Mary's mediation. On 5th May 1847, praying as always for the establishment of the Work, Sister St. Peter receives a communication which she relates in these words:

"The Saviour makes me understand that He had handed over everything into her hands (those of the Blessed Virgin) and that she would obtain the brief from the Sovereign Pontiff for us. This reparatory work is so necessary to France and so glorious to God, that He desires that His Most Holy Mother may have the honour of giving it to this Kingdom, as a new

pledge of His mercy. Let us then go to the Most Holy Virgin, who is the treasurer of God's graces."

A little later (24th May) we find this writing:

"Having been at this august Mother's feet these last days, I felt myself inspired to invoke her under the title Our Lady of the Holy Name of God; then I made for her a crown, composed of seventy-two invocations, to honour the precious years of her most holy life. At the end of each decade, I recalled to her the words which she pronounced herself in her divine song: 'He has done great things for me, and Holy is His Name'. After these words, I added: 'O most Holy and most worthy Mother of God, powerful advocate of Christians, I place the cause of the Holy Name of God in your hands.' This little devotion touch, I believe, the feeling heart of my tender Mother, because whilst I was making it, I felt in my soul a quite special grace.

"O Holy Virgin," I said, "deign to receive this new title because you are truly Our Lady of the Holy Name of God, since you are the daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son, and you proclaim yourself that He has done great things for you, He whose Name is holy. Yes, O divine Virgin, you are the honour and the glory of the holy Name of God, because you are the masterpiece of His Hands, who has worked marvels in you. I will call you therefore Our Lady of the Holy Name of God."

A little later, she adds further:

"Our Lord has sent me to His Holy Mother, so as to receive from Her blessed hands the grace which I had begged for so long for the glory of the Holy Name of God. I therefore threw myself in all confidence into the heart of this Mother of Mercy. I did not invoke Her in vain, she regarded the tears of her little servant. Soon she inspired one of her servants, Mgr the Bishop of Langres, who had heard tell of the idea, to take the most lively interest in it. His zeal for the holy Name of God made him work for the establishment of the Association with a pious ardour."

This latter was effectively established at Saint-Dizier in the diocese of Langres. The role was given on 28th June 1847, and the association canonically erected on 16th July. The Holy Father gave two briefs, the 27th and 30th July 1847; the second instituted the association in archconfraternity. With reference to these diverse dates, Sister St. Peter did not fail to observe that if the role of St. Dizier was given on the vigil of St. Peter and Paul, the canonical erection was on 16th July, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

* * *

The events themselves had therefore shown the participation of the Blessed Virgin in the Reparation of outrages made to the Name of God and her power as mediatrix. It remained to Sister St. Peter to be introduced to the heart of the mystery. It is indeed at this time – from June to November 1847 – that she was drawn to the contemplation of the mystery of the Infant Jesus at His Mother's breast. "I contemplated this prodigy of love and humility," she says. "He who is begotten eternally in the midst of the Father, nourishes Himself at the same time with His Holy Mother's milk."

What is the meaning of these illuminations? Since the first contemplations, Sister St. Peter has seen at the same time the merciful power of Mary, and the voluntary humiliation of Jesus in this mystery. It is through this humiliation of the Word that the light on the divine Maternity attaches itself to the Work of the Reparation and crowns it. As Sister St. Peter had already offered His Son's humiliated Face to the offended Father, she will present it to Him in homage, "His divine Son in the state of littleness and humility".

She understands that this homage is perfect which comes from "the Word a child at the breast", and she prays: "Eternal Father, we offer you the Incarnate Word, a little Babe at the breast of His divine Mother, rendering you by this humble action a perfect offering for the glory and honour of your Holy Name."

This new group of communications is distinguished, however, from the two preceding ones. It appears that the prophetic character therein may be less clearly marked. The purpose of the communications on the outrages to the Divinity and the reparation by means of the Holy Face was indicated by their expression. Even the application of the Work of the Reparation was defined. But above all, these lights received by Sister St. Peter were principally destined for others; to France, to the world. Like the lights received in general by the prophets, they were the material of a message, of a warning which the prophet is charged to transmit to men. If the messages about the divine Maternity and the humiliations of the incarnate Word still possess this prophetic character to a certain degree — that which hardly seems doubtful — they are at the same time and more than the others, brought about for the interior perfection of her who received them. I mean to say that these contemplations introduced her to a more elevated mystical union and were given to her in order to bring the life of her soul to perfection.

The short career of Sister St. Peter is soon going to end. She has worked and suffered in order to transmit the message of reparation with which she had been charged. On the whole, her end was reached. There remained to her scarcely one year more of life. And it is at that moment that Our Lord wished "to rejoice and refresh her soul". In offering to her a great banquet, "where one will relish a delicious dish", her contemplation is perfected in plentitude and a new ardour. That which she will transmit to the world, are not any more exact words, menaces or well marked warning, but an experience of interior life. This experience communicates to us, if one may say thus, a general discretion, a rhythm, and an intensity. And in this sense, the messages remain prophetic. They direct us towards the universal Mediation of the Virgin Mary, and tell us with what intensity of love it is fitting for us to unite with her mediatory action.

It is very probable that, in the providential plan, the history of the world does not subdivide itself in the same way as for us.

When Mary St. Peter, at the end of her natural resources, cried out, "Holy Virgin, appear to someone," and when interiorly enlightened, she knew the plan of La Salette before the day of the apparition, nothing permits us to suppose that her interior regard may have done further on. However, in the sequel and since La Salette, the direct interventions of the Virgin have been multiplied, at Lourves and at Fatima. And one asks oneself whether in her contemplations of the divine Maternity, Mary of St. Peter has not "seen" the times to come, that in which we have been sent to live today, according to God's plan like a new age, placed under the sign of the Virgin and her universal mediation.

The humiliations of the Incarnate Word and the divine Maternity

The contemplation to which Mary of St. Peter was drawn during five months was a spiritual participation in the mystery of the suckling of the Child Jesus. One must recall that, having already reached the end of her career, Sister St. Peter whose heroic felicity and correspondence to grace one already knows, and who had been passively directed by the Holy Spirit since her early youth, had been raised to very high states of mystic union. The lights which she received, the flavours which she tasted, the divine touches which her soul perceived are operations which take place, without words and images, in the depths of the soul. But like all these mystics without exception when she is obliged to relate what she has experienced spiritually, she must of necessity have recourse to the perceptible image. All mystic writers transpose. They try to suggest by material rhythms or perceptible forms, the insubstantial rhythm, the silent harmony which God has caused to arise in the secret of their soul. All the words and all their images are analogous. They can evoke, suggest, but cannot translate immaterial, inexpressible realities.

When these rare favours were accorded to Sister St. Peter, she was astonished, even frightened, before abandoning herself

to the joys and delights with which these contemplations filled her soul. But two priests she had consulted, reassured her, counselling her to follow the motions of the Holy Spirit. Besides she knew that Saints like St. Bernard and St. Fulbert had enjoyed the same favours and she learnt a little later on that even in Carmel itself, Venerable Marguerite of the Blessed Sacrament (of Beaune) had been drawn to this kind of contemplative union. "After this example," she wrote forthwith, "I conclude that it is not any more difficult for the Holy Infant Jesus to give to me at the present time this share in the state of His Infancy than it was for Him to do so to one of my Sisters 200 years ago, because He is All-Powerful. But what astonishes me very much is, that the first recipient was a holy soul, and the second is nothing but a miserable instrument who has neither virtue nor talents, a poor sinner who deserves Hell, but of whom nevertheless the Infant JESUS sometimes wishes to make use, despite her extreme unworthiness, because she is entirely abandoned to Him for the accomplishment of His plans."

In the account which Sister St. Peter made of these favours, as usual copying out these notes again for her Prioress, she finds again the images and expressions which she has read in the Breviary, and her style, animated by an interior rhythm, recalls in its candour and purity, the innocent tenderness of our old Flemish painters, who are often inspired with the mystery of the Virgin suckling the Divine Child, with a restrained piety. At the heart of a rationalist century, and on the threshold of an epoch dedicated to the cult of positive science, Mary St. Peter makes the spirit and love of the great centuries of faith to live once more in her pages.

One account which she ended on Christmas Day, 1847, begins with this preamble:

"A woman in the Gospel, on speaking to our Divine Saviour, cried out: 'Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and blessed the breasts which have nourished Thee'. The Holy Fathers say that this woman, full of faith and piety, represents the Church;

she recognized and confessed out loud the divinity and humanity in JESUS CHRIST !

"In Him she adored a God-Man. This victory of a Child-God nourished by the sacred milk of the Virgin Mary, His most Holy Mother, is an unknown and hidden mystery, which the divine Infant JESUS discovers to whom it pleased Him in order to do Him honour. Despite my unworthiness, He has deigned to draw me to it, during five months, in giving me lights and ineffable consolations to rejoice and refresh my soul in consequence of the little works and bitterness with which I have been overwhelmed in occupying myself in glorifying His Name. Yes, most amiable Child JESUS, at the birth of your reparatory work you have made a great feast for my soul, where she has savoured delicious dishes. Because of my sins, I have only merited to feel the rigour of your justice. But your Mercy is above all your works, and the admirable familiarity which you use towards souls surpasses human understanding."

The first note which she wrote about this subject to the Prioress was dated 22nd June 1847:

"It is with the greatest shame that I am obliged to tell you the favours of the divine JESUS, and of His Holy Mother, that I have received during these last days. I have hesitated a great deal before applying myself to write this letter, because I would much rather write about my sins; however, I must co-operate with the Child JESUS' Will, who desires to imprint His simplicity upon me, and to tell you simply what passed in my soul. Here it is, approximately:

"Some days ago, after Holy Communion, I was powerfully drawn by the Child JESUS to consider the honour and the homage of perfect praise which He rendered to His Heavenly Father during the time when He was being nourished by the virginal milk of His most Holy Mother. And He made me understand that He desires that I should adore Him in this humble state, in union with the Holy Angels, so that His mercy might fill me with innocence, purity, and simplicity, and that I might be able to gather the precious graces which spring

from the ineffable mystery of a Child-God. Then, this divine Saviour enraptured my soul in a sublime state, and in a great elevation of spirit. I contemplated this prodigy of love and humility. He who is eternally begotten in the bosom of the Father in the splendours of His glory, nourishes Himself at the same time with the milk of His August Mother.

"The Holy Spirit caused me to enter into the profundity of this mystery, which until then had been unknown to me. O angelic spirits, who are occupied in adoring, tell me what you feel, which appears the most charming to you, either to see a Virgin holding her Creator and her God in her arms to nourish Him with her virginal milk, or to see a God become a child, the divine Word reduced to silence, the All Powerful enveloped in swaddling bands on the breast of this Virgin Mother? Ah! I think you intend to answer me that these humiliations of the Infant God in this profound mystery constitutes Mary's greatness and glory whose two august privileges are to be at the same time the mother and the nurse of a God-Man.

"I tell you with the greatest abasement, because such a favour was only due to a Saint Bernard and not to a miserable sinner like myself, however, I am obliged in the simplicity of my heart to give testimony to it, and it is not a question of imagination, but a grace which I cannot express, having no proper words for it. Ah! if it was given to me to make known the light which I have received, what a treasure I have found! The Infant JESUS, if I can express myself thus, has made a bouquet of His Holy Infancy's virtues, those of sweetness, humility, innocence, purity and simplicity with which He has adorned His Mother's Heart, so that JESUS' brothers, brought forth by Mary at the foot of the Cross, must come to seek them from their adopted Mother. Oh! I perceive a great mystery. Yes, Mary is the nurse of a God, but she is also nurse to man; what great things my mind has conceived in Mary's arms, whilst this lofty contemplation ravished my soul; I needed the recreation hour to come to myself a little.

"This is a little summary of the workings of the divine Saviour in an unworthy sinner. I must adorn myself with the virtues of His Holy Infancy before I appear at God's tribunal. I must become a little child, before entering the Kingdom of Heaven, thus the little time which I have to pass upon this earth must be consecrated to humanity and imitating His Infancy in order to receive the divine impress of it.

"Here, then, my Reverend Mother, are my soul's dispositions. As you see, they are entirely concentrated upon the Infant-God and the Virgin Mother. I feel a rain of graces falling upon me. Nevertheless I do not forget the Work of Reparation; because it is from the mouth of the Word-Child at the breast that God truly receives a perfect homage to the glory of His Name; and I offer Him to the eternal Father in this state of weakness and humiliation, to worthily glorify Him."

* * *

Since this first contemplation, it is the humiliation of JESUS which strikes Sister St. Peter first, and it is also by this initial meditation that all her marial communications will be connected with the Work of Reparation. The new favours which was relishing for the first time, did not cease to amaze her. It was at this time, that after taking advice, she had occasion to read a book by a seventeenth century author, Father d'Argentan, of the Friars Minors Capuchins. There she discovered that her devotion was neither new nor illusory, and that the Fathers of the Church had treated of it. She found herself still further reassured, when, in a fragment about the Maternity of Mary, nurse of the Incarnate Word, she recognized "like an echo repeating to the letter, that which the Holy Spirit's operations touching this mystery had imprinted in her soul". It is of these operations that she is going to speak.

(Letter of 25th June 1847) "Having received the most holy Infant JESUS into my heart by means of Holy Communion, and adoring Him in the mystery of His birth, which I recall to mind today, I saw the most Holy Virgin take her Divine Son into her arms and present to Him her virginal breast. Soon, I found

myself enclosed into the Heart of the Holy Infant JESUS. He made me understand that I must remain there in silence, so as not to interrupt His work by the acts I wished to do. I obeyed His voice. Soon after, the most Holy Virgin left Her divine Child, if I can thus express myself, to occupy Himself with me, with the object of letting me know her divine Son's merciful design upon my soul."

The Holy Virgin then said to me: "My daughter, my divine Son desires to contract an intimate union with you. Acknowledge yourself to be very unworthy of such a favour; it is a prodigy of His love; however, He has charged me to prepare you for it."

