

14. Letter of the 27th of January 1805

During the 5 years of Clorivière's imprisonment, Adelaide could not visit him in prison, the situation being too dangerous for her who was always under surveillance. We understand that it is very hard for her. And on January 27, 1805, Clorivière wrote her a beautiful letter inviting her to trust

(in *Lettres de Prison* M.-L. Barthélémy p. 81-85 ; January 27, 1805)

Praised be J.C.

I come back to you, my dear daughter of J.C. and I resume the letter that I started on Friday, and that I could not finish. I dedicate a good part of the Day of the Lord to you, and I do not believe that I have spent it uselessly and in a way that displeases him, if I can, with his help, bring some consolation and some light into your afflicted soul. I will perhaps tell you only what you know, only what I have already told you many times; but in the state of sorrow where you are, we often need to hear the same thing, and the Lord can give it a new grace and make it penetrate more in the heart and make a more lively impression than ever.

I remained confident; There is no virtue more necessary to you than that, as I have always told you; and you have to practice it continually, because lack of confidence is the source of all your faults and it prevents you from practicing the virtues that the Lord asks of you. Without trust, humility itself is no longer a virtue; to be a virtue, it must relate to God, it must not turn aside from what we can do for His glory, and it must lead us to do it in the most perfect way, but only for Him, without us appropriating anything for ourselves. True trust, that which rests on God alone, can never go beyond bounds, because the mercy of God and the merits of J.C. on which it is founded are boundless. However great our miseries are, they are nothing, they disappear entirely before the infinite mercy of God and the merits of J.C. which are equally infinite. Nothing should diminish our confidence. We lack it whenever the sight of our past miseries throws us into too great sadness, and in uncertainty if they have been forgiven; whenever the sight and the feelings of our present miseries disturb us and prevent us from carrying ourselves with courage and with joy to what the duty of our state demands of us, the circumstances of the moment and the edification of the neighbour; whenever excessive fears about the future distract us from responding to the holy inspirations that God gives us, thinking that it will be for us the source of many trials and struggles and we will not have the strength to resist. A little more confidence will support you in all your fears and will make you triumph over them.

Do not keep your eyes on yourself so much that you lose sight of God, or at least that He is not the main object of your attention. The sight of his mercies and of the infinite price of J.C.'s blood will dispel all these worries, all these distressing returns to the past; and, without losing anything of the lowly feelings for yourself and of the pain which your fault must inspire you, you have no doubt that, since you sincerely wanted to do what was in

you, to obtain the forgiveness of your sins, that this forgiveness has been fully granted to you and that all your faults, like a little straw thrown into a fiery furnace, will have been suddenly consumed in the immense blaze of divine love; This confidence will ignite in you the keenest gratitude; you will think only of responding to the blessings of the Lord.

The sight of his almighty goodness and his love, without making you forget your weakness, your helplessness and the excess of your miseries, will prevent pusillanimity (= lack of courage) where the thought of these things would not fail to throw you, if you stop to consider them too much; You are only a weak child, you are only blindness and corruption, however it is necessary ceaselessly to fight powerful enemies, practice great virtues. But remember that you are not alone ... If God asks great things of you, He gives you powerful means, He covers you with His shield; His mighty arm is poised to defend you. He himself is always by your side; he never abandons the humble who trust in Him. It is not on your own strength that you count, but on His. Why should you be worried about your weakness? The greater it is, the more it will excite His compassion, the more it will serve to enhance His glory.

The same considerations must raise you above the fears that the future may arouse in you. Also think of the faithfulness of God, the greatness, the magnificence of His promises. When, in order to follow him, and to obey the voice of God who calls you, you have entered into difficult paths, dark, full of dangers, can you fear that he will abandon you, and that he will leave you at the mercy of your enemies, of your weakness? Dispel from you such a thought, it would be too insulting to the faithfulness of the Lord; He will no doubt test you, he will seem to be distant, the difficulties will increase with each step, everywhere you will meet crosses, you will have to walk on paths bristling with thorns, to climb steep mountains, but fear nothing of all this, fear only to lack confidence; It is the only thing that can harm you; Your strength will be in silence and in hope. These two virtues will obtain for you the help of God. He will smooth out all the difficulties before you, nothing will be able to resist you; He Himself will be your torch in darkness; and His wisdom which will accompany you everywhere, will direct all your steps, will indicate all the dangers which you would have to fear and will protect you from them; If, on the contrary, out of pusillanimity, you do not enter into the designs of God on you, or if, after having entered there for a while, lack of confidence leads you to be intimidated by a host of difficulties, either real, or apparent that arise from your imagination and which the spirit of malice strangely magnifies in your eyes, whatever means you may take for your safety, as you would have strayed from the path and withdrawn from the guidance of the Lord, you will not advance, and the slightest obstacles will seem insurmountable to you.

By this same lack of confidence, one recognizes only superficially in oneself the gifts of God, one makes little of them, while admiring in others lesser gifts and one carries some