Mary then recalled her past sins to the Sister, and when she had asked JESUS for pardon for them, her soul found itself at the breast of the august Virgin, like a little child, and the divine Mother taught her that Her Son had given her to this Mother, to nourish her with the milk of her graces and virtues. "Finally," Sister St. Peter continues, "the most Holy Virgin made me realize that I must apply myself to honour Her virginal breast by practices of piety." I obeyed her, and the Holy Spirit gave me insight to compose a little exercise on the ineffable mystery of a Child-God, on the breast of the Virgin, His Mother.

This little exercise is composed of invocations borrowed from the Church's prayers and hymns and the Colloquies of Father d'Argentan.

* * *

During the whole month of July, Sister St. Peter rejoiced in this sort of contemplation, and on 1st August, she described the state of her soul as follows:

"Despite my repugnance to put the actual dispositions of my soul into writing, I will do it willingly however, in order to practice the Holy Infant JESUS' obedience and simplicity, which I desire to imitate. As I have confidence that you will burn this paper, I will speak to you with the simplicity of a little child, and will give you an account of what has taken place in my soul since St. John Baptist's day until today."

"My Reverend Mother, since this time my soul has been drawn to adore the incarnate Word at the breast of His Holy Mother. Oh ! how ineffable is this mystery, the soul is entirely ravished with such a prodigy ; a God-Child of a Virgin ; He who has spoken by the prophets, and who has given His law in the midst of thunder and lightning, He in fact by whom all has been made, the divine Word, the eternal Word of the Father, is there in silence, attached to the breast of His Mother, by obedience to God, His Father, doing Him homage by His absolute power in educating Himself to a child's helplessness, nourishing Himself by a milk which will soon be changed into His precious Blood, to be poured out for the world's Salvation.

"He is there, this God-lamb destined for sacrifice, attached to the breast of His Holy Mother by the same obedience which later on will fasten Him to the Cross. Oh ! how ravishing this contemplation is, but after having considered this divine Child with respect and love, my spirit turned itself towards His Mother. Ah ! what must have been Her heart's feelings in seeing Her God, her Creator, nourishing Himself with her substance. How I thanked her for having suckled my Saviour and of having made Him thrive, if I can thus express myself, He the victim of our salvation." But how to render oneself worthy to contemplate such a mystery ? JESUS demanded from Sister St. Peter, innocence of heart and complete detachment from creatures.

"I must," she writes, "imitate His Infancy's virtues and to be for once a little distant from this, during eight days I lost the presence of the Holy Virgin and that of the Infant JESUS. But I have been humbled before God at the memory of my profound miseries. He thrust into my heart a sharp pang of contrition ; I wept bitterly for my past sins. Soon, like the father of the prodigal son, He gave me the kiss of peace and reconciliation, and imparted this to my soul in the most intimate way. Then He made me know the purity, the perfection which I must have in order to unite myself to Him, because He is my God and my All. Finally, He showed me the

favours which He was reserving for me, if I was faithful to follow the light of His grace. This communication has changed my soul's disposition. I have found the Infant JESUS once more at His divine Mother's virginal breast. Our Saviour has told me many times that He desires that I might adore Him in this state, because few souls are capable of this holy attention, which demands a great purity of heart. The demon came to torment me, in order to make me abandon my practices towards this mystery, but when I had submitted my worries to my spiritual guide and put his counsels into practice, before obedience, the devil fled."

"My soul," she says once more, "is entirely lost in this ineffable mystery; I think of it night and day. Once when I awoke at the hour in the morning, I felt the presence of the Holy Virgin in me. She made me understand anew the treasures of grace which She kept in her breast, inviting me to draw from this source in all liberty, begging me to share part of my abundance with poor sinners. This same day, at Holy Communion, JESUS warned me to pray for impure souls.

" 'I have prepared you and purified you,' He said to me. 'Now arouse yourself, go and look for souls for me, so that I may reign over them'."

"Finally, He wrought something in me which I am not able to comprehend; with it I felt the weight of inexpressible pain, I was as if in a fire; my senses were bound by a divine power. I understood that the Infant JESUS wished to make me fight against the demon of pride and impurity with the virtues and graces of His Holy Infancy. Live, JESUS and Mary!"

But does not this contemplation of JESUS' extreme weakness constitute itself as a lesser degree for she who during four years had been concentrated on the greatness of God's Holy Name? This objection Sister St. Peter herself thought; but she forthwith replied to it:

"I will not condemn those who may have this opinion, because without the lights that the Infant JESUS and His Holy Mother have given to me during this last year, I would perhaps

have shared their sentiments. But it is not so today, and after the messages which I have received and am still receiving at the moment of writing, I will say that this mystery, however unknown it may be to the world, is however great, admirable, ineffable, its depth is only penetrated by the Infant JESUS, who is the object of it, and by the Virgin, His tender Mother.

"God forbid that I should imitate the rebel angels, who after having contemplated the height and the sublimity of divine perfections, did not afterwards want to lower their proud gaze upon the humiliations of the incarnate Word and to adore Him in this state of abasement. Yes, O divine Child, you are as worthy of our respects and adoration upon your Mother's virginal breast as in the bosom of your eternal Father; you are and always will be the God of eternity."

Thus the circle closes itself. From the first blasphemy of Lucifer, down to those who do not cease to outrage, to disregard or to deny the majesty of God's Name, answer the voluntary humiliations of the incarnate Word, contemplated by Mary of St. Peter. (The perfect praise is rendered to God by His Christ's humiliated Face, and by the helplessness of the Child Jesus on Mary's breast.)

But the fruit of Sister St. Peter's marial contemplation does not stop there. The prophet's message does not content itself with showing the truth; it must further envisage those who hear it to "be converted", that is to say, according to the etymology of the Word, to return, to take a new direction. The messages on Mary's role in the work of Salvation establishes a way to take; because it is from this source of graces that we must draw in order to join ourselves to this Work of Reparation. In her most eminent contemplation, Mary of St. Peter, as a true daughter of St. Theresa, never lost sight of the good of the Church and the salvation of souls. She was conscious of having received a mission in their regard, and this mission is to show men the powerful intervention of the Mother of JESUS. This is why her messages end in the words of mercy.

"Our Lord," she writes, "always applies to me to adore Him"

as a little babe on His Mother's breast. There He reveals to me admirable instructions on the Blessed Virgin's maternity, towards mankind, whom He has given to her as children when she was on Calvary at the foot of the Cross."

Mary, Mother of Jesus, and Mother of Men, such is the mystery which Sister St. Peter is going to be shown.

(Letter of 13th August 1847) "How can I convey to you matters so incomprehensible, through feeble words? However, with the help of the Holy Child JESUS, I will endeavour to babble some words which, however imperfectly said, will be able nevertheless to give you light on the actual state of my soul. Ah! if I knew how to write, if I knew how to speak: no, till now, I have never understood what the dying JESUS gave to us in leaving us His Mother. O mystery of clemency and love! As soon as He had brought us forth on the Cross in the midst of the most appalling sufferings, He placed all these newborn souls into the arms of Mary, most tender of mothers, so that she might nourish them and raise them for eternal life.

(NOTE: R. P. Olivaint: *In Mary, the children are conceived at the same time as JESUS and in JESUS. Because it is of Her that it is said: The grain of wheat, JESUS buries in her breast, and from this grain, this fruitful earth, comes the harvest of the elect.*)

"In this view, He filled her breast with the milk of grace and mercy. He made this divine Mother the legate of the immense graces which He had acquired during His labourious life and His sorrowful Passion, so that she might become the admirable channel from which His infinite merits should flow upon Holy Church, His Spouse.

"I have been still further enlightened upon this mystery, the Holy Spirit had formed the adorable Body of Our Divine Saviour from Mary's most pure blood. This Sacred Body was born of this tender Mother, she had rights over Him. That is why He was placed in Her maternal arms after His death. This amiable JESUS made me understand that He wished to give back to her all He had received from her for the world's salvation. She had nourished Him with her most pure milk. In order

to thank Her JESUS had given her back His blood, of which He made her the trustee. Yes, she was there, standing at the foot of the Cross, so as to receive this treasure in the precious vessel of her maternal heart. Mary had given JESUS His adorable Body and He had given it back to her after His death, adorned with His glorious wounds, so that she might draw eternal life from those sacred fountains, for the children whom His love had brought forth before His last breath. Yes, JESUS belongs to Mary with all His treasures, and Mary is for men with all her tenderness. Oh, how great is this Mother's mercy! She holds her bountiful arms out to us, she invites us to draw the milk of grace from her virginal breast; her heart is always open to receive us.

But this view of the entire scheme is still made still more precise. JESUS said to her: "As long as man is upon earth, he is in a state of infancy; only in Heaven will he be the perfect age. That is why he must constantly have recourse to the Mother like a little child.

"Yes," Sister St. Peter goes on, "I see it clearly in God's light; man must have recourse constantly to the most Blessed Virgin, His Mother, if he wishes to arrive at the perfect age in eternal life. Here are the two great mysteries of Mary's Maternity, which the Infant JESUS wishes me to realize, Mary, Mother of God, and Mary, Mother of mankind. That is why He continually presses me to meditate upon Him at His Mother's breast, so as to teach me by His example to have recourse to her so as to nourish myself with the milk of her virtues.

"(The Blessed Virgin) made known to me that as she would choose certain places in order to pour down her graces with profusion she would choose my soul to make it the scene of her mercies. I had not long to wait to feel the effect of this promise because, today after Holy Communion, the Infant JESUS appearing to me on His divine Mother's breast, made me know His Will more clearly. This great mystery is a treasure hidden in the ground of His Church, and He makes it known to whosoever it pleases Him. There are souls charged by Him to honour

the mysteries of His Passion. To this end, He has marked them with His Sacred stigmata. But as for me, despite my unworthiness, He has charged me to carry the state of His Infancy. Already He has prepared me Himself for this favour. Today, through Holy Communion, He deigns to unite me to Him, and to make me enter His adorable Heart, so that I may approach the virginal breast of His august Mother. It is He who conducts me to this source of graces and benedictions, telling me to draw the milk of the divine mercy in the spirit of charity with which He Himself had drawn it; because He took this milk for all men, and for all men, He had poured it out in shedding His blood on the Cross. After His example, I must adapt for myself this mysterious liquor from Mary's breast in the name of all my brothers and henceforth pour it out like a heavenly dew upon the whole world, to refresh it and purify the earth which is devoured by the fire of concupiscence and full of corruption."

This account ends in these words:

"Most Reverend Mother, how can I express to you that which I have experienced during this operation of grace? Oh, what an admirable and incomprehensible thing it is to find oneself as a little child in union with JESUS on His Mother's breast, the divine Mary! Oh, how abundantly she gives this milk of mercy! She told me the source is inexhaustible. But alas! who am I, miserable and unworthy, to be thus deputed to draw from this fountain for the salvation of sinners? I prostrated myself with my face upon the ground, confessing to God my unworthiness for such a mission. But the Lord always chooses the most feeble instruments the better to make His power shine forth.

Sister St. Peter, who did not cease to meditate upon what she had seen in contemplation, asked herself how Mary's most pure milk could possess the virtue of purifying sinners. But Our Lord Himself will instruct her:

"Here is approximately what He taught me; it is certain that the milk exactly so called from the Most Holy Virgin's

substance, with which the Incarnate Word had been nourished in His Infancy did not then have the virtue of sanctifying souls. It would be an error to believe it. But this sacred milk, having filled Our Saviour's adorable veins, had become the blood of a God. By the Redemption, we have been made children of the Heavenly Father and brothers of Our Lord JESUS CHRIST. The Mother of JESUS has become Our Mother. Then the Saviour has made her trustee of the riches and infinite merits of His Life and His Passion. He rendered back to her the Body and adorable Blood which He had received from her. He filled her breasts with a mysterious and divine milk in order to nourish the new children whom He had brought forth upon the Cross, and of whom she is the Mother, in the order of grace. Thus, when Our Lord sent me to Mary's breast to look for the milk of mercy for the salvation of sinners, there is nothing in this process contrary to the Faith nor to the doctrine of the Church, which names the Most Holy Virgin the Refuge of Sinners, the treasurer of her Son. The virginal breasts and the mysterious milk of which I have spoken in this narrative, are the image of the sweetness of grace and the figure of the effusion of mercy."

These favours followed one another during a whole month, but Sister St. Peter is always warned that they are not accorded to her solely for herself, but for souls, for sinners, for France.

In a new account, dated 14th September, she writes:

"The Infant JESUS has made me bear the state of His Infancy, as He had promised me. But how to explain these workings, as admirable as they are extraordinary? Yes, I avow in all simplicity, it is only the love of obedience which makes me determine to speak a few words about it. It is by obedience that I have responded to the Infant JESUS' appeal, who has conducted me to the divine Mother's breast; I only remained at this fountain of grace through obedience to my Superiors, and it will be once more under the star of obedience that I will write; its sweet light will enlighten my soul and will prevent it from falling into Satan's clutches.

"The Infant Jesus, despite my unworthiness, has transformed my soul into Him and has caused me to participate in the mysterious milk of His Holy Mother. He has given me to be able to draw the milk of grace and mercy from these admirable fountains, for sinners, my poor brothers. By this privilege which the most Holy Child Jesus was accoring me, He said to me that I would obtain great favours for France, and that I was only an instrument of whom God wished to make use. Thus, I see very clearly that these graces are not personal to me; on the contrary I must in some measure forget myself. I look upon myself as a vase in the hands of the Infant Jesus, to receive from this mysterious fountain and then to pour forth this divine liquor, without anything being kept back for self-interest.

"The greatest glory of God and the salvation of souls; here is my heart's cry. I receive freely. I must give freely. In this new mission, I am the Holy Infant Jesus' little steward. May I be faithful, because one day He will demand from me an account of the graces which He has placed in my feeble hands.

"Oh, what feelings arise in the soul at the sight of a Child God at the breast of His Mother: the Éternal Word wrapped in poor swaddling bands! The Éternal Word of the Father reduced to silence. All the perfections of the Living God hidden under the cloud of humanity. The All-powerful reduced to helplessness! Greatness shortened! Oh, what glory the Child Jesus rendered to His divine Father in this state of poverty and humiliation! Because then, He has rendered Him the homage of His absolute power in suspending His divine operations.

(NOTE: "*Suspending*", not the "*divine operations*" of which the mystery of the Incarnation does not modify the exercise, but their manifestation here below.)

"What startling actions He could have performed on entering the world. However, He deprived Himself of them to show us the example of a profound humility. After this consideration, I say to myself, Oh what a price this sole action must be

in the eyes of the Eternal Father, this action of the Word Child, remaining for fifteen months on the breast of the Virgin Mother, since He has annihilated or enclosed His greatness. His power, His wisdom and all His faculties in that one action: in profound and ineffable mystery! The smaller He appeared O the eyes of men, the greater He appeared in the eyes of the Eternal Father! One day I saw in a divine light that the Heavenly Father will accord me that which I desire, when I ask it of Him in the name of the Child JESUS on His Mother's breast. Yes, O divine Child, in this humble state, you are as worthy of our love, our homage, and our adorations as when later on your will cure the sick, raise the dead, and command the winds and the sea. Here I contemplate you, silent, hidden, adoring your Father's eternal counsel about your Life and your sorrowful Passion. The Cross is already planted in your heart, you only await the hours marked by your Heavenly Father in order to accomplish His Will."

* * *

But here is what JESUS told Sister St. Peter, that He was going to make her also taste the bitterness of His chalice, and He charged her to pray for certain sinners who outrage Him.

"I have obeyed," she writes, "but I have been terribly tormented by the demon, who fears no doubt that souls are escaping him. The most Holy Virgin has told me that I must persevere in my exercises, despite my enemies' efforts. The devil cannot fight against a little child, he is too proud for that. That is why he does all he can to turn me from the mystery of the divine Maternity. Our Lord has made me understand for some days that in sucking His most Holy Mother's breast, He was also sucking His Father's rigorous justice, and that He was going to make me share in it. I am beginning to support this state. I see the divine Child so sad: I now look upon Him burdened with the world's sins, and already bearing the Cross in His Heart.

"Oh, I find a marvellous connection between JESUS attached to Mary's breast and JESUS attached to the Cross. In these two

states I see Him as a victim suspended between heaven and earth. Here I see the Queen of Martyrs, Her heart already wounded by the dart of Sorrow, nourish with her own substance this adorable Body which must suffer so much for us in His Passion. I see JESUS, the Saviour of the World fill His sacred veins with this precious Blood which He must pour forth one day upon Calvary."

All these contemplations created in Sister St. Peter's soul an atmosphere of joy and enthusiasm which showed itself by truly lyrical aspirations. Her letters now resemble hymns. The Bible furnished her with images, and the lights received in prayer made her catch a glimpse of the hidden meaning. Despite these inspirations, however, she remains the humble daughter, conscious of all her limits and avowing them in all simplicity.

"I tell you in the simplicity of my soul," she writes in November 1847. "Yes, if I were a theologian, I could make an admirable treatise about it, but as I am only the poor donkey of the Holy Spirit, I find myself reduced to keep silence, on account of my condition. However, I recall to myself that in the ancient Law, Balaam's ass had duly spoken. After its example, therefore I will say some words under the New Law; for the glory of JESUS and of His Most Holy Mother."

But, after this preamble in which Sister St. Peter affirmed her helplessness, she composed a veritable canticle to Mary's glory, a canticle, but also a commentary on the sacred texts; she remarks:

"You see, Reverend Mother, that the Holy Spirit, does not cease in the Scriptures to advocate Mary's virginal Maternity. The Master of doctors desires, in His mercy, to give some lights on the subject to His little servant.

"O most holy and most pure Mother of God, reveal the profound mystery of your virginal Maternity to our souls, and distil the precious and sacred milk of the divine mercy upon all your dear children."

"For all your children," because Sister St. Peter will never

forget her mission at any time. Moreover, the lights she received recalled it to her without ceasing.

On 8th November she writes: "Since the day when I wrote to you to give an account of my conscience, it has pleased Our Lord and His Holy Mother to work many things in the soul of their very unworthy servant.

"My Reverend Mother, I tremble at the sight of my misery and in inability. During nearly five months this tender Mother and the Holy Infant JESUS have taken possession of the little chapel of my heart. It is there that I contemplate without ceasing the ravishing mystery of the divine Maternity. O greatness of Mary, O Incomparable privilege of which I had never thought; Blessed Virgin, you give milk to your Creator, you nourish the Bread of Life, which nourishes all souls. Be eternally blessed for having furnished the most pure blood from which Our Saviour's adorable Body was formed. Be further blessed for having given your milk to the Infant JESUS, which this divine Redeemer has changed into His Blood in order to make it flow upon us from the wound of His Sacred Heart and His other Wounds.

"My Reverend Mother, I tremble at the sight of my misery and my incapacity, in thinking that I must now speak of an admirable mystery of mercy and love, confided by the most Holy Virgin to this poor little servant of the Infant JESUS. If I keep silent, I shall cause sorrow to my divine Mother; and if I speak, I fear to not give a good account of her heavenly language. I therefore beg her to direct my pen herself.

"Since yesterday, after Holy Communion, I am under the impression of a very powerful grace: I have seen and heard ravishing things. The Holy Virgin has communicated herself to me several times. This august Mother appeared to me in the interior of my soul; but this time she did not hold the divine Child in her arms; She was alone. Then I saw her virginal milk flow in torrents and the angels received this precious liquor in vases. I begged them to pour it forth upon the clergy, on the houses of our holy Order, finally upon the whole world. This

sight enraptured me. In the evening, the same marvel was represented to my spirit once more, I felt myself pressed to ask the Blessed Virgin for an explanation of this prodigy. I entreated the angels and saints to carry my prayer to her, and remaining myself prostrate at her feet, I said to her: 'O good Mother, what is the significance of such an amazing matter? Last year you came down to earth to show your divine Son's anger and to tell us about misfortunes, and I see graces flowing down upon us in waves.'

The Blessed Virgin answered me: "Yes, my daughter, it is certain that I appeared last year (at La Salette) alone, without my Son, the earth was not worthy of His visit. I announced disasters which would have infallibly taken place without my mediation. I uncovered my bosom to my angered Son, I showed Him the breasts which had nourished Him; then He revoked the sentence of famine. He was not able to resolve to deprive my children of bread, because of the love with which I had nourished Him with my milk. And His arm is raised to strike, fell disarmed upon my breast, from where it caused torrents of milk to flow which have fertilized the earth.'

"At these words, I cried out: 'O Mystery of love, mystery of love.' The Blessed Virgin added: 'Tell these things to your Superiors, so that my mercy may be known as much as the evils with which God menaced you were known; but that they will know the virtue of my breast.' Furthermore, she gave me great confidence for the extension of the reparatory work, telling me: 'My Son has hidden resources in His Providence: He will make use of them when the time is come'."

* * *

To end the relation of these exceptional favours, Sister St. Peter sums them up, placing them in the general plan of her mission. "They are not at all irrelevant to the Work of Reparation," she writes. The Lord, angered against France's sinners because of the transgression of God's three first Command-

ments, threatens to chastise them. But despite the obstacles the Work of Reparation is begun. Justice transforms itself; and through Mary's intervention, the milk of divine Mercy flows over France. "God's justice terrified me," the Sister cries, "now His mercy enraptures me." And it is in thanksgiving that the narrative ends.

"O my God, bless me despite my unworthiness, because I have done that which you have commanded me. Deign also in your great mercy to pardon my faults, because I fear the sovereign rigour of your justice when I think about these words: "From him who has received much, much will be demanded." However, my God, two things console me in the sight of your judgement. The first is that you have given me the grace to walk in your ways with a spirit of uprightness and simplicity, and always under the star of holy obedience. The second, is that you have granted me that which I asked of you, never to give myself glory because of your gifts. Yes, Lord, to the end of my life I will say to you: "To you alone be all honour, praise and glory, and to me, miserable sinner, shame, scorn and confusion.

✓ "O my God, I give back to you a thousand thanksgivings, for having given two great gifts to your unworthy servant, that of your adorable Face in order to appease the justice of your Divine Father, and the virginal breast of your august Mother to pour there from the mysterious milk of grace and mercy. Both one and the other of these gifts charm my heart, O amiable JESUS, to which side shall I turn myself? On the one side I see the adorable Face of my divine Saviour, from whence flows a precious Blood which assures eternal life to me. On the other, I see Mary's maternal breast, from whence flows a mysterious milk which makes me taste the sweetness of a celestial manna and which fills my soul with confidence in the infinite mercies of which the Immaculate Virgin is the channel. O Blessed Holy Angels, and all you Saints of heaven, thank JESUS and Mary for me, who have loaded me with blessings during my life, so that despite my unworthiness I may eter-

nally sing the hymn of gratitude, together with you, for all the graces which I have received from my God and above all for the Work of Reparation which in His mercy He has established in France.

"O Good JESUS, O tender Mary, bless and spread the Archconfraternity: I place it in your amiable Hearts: be for ever its powerful protectors.

"Sit Nomen Domini benedictum. Vade retro, Satana."

"O Most Holy and most amiable Child JESUS, I give you thanks for having helped me to make this little statement in your honour and for the glory of your divine Mother. I place it at your Feet on this memorable day of your august birth and on this beautiful feast, I beg you very humbly to take a new hold upon my soul To the end of my life I desire to be your little shepherdess to look after your sheep, and your little servant to serve you as well as your Holy Mother. Yes, O divine Child, heavenly Spouse of my soul. I renounce everything that I am, and I give myself to everything that you are, possess me as sovereign. Amen. (25th December 1847)."

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Having collected her letters together to make a general narrative, Sister Mary of St. Peter finished her work on 25th December 1847. Nevertheless after that date she continued to relate that which she was receiving from God. But death will soon come to end her mission upon earth and to reveal to her eyes the wonderful secrets of which her vivid faith had let her catch a glimpse here below. In these notes she speaks of contemporary events, "although humanly speaking, she was very ignorant on this matter" (NOTE: *Reverend Mother Mary of the Incarnation*). In future, she will not any longer live the Reparation as the model of souls who are called to meditate and pray vocally, in order to console our Divine Redeemer; this remains as the share of fervent Christians who are not necessarily contemplatives. But she will live it as a soul who has attained, whose whole life is established in that of Christ, and in her prayer. The previous repugnances for following the way of

reparation seems to have vanished: she is entirely simple and finds the unique base of her personal reparation in the Eucharist and in the prayer after the Last Supper. Listen to her:

(Letter of 3rd February 1848) "Now my interior occupation is to adore Our Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, as the real Restorer of the outrages committed against the glory of God His Father. Oh, what consolations my soul feels in offering this Host of benediction and Reparation to God's Majesty, insulted by the wicked. Immense are the graces which I receive from our Divine Saviour in the Holy Eucharist, I cannot explain these favours, His way of working in my soul is more secret; they cause faith and charity to grow in me. Thus my union with Our Lord is greatly augmented: I am happily bound to His Feet in the Most Holy Sacrament, and there I keep Him company with the Holy Angels. The dew of grace, falling on the ground of my soul, and the burning Sun of JESUS' Sacred Heart warming this poor sterile soil, causes holy thoughts to blossom which I present as flowers to JESUS, my Spouse. I have written of some of them of which I often make use of visiting our Amiable JESUS in the abode of His Love. They bring grace to my soul; it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit with which my heart nourishes itself with delight. Oh, what a treasure we have in the Adorable Eucharist; I have never well understood it."

(13th February) "During my evening prayer, on Sunday 13th, I felt that Our Lord was going to communicate some thing to me. Fearing illusion, I resisted this inspiration several times; but in the end Our Lord having gathered the powers of my soul into His Heart, recalled to me that I had been given up wholly to Him for the accomplishment of His designs; He then wished to impose a new mission upon me, and soon told me the terrible blow which must strike us. 'The Church is menaced with a horrible tempest: pray - pray.' Our Divine Master gave me this knowledge at different times; but it is not possible to describe the touching way in which this charitable

Saviour said to me: 'Pray – pray'. He taught me the prayer of which I must use in order to keep His Church in the Most Holy Name of God; it is that which He addressed to His Father for His Apostles and for His entire Church before leaving the world. 'Holy Father, keep in your Name those whom you have given to me.' This prayer, coming from Our Saviour's mouth, will be MORE EFFICACIOUS than all the others of which I could make use, and Our Lord, as He made me realize, having chosen me to GLORIFY GOD'S HOLY NAME, gave me the right in some way to ask for grace by virtue of this Adorable Name, refuge of the Church.

"Therefore I received from Our Lord by His Authority the express mission to keep the Church in this saving Name. I recognize my nothingness and I submit my will to God. Our Lord told me again that His Justice was greatly angered against men's sins, but above all against the crimes which directly outrage God's Majesty. At this moment, I knew that Our Lord in the most Blessed Sacrament and the prayers of the just are continually holding back the divine wrath!

"This Good Saviour requested me to pray for the Sovereign Pontiff. At the end of this communication I saw as it were a black smoke going up towards the sky, but the sun was not obscured by it, which consoled me a little. This smoke was the emblem of the enemies and the sun represented the Church.

"By the results which this operation produced in my soul, Our Lord wished to prove to me its truth; because soon my soul was transformed by a sword of sorrow. Thereupon I began my mission of prayer in saying:

"Holy Father, keep the Church of JESUS CHRIST by the virtue of your Saving Name. It is the last wish of your Divine Son, it is His desire.

"Remember the Prayer which His Love made to you, for this Church our Mother, the evening of the last day: Holy Father keep in your Name those whom you have given to me: whilst I was with them, I kept them in your Name.

* "Most Holy Name of God, refuge of the Church of France, save us!"

In a letter of 26th February 1848, she insists: "This is the prayer which one must continually address to God, in union with Our Lord JESUS CHRIST: for the Holy Church: 'Holy Father, keep in your Name those whom you have given to me.' Our Lord desires that I recite this prayer continually, always in union with Him, it is He who says it in me, and I, I do it with Him: oh what tenderness He has for His Church. He appears to be only occupied with Her: He wishes to save Her, hide Her, in the adorable Name of His Father. If the Church of France could speak, she would request the Work of Reparation with great cries. I ask it on her behalf; it is a divine rampart against the darts of her enemies (3rd March).

"For many years I cease not to repeat it, God demands a Work of Reparation from France, this work will be for her the RAINBOW OF MERCY, and will hold back the Hand of God which is weighing heavily upon our country. Happily the work is born."

✓ The main reparatory work was that of Saint-Dizier, diocese of Langres, erected as an Archconfraternity in 1847; Tours was not to have its own association till 1884. All the members of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus' family inscribed themselves in these two works in 1885. At the See of the parish of St. Jacques at Lisieux where there existed an affiliation to Saint Dizier, and at the Oratory of Tours. The diocesan Confraternity, more specially vowed to the veneration of the miraculous Effigy of Veronica's Veil. This latter was elevated to the title of the Archconfraternity by the Holy Father Leo XIII on 1st October 1885, who spontaneously abolished the ordinary stages and accorded, not only for France, but "PRO GALLIA ET IBIQUE", the erected solicited first of all for France alone. This was after more than 7000,000 members had been inscribed on the registers of the Oratory of Tours, without counting the multiplied associates of the confraternities affiliated in the whole world.

"She begins to shine, but she is still too weak to stop the arm of the All Powerful in anger. Ah ! if it were spread in all the diocese, I would be without worry, because the Lord is faithful in His promises (2nd March 1848).

(27th March 1848) "Our Lord urges me incessantly to offer His Adorable Face to His eternal Father, in order to appease His anger and to obtain mercy. Nothing is more meet to disarm His angered justice, because Our Lord, having put upon His Head the thorns of our sins, and His Face being, "firm as a rock", under the blows of this same justice, has become our courtian and has paid our debts – have great confidence therefore – JESUS assured me that He would have pity upon France. His All Powerful Name will be our buckler and His Adorable Face our divine rampart. Our Lord greatly desires that people should work to spread the devotion to His Holy Face.

"Eternal Father, I offer you the Most Holy Face of Jesus, it is the mysterious coin of infinite value which alone can pay our debts.

"Eternal Father, I offer you the sacred Head of JESUS, to appease your anger, remember that He has borne the thorns of our sins, and is firm as a rock against the blows of your justice of which He still bears the marks. Look upon these divine wounds of which I desire to be the echo, they ask of you ceaselessly, MERCY, MERCY, MERCY, for sinners."

(30th March 1848) "After Holy Communion I received an extraordinary grace of which I am going to give you an account. After having made this Communion in the intention of honouring the Most Holy Face of my Divine Saviour and of soothing His grievous wounds, I begged Him to imprint this Adorable Face on my heart so that I may never forget it. After Holy Communion I saw by an interior light that the Church, the mystical Body of JESUS CHRIST, was now covered with wounds by the impious. Then, following the inspiration which was given me, I offered to Our Lord the virginal milk of His Holy Mother, as a sweet liquor to heal His cruel wounds;

and my soul felt a great joy, in these exercises of simplicity and love.

"After the Holy Communion, our sweet JESUS desired in His infinite goodness, to tell me that this exercise was pleasing to Him; He impressed upon me to continue it and deigned to promise to make me taste of His divine consolations in order to soothe my griefs. Then it appeared to me that I saw Our Lord shining with glory and all my senses were ravished with joy. Soon, I heard these sweet words: 'Your pilgrimage advances; the end of the combat approaches; you will soon see my Face in heaven.' At these words, I bowed my face to the ground, saying: 'Lord, I have only merited hell.' Our Lord said again to me: 'I apply to you the virtue of my Face to re-establish in you the image of God. Those who contemplate here below the wounds of my Face, will see it one day in Heaven radiant with glory.'

"I was on Thabor, and I would willingly have said with the Apostle St. Peter: 'Lord, it is good to be here. Let us make three tents here' – for the three powers of my soul, so that they might always rejoice in this sweet repast which infinitely surpasses earth's pleasures. But Our Lord taught me that His true spouses ought to prefer the heat of combat to the sweetness of contemplation, and that one must not fear to throw oneself into the battle to defend His glory. I therefore resolved to fight the enemies of His Church with the instruments of His Passion, and I saw that my purposes were pleasing to Him.

"Here is nearly, my Reverend Mother, that which took place in this communication, I say about or nearly because it is hardly possible to render these interior thoughts exactly, and still less to express what the soul feels in the presence of the divine Saviour. Then creatures seem worthless and unworthy to engage our heart.

"Eternal Father, I offer you the most Holy Face of JESUS to appease your anger; look upon His wounds, see His humiliation, it is the worthy Repairer of our crimes, and the glory of your Holy Name!"

CHAPTER II

THE DEATH OF SISTER ST. PETER

The five months of marial contemplations with which Sister St. Peter was favoured and which filled her with a supernatural joy, were only a breathing-space "to rejoice and refresh her soul", as she had said. Achieving doubtless her interior perfection, this contemplation also appeared as a rest, granted before the last trials. The some seven months which remained to her on earth will plunge her once more into the heart of suffering. But had not Sister St. Peter been prepared for this for a long time? Without doubt, her habitual recollection did not let anyone guess the interior travail which she was suffering. Alone, at Carmel, the Mother Prioress and her secretary, knew the formidable communications of which Sister St. Peter was the store or safe.

(NOTE: *The religious who carried the duties of secretary to the Prioress was Sister Mary Teresa of St. Joseph. She will succeed Mary of the Incarnation as Prioress. Entering at the same time as Mary of St. Peter, she had made her Novitiate with her.*)

For all the other Sisters, she was a holy little religious, always full of spirit, always ready to render a service, to sing or to write facile verses. But all were ignorant of the mission with which she was charged and the interior pains which she hid under a smile and an amiable word.

These sorrows, the details of which is not known, will however come to light during the course of her life; despite certain appearances, it is certain that Sister St. Peter did not proceed towards perfection by the way of consolations. Since before her entry into religion, one discovers the trace of purifying nights, and at the beginning of her religious life, she describes the state of her soul in these words:

"I delivered myself thus entirely into God's Hands, and I felt that He was applying Himself to my soul to purify it by interior suffering. Then, I was plunged into bitterness, lost in the darkness and attacked by temptations. But that which made me suffer the most, was the desire to love and glorify God. My soul was suffering a hunger for God, and it seemed to me that all I was doing was nothing, feeling in myself only in capacity, sin and misery (but) I would not have wanted to change these pains against all possible consolations."

One knows that the Mother Prioress, astonished at first, quickly understood Sister St. Peter's way and that she continued to keep her in this way of mortification, humiliation, and interior sufferings. She well understood that with a soul of this quality, one must not demand a few things, but all. Sister Mary of St. Peter generously let herself be purified and suffering remained faithfully attached to her. The year which preceded that of her death, she could write again:

"The way by which Our Lord leads me is very painful to nature, because this divine Saviour exacts a continual interior mortification from me. I rarely have spiritual consolations and all the communications which I receive from Our Lord are rather of a kind which causes me to suffer much, because they so often show me the justice of wrathful God."

Then these words which reveal her great grief: "This Work of Reparation which I have carried for nearly four years, with the sorrows which God alone knows because He is the author of them. Terrible times are approaching and the Work of Reparation does not appear. O my God, arise, it is your cause as well as ours which we pray you to defend."

Since the end of the year 1847, the marial contemplations having come to an end, warnings were given to Sister St. Peter. One day, it was 21st November, she heard these words: "When with my powerful arm I will shake the throne to cause him to fall who sits upon it, in what state will France be?"

In a communication of 2nd December in the same year, Our Lord gave the order to Sister St. Peter to make known to the

Archbishop that the thunder rumbles, and that it is the last time to act. The Sister understood that it is a question of officially establishing the Confraternity in the diocese of Tours, in affiliating it to the diocese of Langres. Once more all the weight of her mission weighed upon her heart. But an unexpected intervention came to revive her courage. On 4th January 1848 she wrote:

"Our holy Mother Teresa appeared to me this morning in the interior of my soul. She is deputed by God to combat the enemies of the Work of Reparation, which the demons wish to devour. She told me that this work would be the honour of Carmel and that it was well in accord with the spirit of our holy vocation, the end of which is the glory of God and the needs of the Church; that is why she has urged me to devote myself to it with fervour. Finally, she enjoined obedience upon me, making me understand that JESUS worked miracles for souls who possessed this virtue, and that she herself had always submitted to obedience the communications which she had received from Heaven. She also made me see with what fidelity I ought to acquit myself of all my religious observances, of which even the least is very pleasing to the Lord and could enrich me with merits. In the end I understood that God was giving to the work a very powerful protestress, in the person of our holy Mother, and to me a very sweet consolation in my troubles. Since then, I feel myself bound in a special way to this great Saint, who had so much zeal for the glory of the Most High. She is going to sustain my feebleness and help me to walk along such a thorny path."

On 13th February 1848, she heard these words, "The Church is menaced with a horrible tempest: pray, pray." (NOTE: *In November of this year, 1848, Pius IX, on being obliged to leave Rome, took refuge in Gaëta.*) Furthermore, the prayer of JESUS Himself is suggested to the Sister: "Holy Father, keep in your Name those whom you have given to me."

On 20th February Sister St. Peter sees that the chastisement will not be arrested. "The Lord has drawn His bow, He is

going to discharge His arrows". And she replies: "Strike, Lord."

Some days later the revolution overthrew Louis Philippe. But on 26th February, after Communion, she received this communication: "Do not fear, little flock; your sheepfold is in my Name. I hold you all hidden in my Heart; nothing evil will befall you." The Sister understood that the clergy would be spared, at least this time, but that it was urgent to invoke mercy.

Until that day, Mgr Morlot had not done justice to her pleas. Must one insist again? Our Lord urged her: "I have still my rod in my Hand," she heard, "the rod of my Justice. If they wish to tear it away, let them put the reparatory work in its place. As to you, be faithful and fulfil your mission, and consider that it is not a slight matter to make my Will known. If you were unfaithful to my Voice, you would expose yourself to suffer the blows of this rod in your own person. Do your best to tear it from my Hands."

And Sister St. Peter essayed the last effort. She solicited a visit from the Archbishop or his secretary. It was the later, the Abbé Vincent, who came to Carmel. We know the result from the first words of the interview. The little portress of Carmel pleaded her cause with a dignity and intelligence which must at least have astonished the Secretary. But the decision had been taken beforehand, and the interview ended with this brief dialogue:

"Monseigneur has told me to tell you on his behalf not to think of this work again, to disengage your mind entirely from it," concluded the Monsieigneur.

But Sister St. Peter liked precision: "Monsieur, Monseigneur does not forbid me to ask from God the accomplishment of His designs?"

"No," replied the Abbé, "but without asking for the work."

"Monsieur, I beg you to assure Monseigneur of my obedience to his orders."

This word of heroic simplicity put the end to Mary of St. Peter's prophetic mission. She is so truly "she who has always obeyed". One day, it was not so long ago, Our Lord had said to her: "I desire that you may be truly small, but that you may have a big heart." If the humiliation and sadness of this last check were necessary to make her as small as possible, doubtless her heart also became larger. And it is in the secret place of this heart enlarged by the fresh wound that she will be able to gather up and keep the last communications which she is going to receive. It is this entire heart which she will be able to offer to God in order to save men.

With more intensity than ever, Our Lord urged her to the contemplation of His Holy Face. This was not forbidden to her and, ceaselessly she offered to the Father the Face of His Christ; the coin with the Prince's effigy which enables all to be acquired in the Kingdom. And Jesus replied: "Each time you offer my Face to my Father, my Mouth will ask for mercy."

Other times she contemplated the "Ecce Homo", and full of confidence, she prays: "May the devil's malice become powerless before the sceptre of JESUS CHRIST."

Then, finally, one day, she heard these words: "Your pilgrimage proceeds, the end of the combat approaches. Soon you will see my Face in heaven."

At these words, prostrate upon the earth, she said: "Lord, I only deserve hell."

But Our Lord reassured her: "I have applied to you the virtue of my Face in order to restore God's image in you. Those who on earth contemplate the wounds of my Face will also contemplate it shining with glory in heaven."

* * *

The last related communication is dated 12th April 1848, three months before her death. We transcribe it in entirety here, because it enables us to get a glimpse of what was for Mary of St. Peter the silence which preceded that of the tomb:

"My most Reverend and most honoured Mother, for some days I have found myself once more applied to the Most Holy

Infancy of the Incarnate Word. You know how my soul is dedicated to this mystery. Our Lord leads me from time to time to the contemplation of other mysteries of His Holy Life; but the stable of Bethlehem is my rallying point.

✓ "Our Lord made me understand, last Sunday, that many good souls think of the humiliations of His Passion, but few the self-abasement of His Holy Infancy. (He desires that I apply myself to it to combat the spirit of pride, ambition and independence through the humiliations, the poverty of His crib, and the captivity of His swaddling bands. Thus I believe that the Eternal will not find the Face of the little JESUS covered with tears because of our sins and forsaken in His crib, less pleasing than the Face of JESUS covered with blood and abandoned on the Cross.) Also I offer this divine Child to the eternal Father; I place Him between heaven and earth to appease His wrath. The Holy Spirit also urges me once more to contemplate this Divine Infant on His august Mother's breast. Yesterday, at the end of my prayer, the Most Blessed Virgin deigned to show herself to me, despite my unworthiness. She told me that she was the Queen of Carmel and that she would protect her houses in these days of calamity. One must have a great confidence in her and in her Divine Son, and work with zeal for the object of her Institute, that is to say to pray for the Church and do violence to heaven. This tender Mother prescribed me to recite the hymn "O gloriosa Virginum" as many times as the houses we have in France, to honour her Divine Maternity; and this tender Mother will water the flowers of Carmel in pouring down upon them the celestial dew of mercy; because she has promised this, she has also told me that the more God's army grows in number, the more Satan's army will be enfeebled.

✓ Here is nearly or thereabouts, my most Reverend Mother, what has happened in my soul. I have said the hymn indicated by the divine Mary 72 times, in honour of the years of her holy life, and I have prayed to St. Joseph, our good Father, and our Mother St. Teresa, to offer them to the Queen of

Carmel for the safety of our dear houses.

"O divine Mary, according to your promise, water the flowers of Carmel yourself, so that they may take strong root in this land of blessing, and may they never be torn up by the enemy of all good."

* * *

Like all Sister St. Peter's letters, this last letter gives us a picture of her soul; because with her there was a perfect agreement between the interior flame and real life. The Prioress Mother Mary of the Incarnation, brings a precious witness to bear upon this subject. "One can say," she wrote, "that without thinking of it, Sister Mary of St. Peter makes a complete and faithful picture in her writings of her virtues and the rare favours of which they were the end and the recompense." And, speaking more especially of this last letter, the Prioress goes on: "God permitted that the last writing of the burning heart of this fervent Carmelite was a proof of her love, her gratitude towards the Holy Order to which she belonged, and of which henceforth she will be one of its most beautiful ornaments." After having been immolated for the salvation of her country, it was fitting, as a daughter of Carmel, that in ending her mission here below, she should give a kiss of love and adieu, to Religion, her Mother, in the breast of which she had known how to draw immense treasures of graces and virtues for herself and so many others."

This image, which without willing it, Sister St. Peter had drawn in her soul, is indeed that of a "Daughter of the Church", militant and contemplative; the picture of the Carmelite according to the heart of St. Teresa, Mother Mary of the Incarnation, thoroughly understood.

But the picture that Sister St. Peter cannot draw, and of which her Prioress perhaps did not get a glimpse, is that which appears to us today, after a century; the picture of a humble little Sister carrying as a banner Christ's marred Face, and followed by the 700,000 Associates of the Archconfraternity, "Turba magna". Veronica by choice, ignored or known,

praising, loving, glorifying for ever (NOTE: *The golden arrow*), He whose Name is Holy, by the offering of the merits of the "Immaculate Lamb", who has borne the sins of the world, of which He is the Salvation.

* * *

On Good Friday of that year, 1848, Mary of St. Peter was vanquished by the sufferings of the malady which would carry her away. At three o'clock, adoring the dying Christ, she felt the weight of divine justice weighing down upon men. At once she offered herself as victim. Her offering was accepted, and she will die as a true "victim".

During the whole course of her convent life, she had borne perfectly all the austerities of the Rule, and again this year, she had made all her Lent until Holy Week. It was at that time that the first sufferings were felt.

Her malady was clearly characteristic pulmonary consumption, but other pains came to be added to it, an ulcerated throat, devouring fevers, an incapacity to take any nourishment, sleepless nights. As well, the impossibility of changing her position caused wounds to form. And in this evidently desperate state, prolonged contrary to all expectations, Sister St. Peter was soon only a skeleton. Her skin which adhered to her bones was dried up as if by fire; only her face remained fresh and rosy.

A letter addressed to M. Le Brument, in June 1848, describes her in these terms: "As to the body, Sister St. Peter is reduced almost to a state of complete nillity: she only weighs 30 lb. But the face is of an entirely heavenly beauty. It seems that the disease and the pains have only embellished the features of Our Lord's happy privileged one, features hitherto not remarkable. The doctor, a man of great faith, is in the greatest admiration of everything which concerns the saint, to whom he has been called to give his care during the last two months, a time when the illness took an unexpected grave turn. We are at a wonderful moment one must agree; man is going to be obliged to see his nothingness and throws himself humbly on to the

breast of the God of all mercy. What a beautiful spectacle for the Faith."

The relation of this last phase, also the details which follow, are borrowed from the circular letter written by the Prioress, Mother Mary of the Incarnation, she who had known Sister St. Peter so well, and as one knows, led her with prudence and firmness, could now speak freely, or almost, of the soul whose quality she knew. And in reading these lines one realizes the profound and maternal affection which had united her to her little portress.

However, death was slow in coming. Sister St. Peter awaited it. Some words, reported by the Prioress, suffice to mark the stages of this expectation:

"Pray therefore to Our Lord," someone said to her, "that He may soothe you a little, if He does not wish to cure you."

"No, with regard to suffering and sacrifices, I have never asked God for anything special; but as well, I have never refused Him anything."

Another day, she said: "My God, I think of God's judgments, and I weep for my sins."

Other times: "My hour is come. When, O my God, shall I see you face to face without veil?"

Someone asked her if something eased her pain. "No, by God's grace, because I suffer all that He wishes, and I do all that people wish."

"Then this divine Master taught me the science of the Crib and now, it is the science of the Cross."

On 16th June, a crisis of the malady warned the Community. Almost without strength and as if paralysed, she united herself to the prayers. But at the words: "Maria, Mater gratiae, Mater misericordiae", she extended her arms towards the sky, then stretched them as on a cross, saying: "Leave me this, it is my duty."

It was not yet death; this a Friday passed. On the following Sunday, the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, God communi-

cated Himself to her soul once more, and Sister St. Peter confided to her Prioress:

"My Mother, I shall remain upon earth a little longer, because my soul is not sufficiently purified; but during this time, I am going to suffer cruelly, because Our Lord has fastened me to the cross, and I shall stay here till my last sigh. Do not give me any more care or comfort; I must occupy myself only with suffering and I only wish to think of my eternity. I desire to remain alone with my God, because I can hardly speak any more; people think that I sleep, but no, I am solely occupied with Him. Soon I shall see His adorable Face, soon I shall sing His praises for all eternity. Oh, how I shall pray then for the Church, for France, for the Community, and for the Work of Reparation. My career is finished, as God has made me understand, because the Work of Reparation is created, and it is only on that account that He put me into the world. Now, I have nothing more to do only to suffer, one must enter into God's designs. Oh, how true it is that His justice has ways unknown to men in order to satisfy it.

And it is a new phase of suffering. She no longer desired that anyone should nurse her. "No, allow God to act." She suffered without complaints.

"My God, how I suffer, have pity on me, help me, do not abandon your little servant. I am your victim, you know well, Lord, but bear it in mind. Oh, how terrible are the rigours of divine justice. My God, how rigorous are your designs. If one knew what I suffer. Oh, my divine Spouse, how bitter you are to me, you who are so sweet."

She is the offered victim; and how must a victim die? "Immolated," she murmured on one of the last days of her life. But she has desired it so much. "I do not repent of it, my God; I desire all that you desire: as much as you desire it, and if it is necessary I consent to suffer until the end of the world."

And she suffered in the whole of her poor body, which is consuming itself. "It is a universal martyrdom; my bed is a purgatory which burns me; the fire burns me and each moment

appears to me like a century; I do not ask God that He shorten or soothe my sufferings, but when will the moment come when I shall be united to Him for ever? Ask Him for patience for me; I beg of you; I want nothing more than my Crucifix. I have my eyes upon Him without ceasing, because He helps me to suffer. My love is crucified, and I am crucified with Him."

On Friday 7th July the agony began, but the dying woman kept her consciousness until the last sigh. On the morning of the 8th, wanting to change her position during the Prioress' momentary absence, who had ordered them not to move her; as the Sisters wished to draw near to tend her, she stopped them. "No, obedience," she said.

"My Mother, when?" she asked the Prioress. "Soon, my child, in a few moments." She is happy, and remembering that Our Lord Himself had promised to restore God's image in her at the hour of her death, she found the strength to renew her baptismal vows: "I renounce Satan, and all his works and pomps; I wish to be with JESUS CHRIST for ever." Her body became icy, her lips were grey; but she still murmured these distinct words, her last: "JESUS, Mary, Joseph! Come, Lord JESUS. Sit Nomen Domini benedictum."

Then a loud cry, like JESUS on the Cross; and she sweetly expired. It was Saturday 8th July 1848, towards midday. Sister St. Peter had always asked the Virgin to present her to God at the hour of her death. She had also asked that she might not die at night, so that all the Sisters might be present, and not be alarmed. At her death she was 31 years, 9 months, and 4 days old, and in religion, 8 years and 8 months, less a few days.

* * *

Better than a long enumeration of qualities and virtues, the few documents which we are going to quote will say what was the perfection of Sister St. Peter's religious life.

The first document is a letter of February 1843 wherein the Sister, with that frankness and simplicity natural to her, reveals the transformation which has been worked in her, and

how the enthusiasms of her partisan spirit were elevated to the design of true Christian charity. Already she had understood that the "site of God" cannot be a "choice", because it is the Church, the mystical Body of Christ.

"I think," she writes, "that it would be of some use to know what my sentiments were on the subject of two families (royal), before my entry into religion; because since I have left the world, I see all men in God. The holy state which I have the happiness of embracing having made charity more perfect in my soul, is that which brings me to succour them with an equal affection in prayer, looking upon them all as my brothers, being the children of a same Father, in Our Lord JESUS CHRIST. But it was not this in my first youth. Born in a country where to be neutral in matters politic is a rare thing, finally belonging to a family extremely devoted to the elder branch, one cannot doubt that I was obliged to share their sentiments. Yes, I was likewise devoted to the Bourbons; but also, I say simply, I had no affection for the other family, not to say more. But, as I have said above, Our Lord, in enlightening my soul, has given me more perfect feelings. He who has given His Blood for the salvation of all men without any exception made me understand that a Carmelite, after His example, should immolate herself for the salvation of all with an equal charity.

The other two documents are a letter of Sister St. Peter, and a letter wherein the Mother Prioress speaks of her Sister portress.

On 2nd February 1847, she wrote to her Superior: "I have taken up once more the exercises of the Rule, as before being ill, but you will not be astonished of that which I tell you, when I have given you an account of what has passed in my soul on this subject. After I had asked you, my Reverend Mother, the grace of having a second portress to help us in our office, that we thought we could not longer fulfil alone, because of my health, which for some time I had felt greatly enfeebled, after the answer you gave me of not being able to satisfy me, telling me that it was laziness, and a little self-love, which had

caused me to make this demand of you, and that you commanded me to desire the re-establishment of my health, and to ask for it from Our Lord, so that after fifteen days I could take up the exercises of the Rule once more, my very Reverend Mother, I received this order with respect, but I confess my feebleness to you I was afflicted not to find in you the tenderness which is natural to you; and the demon began to tempt me. Happily I was able to tell all my sorrows to Our Lord, shedding tears, telling Him that this office of portress was a continual martyrdom for me, because it continually tears me away from His presence. After having told Our Lord, all which caused me pain in this occupation, I told Him: 'My Lord, however I only wish whatever will glorify you more and which will save more souls. You did not descend from the Cross, neither will I descend from it,' and I made obeisance to Him, asking for my cross.

"The following day, at Holy Communion, Our Lord said to me: 'My daughter, does not solitude bring you delights? The first years which you spent in religion, without these exterior occupations, were not all your days feast days?'

"Yes, Lord."

"'Well, my daughter, a religious should be a living crucifix. If you did not have all these troubles with what will you save the souls that I place in your hands?' As a proof that I wish you to carry this charge, and that it is I who have refused you a second portress, through the mouth of your Superior, I desire that you may be cured at once. Be consoled; for all these works, I will give you souls.'

"At once I heard a clang of the bell from the clock tower, like the signal of sacrifice, before my time of graces finished.

"Ah, my JESUS," I said, "I take up my little boat once more."

In another communication, Our Lord said to me: "I desire that you may honour my servitude, but to serve." Finally, Our Lord told me that, by a comparison, He was going to show me what I should do in discharging half of the work of our office, He told me in somewhat these words:

"In a time of want when bread is very dear, would not a father of a family merit reproaches on the part of his wife and children if, having a fine house, where he was able to work all day he wanted through laziness, to only work half the day and because of that conduct places himself in the position of not earning the bread necessary for the children's life? Well, my daughter, here is your portrait. You have children to nourish; I have already told you, have no doubt on that point and you must earn their bread; they have need of your whole day's work. Do not expose yourself therefore, through laziness, to hearing them make reproaches on Judgement Day."

Another day Our Lord gave me an instruction on the subject of our office, in just about these words:

"My daughter, you complain that your life cannot be solitary because of your occupations; but do you really know what a solitary soul is? It is a soul who is mistress of her passions. This a soul who continually immolates her own will by the sacrifice of obedience becomes truly a solitary soul who shares in some way in the solitude of God, in living in His Holy Will. And on the contrary, a soul is not solitary in the silence of retreat when the noise of her passions agitates her and when she rejoices in her own will. Now understand that one's own will is the nourishment of passions."

"Here, my Reverend Mother, are the instructions which Our Lord has had the goodness to give me. Now, I do not desire to have any will but His; I will be a portress my whole life, if it pleases God and my superiors."

* * *

(On her side, the Mother Prioress was writing about the Sister in a vivid way:

"This child in her candour, is really a masterpiece of grace, which is her unique incentive. She has a right judgement, a solid spirit naturally tending to good, an imagination easy to dominate, a character sweet, docile, and gay, a germ of virtue already very developed, an already eminent degree of perfection, acquired by an absolute fidelity. We admired her regular

conduct, which made her a model of exactitude, her spirit of simplicity, uprightness, and obedience, her sustained practice of charity. Add to these qualities her deference towards her Sisters, her mortification of the spirit and the senses. In a word, to distinguish all the religious virtues in her, we can assert that she did not commit any fault so to say, or even voluntary infidelity and how, despite the most severe and minute examen, I believe it would be almost impossible to have a well-founded reproach to make against her.

"After having informed her Superiors of the supernatural communications received from God, she kept them hidden in the depth of her soul, and her humility seemed to have lost them from sight in order to attach herself only to the duties of the solitary life, separated from the world, of a true Carmelite. Everything which this young religious did is imprinted so greatly with the spirit of God, that I believe it difficult to think that such an upright soul may be deceived, and I back up these words on this oracle: 'The obedient man will be victorious over his enemies.'

Let us add that the Community, which was ignorant of the extraordinary graces with which the Sister portress was favoured, none the less considered her as a saint. In this regard a valuable witness remains to us; that of Sister Aimée of JESUS, officer of Sister St. Peter. This latter worked at two offices, the one as the Head of the Holy Family, the other as the Holy Virgin; and she was obedient and submissive to them as the Child JESUS was to Joseph and Mary. Sister Aimée of JESUS gave witness that she had never seen her ignoring the Prioress' smallest recommendation. Without any attachment to her own point of view, she was always ready to give way. "How many times when she was not present, have we not said: 'My Sister St. Peter is a saint'? Above all it was her recollection which struck us; her presence alone would have recalled us to God if our spirit had been distracted. Her recollection on passing through the house was as great as when approaching Holy Communion. I have never see her raise her eyes when in

the refectory. I used to look at her with assurance because I was quite sure that she would not raise her eyes. For us, her conversation was like that of Our Lord for the disciples of Emmaus; our soul was all burning with love in her company. The mere sight of her when she remained before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, would have been capable of reviving the most feeble faith."

* * *

Many things will remain hidden in Sister Mary of St. Peter's life, her ascensions, the successive purifications which had led her to the appointed end. Doubtless it is by a design of Providence that she should not be known except in function of the message with which she had been charged. She knew it and even in her agony she affirmed: "It is only for that (the Work of Reparation) that God has placed me in the world." But for us, who meditate upon this nun's life, at a distance of more than a century, one very particular characterization cannot fail to strike us; the way in which Sister St. Peter, with more than half a century's anticipation, had really put into practice the doctrine formulated later by St. Thérèse of Lisieux. The contemporaries of Sister St. Peter were not able to give to this nuance of the spiritual life the importance it holds in our eyes. Without doubt, Sister St. Peter did not formulate any doctrine, such was not her mission. But everything that her holy little Sister of Lisieux will do, she had built on the entire edifice of her interior life on the humiliations and feebleness of little children's conditions. "I desire that you may be very small." These words addressed to Sister St. Peter could serve as epigraph for the doctrine of spiritual childhood.

The parallels between Thérèse of Lisieux and Mary of St. Peter are astonishing:

"O little child JESUS," she first asks, "imprint in me Thy graces and the childlike virtues so that on the day of my birth in heaven, the Angels and Saints recognize in Thy little spouse, Thérèse of the Child JESUS."

And Sister St. Peter: "Oh, how admirable and unknown a thing it is to find oneself as a little child in the union of JESUS on His Mother's breast." Stating precisely, she will say later: "What a treasure I have found, the Infant JESUS, if I can thus express myself, has made of the virtues of His Holy Infancy a bouquet with which he has adorned His Mother's breast; virtues of sweetness, humility, innocence, purity, simplicity."

Neither for the one nor the other, is there here a simple devotion to the Holy Infancy, but a life and a spirit, mystic participation in the Infancy of JESUS. "This divine Saviour made me understand that He wished to adorn me with the virtues of His Holy Infancy before I appear at God's tribunal, He wishes me to become as a little child so that I might enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." "The good God," Sister St. Peter said again, "has done me the grace of reducing my soul to the state of a little child"; and "God always makes use of that which is most feeble so that His mercy may shine forth the more." Her weakness was ever her strength, she knew it because "The demon has no power against a little child." But she knew also that spiritual childhood was necessary to respond fully to the demands of her mission. Had not Our Lord Himself said: "Act with a spirit of simplicity because if you want to reason too much, you will not be a suitable instrument in my Hands."

"My Mother," she habitually wrote in her notes, "I will speak to you with the simplicity of a little child." And the Prioress used to say of her: "She is like a little child in our hands."

All this strikes such a Térésian note that it does not appear necessary to insist upon it. But these virtues of infancy: humility, abandon, simplicity, are not restricted to the concord between Sister St. Peter's life and the true doctrine of Thérèse of Lisieux, one knows well that both the one and the other have desired to conquer souls above all things; and while making use of the feebleness and helplessness of children, they have struggled:

"I desire to love Thee as a little child; I desire to struggle like a valiant warrior," sings St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus. And Our Lord addressed this recommendation to Sister St. Peter: "Go towards them with the simplicity of a child, and the courage of a valiant soldier."

What other parallels to make, to the choice of arms for the combat, to the conquest of souls, the salvation of France, and of the world.

But does it not suffice to suggest them ?

CHAPTER III

THE ARCHCONFRATERNITY

"What do you want, my child, I can do nothing about it; you must bring forth this work in sorrow."

This phrase addressed to Sister St. Peter by her Prioress, states the situation very exactly. "It is necessary." The sorrows of bringing to birth works of this quality, are a guarantee of authenticity and a gage of fecundity.

But there is something more. In this phrase, a resonance of sympathy and tenderness reflects the intimate sentiment of all those, who were, by a providential necessity, the instruments of opposition. This systematic opposition, which made Sister St. Peter suffer so much, and which often irritated those who like M. Dupont, would have desired to instantly propagate the message, were no doubt necessary as much to purify the messenger's soul, as to clarify the message itself and to give to its application the definite form which alone is suitable to it.

The necessity of this opposition has been able to escape the notice of certain of the Sisters' contemporaries. Today it appears to us with evidence; and it explained for us the contradiction which existed between the inmost feeling, the personal conviction of those who opposed and their outward bearings. "It was necessary."

If the first extraordinary communications of Sister St. Peter were able to put Mother Mary of the Incarnation's prudence on guard, it is not a matter of any doubt that her inward conviction was formed very quickly. She knew too well, she who confided her secret to her with a child's simplicity and a perfect humility. Nevertheless, she never departed from her method of non-acquiescence. And Sister St. Peter's directors, whilst

reassuring her as to the supernatural purity of her state of soul, they also remained faithful to the Mother Prioress' method.

As the Chief Superior, the Archbishop, whose timidity and hesitations are regretted by some, it is equally without doubt, that without knowing it, he was obeying a providential law. His prudence, perhaps excessive, the fear which a troubled political situation inspired in him, and the hesitations which resulted from the fear, all that was very necessary. We will not be astonished by the flagrant contradictions between his outward conduct, made of half approvals, small permissions, then being suddenly withdrawn, and the personal feeling which caused him to give Sister St. Peter marks of affectionate approbation.

"My child," he had said to her, "that which you experience has not the character of illusions; I recognize, on the contrary, God's stamp." Holding regularly to the course of communications, Mgr Morlot had never modified this opinion, and he even wished, some days before Sister St. Peter's death, to come to her bedside to give her his blessing.

But none the less he did not establish the Work of Reparation at Tours, and we already know, through the medium of his secretary, that he had given the order to the Sister not to occupy herself with thinking about it.

All the obstacles which kept back the establishment of the Work have lost for us the significance they had one day, and it will suffice to relate them briefly. But would it not be fitting, before even sketching in large strokes the evolution of the Work of Reparation, to point out the singular concordance of dates and events which marked its beginnings? A general mass of facts, ignored by Sister St. Peter and the Carmel of Tours at the time of the first communications, seems in some way to confirm their supernatural authenticity.

The first precise communication received by Sister St. Peter on the subject of the Reparation dates from 26th August 1843. On the day before, the feast of St. Louis, a quarantine of prayers

had finished in Tours. This had been began thanks to M. Dupont's intervention, on 16th July, Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The "Holy Man of Tours", had taken to all the town's religious houses, a prayer to the glory of the Holy Name of God, in order to obtain through the intercession of the holy king of France, that the enemies of the divine Name, might disappear, and be seen to disappear. For a reason which one does not know, only the Carmelites had not received this prayer and they knew nothing of this quarantine. This as one has said, might perhaps be considered as a prelude to the Work.

But do not let us forget a prelude of whose existence Sister St. Peter and the Carmel were ignorant.

On the other hand, on 31st July, of that same year, a religious, Mother Adelaide, who had been favoured with supernatural communications, died in the Poitiers Carmel. The bishop of Lieon, Mgr Soyer, at the time when he was still vicar-general at Poitiers, inspired by this Carmelite's communications, had already published in 1819 a warning to the French people for a Reparation inspired to appease God's wrath. This warning was practically unknown at the Tours Carmel in 1843; but the leaflet on which it was printed, hidden, God knows for how long, between the pages of a seldom read book, fell one day at Mary of the Incarnations' feet at the moment when Sister St. Peter was speaking to her about the Work of Reparation. Being informed by the Bishop of Lieon, the Mother Prioress learnt, not without emotion, that twenty-six days after the death of the Poitiers Carmelite, another Carmelite at Tours, seemed to have been charged with an identical Work of Reparation.

Finally, when the first communications of 26th August occurred, neither Sister St. Peter, nor her Prioress, knew that by a Brief dated 8th August, Pope Gregory XVI had sanctioned the erection of Confraternities, under the patronage of St. Louis, King of France, whose object was the reparation of blasphemies. Nevertheless, it is right to notice that the Roman Confraternity, contrary to that which Our Lord was asking of

Sister St. Peter, was only concerned with blasphemy, without speaking of the profanation of Sunday.

These different happenings, grouped together here, were not known to Sister St. Peter till later and then only by degrees. They had no influence either on the Sister's conduct, nor on that of Superiors who put an obstacle to the realization of the Work.

* * *

The evolution of the Work of Reparation, from the first communications of Sister St. Peter, until the canonical erection of the Archconfraternity can be summed up fairly briefly. However, it was very slow, because it covered a space of time stretching from 1843 to 1885 date when a Brief of Pope Leo XIII established as an Archconfraternity the confraternity of the Holy Face established in Tours.

The prayers of the Reparation as they had been inspired in Sister St. Peter, were first of all recited by the Community, who did not know who was their author. After a certain time, Mgr Morlot readily agreed to approve them, granting permission to print them.

Let us pass over the different obstacles which delayed the Work. During three years, Sister St. Peter was being pressed in her inner soul, was begging that it might be realized. Then it was ended by drawing up a leaflet summing up the communications, but always without making known the name of who had been favoured with them. This was "Summary of facts concerning the establishment of the Work of the Reparation of Blasphemies."

The text submitted to the Archbishop was approved by him in these words: "... not only do I not disapprove, but I fully agree with this thought; I believe that it is good, necessary and even urgent to give the sequel which you indicate in these inspirations. The case in joining to reparations concerning blasphemy, those which are relative to the profanations of holy days, completely satisfies me."

The leaflet was autographed with fifty copies and sent with discretion. Contrary to all expectation, the formulas of the prayers and The Summary had a certain fame and Mgr Morlot considered that they were going too far. However, the seed was sown. Two works of Reparation had to come from it, that of Langres and that of Mlle Debouché.

It is The Summary, which Mgr Paisus, Bishop of Langres, secured through a series of fairly unforeseen windings, determined him to establish a confraternity of reparation in a Church at St. Dizier. The order of Mgr Paisus was on 28th June 1847, and on 30th July, of that same year a Papal Brief raised the Association of Saint Dizier with the title of Arch-confraternity. Pius IX then reigning, had said about this matter: "The Reparation is a Work destined to save society." And he was inscribed at the head of the register of Associates.

All this happened a year before Sister St. Peter's death and although the litanies of the Holy Face and the other prayers composed by her were adopted by the association, they usually ignored the part which she had had in the Work.

The other realization was that of Mlle Dubouché, which also found its origin in The Summary of facts. Mlle Dubouché, who was an artist and painted portraits, received The Summary and some prayers through Mother Isabelle of St. Paul, of the Carmelites of the rue d'Enfer, in Paris. Deeply moved, she had painted a Face of Christ, which she had brought to Tours in order to show it to the Carmelites. It is with relation to this picture that Sister St. Peter affirmed that she had never had the perceptible vision of the Holy Face (NOTE: M. Dupont caused copies of this picture to be made. One of them was given to the Tours Carmel, where it still exists.)

On her return to Paris, Mlle Dubouché founded the Congregation of Reparation, with perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. In religion she bore the name of Sister Mary-Thérèse. She had left the world on 6th August 1848, about a month after Sister St. Peter's death and she never ceased to affirm that this nun had been the origin of the Work which she

from
Basil of
Verona

had founded. (NOTE: *Letters of Reverend Mother Isabel of St. Paul, of the Tours Carmel.*)

Many names are mingled in these two realizations: those of Mgr de Langres; of the man from Rouen, Le Brument-Jeulin (whom Sister St. Peter had called "the messenger of the Child JESUS" and, who on his side considered her as his godmother); of Father Vieillecases and the Abbé Favrel; of Herman Cohen, converted from Judaism, and who later became Father Augustin of the Blessed Sacrament of the Discalced Carmelites, founder of the Holy Desert of Tarasteix; of the Reverend Mother Geneviève of St. Thérèse, fervent zelotrix of the Work in the whole diocese of Lisieux, and the four foundresses of the Work of the Propagation of the Faith. One regrets having to limit the list of names. However, there is one, who must certainly be remembered, that of M. Dupont, "The Holy Man of Tours".

This person is too well known for it to be necessary to stop a long time upon him. But it is important to recall the relations which M. Dupont held with the Tours Carmel. He was one of the first to know what was taking place and he believed immediately in the supernatural communications of Sister St. Peter. Having helped her as he was able for the establishment of the Reparation, it was thanks to him that the Work was proceeded with after the Nun's death and finished by taking the form it had to take according to the divine communications (then under the seals).

In 1851, M. Dupont had received from the Prioress of Carmel, who held them from the Benedictines of Arras, two facsimile copies of the picture of the "Veil of Veronica", venerated at Rome. The "Holy Man" placed one of these reproductions in his drawing room and soon he avowed that extraordinary favours were granted in that place. A real devotion was born which did not cease to grow and spread.

When M. Dupont died, in 1876, his house was already considered as a kind of place of pilgrimage. Therefore M. Colet, then Archbishop of Tours, willingly yielded to the suggestions

of those who wished to convert the Holy Man's drawing room into an oratory.

But Mgr Colet ignored nothing about the distant origins of this devotion. Thus, to bless "The Oratory of the Holy Face" he chose Sister St. Peter's feast day, 29th June 1876. His intention was clearly expressed in the discourse he preached on this occasion. St. Peter was the patron of her who had inspired the Work of Reparation, and "the touching way in which she accomplished it".

The Archbishop also desired to establish in this place under the title of "Priests of the Holy Face", a community of priests with the obligation of serving the Oratory. Then in 1885, a Confraternity of the Holy Face was established, as one had not yet been erected – and which finally fulfilled that which Sister St. Peter had asked for so often. The same year the Confraternity was erected to the dignit of an Archconfraternity by a Brief of Leo XIII, the date being 1st October. "Pro Gallio et Ubique." "For France and the whole Universe."

* * *

Canon Janvier, biographer of Sister St. Peter and of M. Dupont, and first director of the Work of the Holy Face, said very truly that "the Confraternity of Reparation was born of itself, by God's Will alone and without human calculation". In fact, when Sister St. Peter died, the Work did not exist as she had advocated it. The realization of St. Dizier was a reparation for blasphemies and the transgression of Sunday rest, without doubt, but it did not treat of a reparation by the virtue of the Holy Face. At least, the work was not officially such. Thus that which one can consider today as the central theme of Sister St. Peter's message, had disappeared. The Nun's life was ended by a half-check. Furthermore, after her death, her writings, examined by order of Mgr Morlot, without being condemned, nevertheless were put in secrecy for a long time. On 5th August 1850, the Archbishop had decided that "these writings will be kept in the monastery's archives, forbidding them to be communicated to anyone, whoever he might be,

outside as well as in the convent." This prohibition which was not lifted until 1875 by Mgr Colet reduced Sister St. Peter to silence – even after death. And it is not perhaps providential that, more than a quarter of a century after her decease, her work might be brought to fruition by the help of circumstances which no one would have dreamt of making use for this end? In the end, the Archconfraternity of Reparation through the Holy Face rapidly took a considerable extension and it does not cease to spread. If as Pius IX said, the Reparation is called upon to save society, that will be, we believe in understanding it and living it in the light of Sister St. Peter's message.

* * *

That is what St. Theresa of the Child JESUS and the Holy Face had already done. The devotion to the Holy Face, as it had been advocated by Sister St. Peter and after her, by M. Dupont, was a tradition in the Martin and Guérine families.

(NOTE: In the registers of the Oratory of the Holy Face, one finds, in the year 1885, this suggestive list. Year 1885 (having been admitted to the confraternity of Reparation at Tours), 19th March: N.5340 M. Isadore Guérin; N.5341 Mme Celine Guérin; N.5342 Mlle Jeanne Guérin; N.5354 Mlle Marie Guérin. 26th April: N.7378 M. Louis Martin; N.7379 Mlle Marie Martin; N.7380 Mlle Leonie Martin; N.7381 Mlle Celine Martin; N.7382 Mlle Theresa Martin).

They knew of the "Life of M. Dupont and that of Sister St. Peter", whose prayers to the Holy Face had been copied by M. Martin. At Carmel, Theresa found this same devotion again, because the foundress, Mother Genevieve of St. Theresa had known of Sister St. Peter's communications during the latter's lifetime and was convinced of their supernatural character. She had the pictures reproducing the "Veil of Veronica" sent to Tours and the devotion was soon established in great honour in the monastery.

Sister Theresa of the Child JESUS knew of Mary St. Peter's writings, whose thoughts she understood so well that already in 1889, during novitiate, she was writing to her Sister Celine, a

letter which is a veritable commentary on "I seek for Veronica's", of the Tours Carmelite.

Theresa who, during her postulancy, had added the name of the Holy Face to hers, was attached to Sister St. Peter's memory. When in her turn, she became Novice Mistress she will speak to them about Mary of St. Peter.

(NOTE: *St. Theresa of the Holy Child JESUS taught them to recite each day, as she did herself, these two aspirations. At the elevation of the Host, Most Holy Father, look upon the Face of your JESUS and make as many elect as there are sinners (Leaflets of Reparation). At the elevation of the chalice, "O Divine Blood of JESUS, water our earth, and cause the elect to spring up (Sister Mary of St. Peter..)*

One of these novices has testified that she invoked her with confidence, carrying upon her a relic of her hair and in her New Testament, upon her heart, her photo stuck on a bookmark, at the bottom of which was written: "May I expire with a burning thirst to see the Face of my God". In the infirmary of Carmel, the picture of the Holy Face was hung upon the curtains of her bed, and shortly before her death, she will say: "Oh, how that Holy Face has blessed me during my life (The "Veil of Veronica" of Tours). As for the way of spiritual childhood, like the zeal for the salvation of souls, one finds an astonishing agreement of thought and love in the devotion to the Holy Face in both St. Theresa of Lisieux and Sister St. Peter. One cannot doubt that both the one and the other lived and died in the light of this contemplation.

NOTE: *In 1949, in the Review of the Precious Blood, Dom Gaspar Lefebvre, O.S.B., made a beautiful study on the relationship of devotion existing between Sister Mary of St. Peter and St. Theresa of the Infant JESUS. He recalls that the Mistress of Novices and Sister Theresa of Augustin, the Saint's companion in the novitiate, delighted specially in the writings of the Carmelite of Tours concerning the littleness of JESUS and the Maternity of Mary. Encouraged by her Mistress, Sister Mary of the Angels,*

St. Theresa of the Child JESUS composed her first poem, "The divine dew on the virginal milk" echo of Sister St. Peter's thought:

My sweet JESUS, on Thy Mother's breast,
Thou appearest to me all shining with love.

Thy dear Mother's arms so pure
Form for Thee, cradle, royal throne,
Thy sweet Sun is Mary's breast
And Thy dew the virginal milk.

Soon for me Thou wilt quit the earth.
Already Love urges thee to suffer,
But on the Cross, I recognize the pearls of Mary,
Thy divine Blood is the virginal milk.

In 1895, in her poem, "Dost Thou remember", the saint will say:

Dost Thou remember that Mary's arms
Thou wilt prefer to a royal Throne,
Little Infant, to sustain Thy life,
Thou hadst nothing but the virginal milk,
To this feast which Thy Mother gives Thee,
Oh deign to invite me, JESUS, my little brother.

It is again for her companion in the novitiate that St. Theresa of the Child JESUS begged from Celine a first sketch of the picture of the Virgin-Mother, representing the suckling of JESUS. She loved this picture, having it always near her, during her last illness, she used to often caress the head of Little JESUS.

Chapter IV

TODAY AND YESTERDAY

One knows that the Gospel is sufficient, that the message of Jesus includes the law and the Prophets, that it enlightens them and brings them to perfection. The era of prophecy properly speaking, is sealed, two thousand years ago. Since Christ, no one will announce to the world a further truth which is not already contained in the Word which He has given us, through His Word and by, His Person; that truth of which He has been, and will be, the unique and perfect incarnation.

Mary of St. Peter said nothing new. In the divine counsel, the subject of her "revelation" had existed from all eternity, and further still, it had already been revealed in time by the Servant of Jehovah, outraged, disfigured, presented to the crowd as an object of derision, led to execution and sacrificed for the salvation of all.

But these things, these realities, which we know perhaps too well, and which have become for us as if they did not exist, that is to say that they leave us indifferent – these truths – it is sometimes and often necessary that someone should remind us about them, that someone should represent them to us with all the disturbing force of a mysterious novelty. Christians by habit, we have so much need of being stirred up.

There is no other reason for the prophecies, the visions, the revelations, after Christ. As someone has said (NOTE: *Mgr Journet* in "Nova et Vetera", April-June 1952), "The prophetic light of Christ is shown in His Body, which is the Church. It flows forth in two ways, the essential and continuous that is the magisterial and jurisdictional prophecy; the other discontinuous and occasional; that is private prophecy."

If the magisterial prophecy prolongs in some way Christ's teaching in His Church, it is normally used to maintain the faithful in the line of the Gospel, accidental prophecy is given occasionally to certain people for reasons determined by circumstances. More than the first, occasional prophecy approaches that of the prophets of the Ancient Law, whose message was to recall people to God and to God's behest.

But, against ancient prophets who sometimes announced absolutely new truths, unknown even to God's people the prophets of the new times knew nothing "to reveal" in the strict sense, because all truth is contained in the Truth announced by JESUS. It remained to them to cause the mysterious presence and their existential value of these supernatural realities to be felt. Their role above all is to remind us of God's behest, in pulling us out of our stupid repose. Because nothing is more stupid than a Christianity in the comfort and security of itself. To recall God's people to God's behest, is simply to make it tremble before the demands of that order, brusquely called up before its eyes.

Mary of St. Peter, that illiterate and common little Bretonne, has without doubt taught us nothing. But through the Truth which she has seen, by the sincere manner in which she transmitted it, she has placed us before a reality which was no longer a reality for her era and is no more so for ours. She has seen and condensed in a picture, full of sorrow and hope, the mysterious concordance between the visage of Christ and the divinity of God, between the disfigured Face of JESUS, and the image of God, disfigured or destroyed in men's souls. That is the whole end and actuality of her message.

* * *

As in all prophetic messages, there is however in that of Sister St. Peter, something of the temporal and eternal. She addressed herself to her times, to her environment; that which she announced or recalled to the world was conditioned in a certain manner by her epoch and by the France of the nineteenth century. One must remember this constantly to under-

stand her way of acting and speaking, above all to understand the reactions of her Superiors.

The times of Sister St. Peter immerse us once more in rationalism, and Christians themselves, Catholics, were tainted with a more or less shameful kind of demi rationalism. The best, those who were less affected, were afraid, they feared to affirm (inopportunately they considered) their faith in supernatural mystery. The "pseudo" dogmas of the epoch was that of positive science and in its limitless progress. Coming at this time, a witness like that of Sister St. Peter inevitably muddled the complicated plans of diplomatic minds.

It goes without saying, that the precise interpretations which Sister St. Peter and her Superiors were able to give to certain terms of the message, remain in great part of the work of natural reason. The prophet transmits a message which he does not necessarily understand himself, and if he makes a mistake in the particular applications which he makes of it, that diminishes nothing of the veracity of the message. Living in a century when the spirit of faith hardly affirmed itself in broad daylight, when the bases of society were trembling, when vague rumours were announcing imminent catastrophies to people, how could Sister St. Peter and those who knew her secret, how could they avoid applying to certain contemporary events to certain people, to certain parties the terms of the warnings contained in the message ? Doubtless, like everyone else, Sister St. Peter had her political opinions. Legitimist by birth, at a moment when even the liberal monarchy was on the point of being overwhelmed, one cannot doubt that the little Bretonne, invited interiorly to pray for the salvation of France, may have formed precise pictures in her mind which perhaps do not pertain to pure revelation. However, it is shown that Sister St. Peter had arrived, in the course of her religious life, had passed beyond this kind of picture and that her political preference had as it were dissolved in the fire of a wholly supernatural charity wherein all souls had become equal, loved with the same love. Entirely legitimist as she might be by birth. She prayed,

and with what fervour – for the Duke of Orleans, for the King Louis Philippe, for all that younger branch for which she never felt formerly “any affection” to say no more (*letter quoted above, page 178*). “I am strongly devoted to the salvation of our Princes,” she wrote in 1843, “but I am not speaking of a human principle of politics; because it would be very wrong if a Carmelite, dead to the world, occupied herself with government affairs in this way and by her own impulse (Saint Theresa) also prayed for Princes, and urged this important duty upon her daughters. It is therefore in order to obey Our Lord, who has so often pressed me to pray for our Princes and to imitate our Holy Mother that I shall continue to perform such a just duty.”

As to Sister St. Peter's Superiors, as to her Archbishop above all, forced by his very situation to take civil power into account, how would they not have had the fear of endangering a laboriously maintained state of things by dint of human actions? In giving too great publicity to this message of warning, would they not have had the look of brandishing it against their political adversaries?

To reveal the message in the light of the history of this epoch, one understands perfectly that the political events, the formation of numerous parties, the social troubles, then finally the revolution of 1848, may have appeared to those who knew “the communications”, as the realization of the different warning they contain.

For us, the question no longer presents itself in the same manner. At any rate, if the political and social upheavals of the middle of the nineteenth century had been foreseen by Sister St. Peter and if they constituted the punishment announced by divine justice, they do not in the least belong to the past; and we have to ask ourselves if the warnings of the message have been exhausted by these punishments.

How to resolve in a certain manner this delicate question of the warnings which often occupy prophetic communications, without even constituting their essential elements? Too many things escape us, which we cannot know. Already under the

ancient law, prophecies were often conditional. "If Niveveh does not do penance." The prophetic message of Sister St. Peter is of the same nature. If the world does not cease to outrage the divine majesty. But up to what point have souls of good will paid for the others ? Up till what degree has the Face of Jesus, outraged by some, been venerated by others ?

Would one not be permitted to suppose that the warnings of upheavals and catastrophes, applied by her friends, Sister St. Peter herself, and her Superiors to contemporary events, have not been exhausted by these historical facts, but that they still remain entire for us ? If the prophetic warning aims at a fact determined in time, it also expresses a measure ; and it is in that we believe its most general sense. God thus reveals the punishment deserved by such and such a kind of sin ; He unveils the rules of His justice in a certain way. All that remains perfectly true and of present interest for us.

* * *

Another point could astonish us today ; the insistence with which Sister St. Peter, under divine inspirations, asked for the canonical establishment of a work. Would it have sufficed therefore, in order to counter-balance the direct outrage committed against God's very divinity, to erect a confraternity, to assemble a certain number of adherents, to recite some fixed vocal prayers ? One would have difficulties in believing it. The gravity of evil, in Sister St. Peter's time, as in all times, was that it was widespread. In the measure than an individual sin becomes more and more collective, so much the more does its danger and power augment, because it creates an evil atmosphere which threatens to distort the mind, and that it is certainly more difficult to reform a general way of thinking and living -- the customs of a community -- than to lead one wandering soul to repentance.

But this explains the action undertaken by Sister St. Peter under the guidance of the Holy Spirit -- without doubt a material remedy was not sufficient. To take its prescriptions literally, the Work of Reparation is inadequate. As there was

question of fighting against a spirit or habit of thought, it was necessary to cause another spirit to be born or re-born. And the spirit of the Work of Reparation, is in the integrity of Sister St. Peter's communications and in her life which one finds therein. However, in the sequence of fulfilments, and taking into account the situation of France and of the world at the time of the communications, the first ends to reach were the material erection of the Confraternity and its diffusion, as wide as possible. First of all it was necessary to create the frame, the strength where the spirit of reparation could be lived and be embodied. If it was absolutely necessary to reply to the shameful publicity of the outrages through the publicity of reparations, there was no other way than this official organization. Doubtless, at that time one could not hope for a massive change, and believe that the Work, in expanding itself, could preserve amongst all its adherents the profound spirituality of her who had asked for it. And would it not be to preserve Sister St. Peter's writings in all their force of novelty that they were put in secrecy for so many years, and that even her person was so little known ?

That which was attained in Sister St. Peter's time, and during the years which followed her death was magnificent; because whilst the Archconfraternity was spreading on the surface, some isolated souls were steeping themselves in the spirit of the communications and living the reparation in profundity and depth. It is sufficient to think of the action of the "Holy Man of Tours", to the foundation of Mlle Dubouché, and the life of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus.

If one considers these events simply from the point of view of history, one must conclude that the life and action of Sister St. Peter belongs exclusively to the past. For the objects which one knows, Our Lord asked from the nun of Carmel the erection of a reparatory association. The Archconfraternity ended by being established in the desired forms and conformable to the communications. Is this not the end of the message and the completion of its justification ?

But God's word overflows the historical settings. If they relate to certain immediate applications in time and space, the only ones which can be valued by historical study, they always necessarily contain an eternal truth. It is this which Sister St. Peter calls "the essence and foundations of things". Because it is eternal, the essence of the message remains true for us at the present time. But to find it again, it is necessary to return to Sister St. Peter's spirit, and of those, who, after her example, were true to the Reparation in spirit and in truth.

That is to say that the Work asked for by Mary of St. Peter, if it was necessary to adapt it to the needs of the present time, had to extend more in profundity than on the surface. The appearance of the world has changed a great deal during a century. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, it was more difficult to draw crowds into manifesting publicly their religious sentiments and their belief in the supernatural, than to find isolated souls, although numerous, to live their Christian faith individually but in perfect logic, today it appears that the situation may be reversed, the public homage of reparation would be more easy to obtain from our contemporary masses, used to large gatherings, than it would have been a hundred years ago. Conversely, it is doubtful whether one would find souls ready to live in the secret idea of the Reparation, with the intensity of interior life of a Sister St. Peter, a M. Dupont, a Mademoiselle Dubouché, of a little Theresa.

Let us add that our age does not know any more the instinctive fear of the supernatural nor the mistrust of its extraordinary manifestations, a Sister St. Peter's era did. Practical science has not succeeded in fulfilling all the hopes of the human soul; and even those who have not got the faith today aspire to communicate with those unascertained powers which could be on the other side of matter, and which positive science cannot reach. That is why the oppositions which are made to Sister St. Peter's communications, the discussions, the hesitations, are no longer in the style of modern ways of thinking. That, above all, in the Work of Reparation, belongs to a past

which seems henceforth to be completed.

The attitude of today's world before the supernatural in general allows one to overlook many difficulties which were real then. Thus it has become easier for us to remember from the Message, only that, "foundation of things" which alone remains and alone matters.

* * *

But this very foundation itself, could it not have however lost its object and its justification? The multiplied blasphemies, the transgressions of the Sunday repose, do they still threaten, as in Sister St. Peter's time, to upset the balance between good and evil in the providential plan?

We consider that to the blasphemies and to the multiplied individual transgressions there has succeeded a kind of collective sin, much more dangerous than the other because it is less apparent, and because, therefore, it provokes hardly an reaction. To the hostility and revolt of some, even a great number, a state of mind has succeeded, an atmosphere which one breathes without knowing it, and today's Christians, poisoned unaware, have a tendency to minimize the gravity of the outrages against God's very divinity, and no longer to notice their presence in the world. Fascinated no doubt by the more and more audacious freedom of habits and morals, do they not forget too much that the real origin of this laxity is to be found in a certain refusal, or at least a certain forgetting, of God's rights? The three first Commandments will always remain the first, as also the three first demands of the Father will remain the most important. And there will never be Christian life – not only in theory but in act – a life involving not knowledge and science alone, but above all a right will – without an initial active and effective avowal of God's Majesty, of His Universal Causality, of the Holiness of His Name.

Modern Society, the States, who create silence around the Name of God, and desire to systematically ignore it, are a kind of blasphemy and practical transgression, and Christians forced to live in the framework of these societies of which they also

are members, do not perceive this outrage any more, perhaps hidden but permanent, committed against the Divinity and His rights. Living in a civil community, which has made it a constitutional principle to remain indifferent to God's rights, how had Christians escaped the contagion? Without doubt only a little education is necessary to stop us from uttering blasphemies, but does the blasphemy of those who refuse to inscribe God's Name at the head of their official documents hurt us like a slap on the Face of Jesus? And again no doubt it suffices to assist at Sunday Mass to evade the transgression of the Law. But the spirit of this commandment, which exacts the "sanctification of Sunday", is it to content oneself with a material gesture, as short as possible, and from which we too easily try to dispense ourselves.

The situation of Christians in modern societies perhaps induces them to a certain conformity. But if one sincerely desires a Christian redress in the world and in life, it will be necessary to begin by not minimizing God's rights. Christian life as Christ has showed it to us, is an ardent life, and burning with an interior flame. Then alone can one understand that "God is never sufficiently served". And it would be necessary to oppose without ceasing, to the benefit of observing Christians who say and think that "if people like us are not going to heaven, no one will go there", the almost tragic saying of Sister St. Peter on the even of her death: "I have only deserved hell".

On the contrary we consider that far from having fallen into the past of history, the object of Sister St. Peter's message has become more of present interest than ever – not because it teaches us something new, but because it has given to a truth the free life of an existing reality. I would add willingly, because, under the self-same Spirit's inspiration, Sister St. Peter has known how to abridge this truth of the outrage and Reparation, this providential balance between Justice and Mercy, in a concrete picture, more true and more authentic than no matter what picture; that of the voluntary humilia-

tions of the Incarnate Word, where, as she said "the Infant JESUS' little Face in tears and the bloodstained Visage of Christ".

Thus as far as the style or the method of these divine communications, one finds again a particular harmony to the time in which we are living and to the general attitude of minds. No abstraction would have been able any more to satisfy our sense of living reality; and more life – that hurried succession of more and more brief, strong, short pictures – averts us from beliefs where only intelligence finds itself implicated. If our Faith wishes to be real, we must believe according to the manner of children, with all the powers and all the faculties of our being, and not only by an operation of reason. But children only believe this in objects incarnated in pictures.

It is astonishing moreover to see how, by her life and by the general effect of her "communications", Sister St. Peter seems to have anticipated the evolution of piety as it has manifested itself in the course of the last hundred years, from her death until our days. The little way of childhood, shown by St. Theresa of Lisieux, is not only found practically in origin in Sister St. Peter's communications, but it was truly lived by her in perfection, long before the letter. And was she not a singer of mercy? For the remainder, the role of the Blessed Virgin as mediatrix appears from the earliest communications on the subject of Reparation, and one knows that they were concluded in a sequence of lofty marial contemplations which place the accent on the universal Mediation of Mary, Mother of God. The active intervention of the Blessed Virgin (this idea which is quite of our times) her co-operation in Christ's redeeming work, her participation in the distribution of graces since Calvary until the end of time, are very clearly stated by Sister St. Peter. We know also that, since her Message, the apparitions of the Virgin have succeeded and they confirm singularly the affirmations of the Carmelite of Tours. It is not until the recent proclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption that a singular value of existing reality was given to Sister St. Peter's

pictures; because this proclamation has placed Mary's transfigured body in the same light of certainty with which we see the Face of Christ and His glorified Body.

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Had not the time come to read the Message of the Reparation and to live it as is right? It is not without a reason that since its origin, the Work of Reparation was placed as much in Italy as in France, under the patronage of St. Louis, whose sanctity was entirely that of a real spirit of faith in all simplicity and uprightness, and blossoming in an incomparable zeal for the glory of the Name of God.

But to read the Message in all simplicity, and to live it, in perfect straightness of heart and mind, one must possess that spirit of childhood of which the "Saint of Modern Times" has shown us the value and the fitness. Moreover, it will be easier for us than for Sister St. Peter's contemporaries, even those of St. Theresa of Jesus and to the Christians of the nineteenth century in general, to keep ourselves on the foundation of things, to those fundamental truths of the Message which are above time. It is also perfectly evident that the pictures suggested by Sister St. Peter, like that of Veronica – have no other end than to cut short a controversial historical question, but to make well understood by a familiar representation of traditional Catholic piety, the necessity of reparation springing in some manner from the heart – in a great outburst of tenderness in Sister St. Peter's thought, is not the "veil of Veronica" before all, the picture of a soul drawn towards the Sorrowful Face of Christ and sufficiently purified so that He may be to impress His Divine resemblance upon it.

It is quite certain, that in demanding on God's side, in reparation to the outrages committed against the Divinity itself, Sister St. Peter never intended to separate the Face of Christ from the Humanity of the Word. The cult of the Holy Face, is for her only a means to unite ourselves to it, in mitigating them, to the "humiliations of the Incarnate Word", and to

render thus a perfect praise to the offended Father, in union with JESUS suffering.

Such is indeed, we believe that foundation of things, that "essential", that Sister St. Peter asked her Prioress to remember solely in her letters.

What need is there of too learned discussions? Is not the hour too grave? To the crowds which are more and more fixing themselves in a practical atheism for the matter of that very elementary and without subtleties of an intellectual order. One must show the Faith as of one piece, is also without complications and subtleties. The fundamental truths of our Faith are rich enough; they have always sufficed. Today it would be of advantage to strip them of all which enwraps them, and to show them in their splendid simplicity to the eyes of the world.

Amongst these truths, one appears to be central in Sister St. Peter's Message, and must also be so in true Christian life; the redemptive value of Christ's sufferings, and in continuation, in prolonging these sufferings, the value and the Christian meaning of suffering in the world.

It is at this crucial point of the mystery of suffering, that our world, our Western civilization, seems to separate itself radically from the truly Christian conception of life. In contemporary societies, suffering is the element standing in the way of progress. Already the environment of our towns, entirely organized for scientific progress with the view to comfort, of facility, of luxury, and pleasure, cannot support the visible and tangible presence of suffering. When one of our brothers appears marked by a too obvious misery or a face ravaged by some hideous lupus, the instinctive movement is to wish for him some hostel or sanatorium, far from sight and memory. Not only does modern man fear to suffer it, but its mere sight and presence disturbs the order of modern life.

However, these silhouettes of misery and these disfigured faces are only to perpetuate amongst us the humiliated Face of Christ. "JESUS remains in agony until the end of the world". Thus He continues to pass through our streets, bruised and

bending under the Cross. For He whose gaze has been purified by an act of faith, He remains visible in all those who have been touched by suffering, the sick, the infirm, the sorrowful of all kinds, captives, victims of life, of society, of men. In them He ceases not to await our fraternal love, our "Veronica", gesture, our witness like Dysmas. But the suffering of JESUS, prolonged until the end of time, present as a sign everywhere, present in the life of everyday; is a very disturbing memory. When it imposes itself with blunt evidence, in a physical reality, it comprises the quietude of a world incapable of understanding the true meaning of suffering. Before the only too vivid pictures of humiliations, decay, and distress, we repeat as if by instinct the cry of the Jews before Pilate's tribunal: "Take Him away".

One will try in vain, progress will never suppress suffering, which is a necessary part of the scheme of the world. That is why the humiliations of the Face of Christ, sign at the same time of God's justice and mercy, must remain visible to the eyes of all until the end.

Indifference or repose are not conceivable before that sorrowful Face; because it bears in its humiliations and its bruises, the material trace of the malice and the sins of all. And if it is true that there exists for Christians a solidarity in good, which benefits us from the goodness of others, there must also exist a solidarity in evil, which causes the malice of others to weigh upon us. We are never alone.

JESUS, the first in willingly taking upon Himself the sins of men, has shown to the eyes of the world what is man delivered to the divine Justice, and bearing the suffering as an offering of Reparation to the offended Father. Since the day when Pilate showing their humiliated Victim to the people, said one word of whose meaning he was ignorant "Behold the Man", the true measure of man has been fixed once and for all. But at the same time the meaning of suffering was affirmed, and the bleeding and outraged Face has been established on the ransomed earth as a witness of God.

Since that day also, no one will go to God any more, will find

God any more, without finding first of all the disfigured and bleeding Face of Christ, object of scandal, of derision, or of love. Because, placed before the Face of JESUS, one must choose between three or four historical gestures; to defile it with spittle like the Roman soldiers, to wash one's hands like Pilate, condemn Him to death like the Jews, or like Veronica, piously wipe it with a sweet, fresh linen.

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Sister St. Peter has said that between the blasphemed Name of God and the outraged Face of Christ there exists a mysterious relation, and that, by means of this relation, the worship rendered the outraged Face makes an equilibrium to the outrages to the Divinity. In a world which has made God a stranger to all its institutions, to all its activities, and of whom almost all its acts are practical blasphemies, it was urgent to recall the eternal presence of Christ's Face and the necessity of Veronica's gesture. That is why, after a hundred years, the Message of Sister St. Peter expresses to us the sound of a prophetic warning to the measure of the abyss towards which we are gliding and the possibilities which are offered to us.

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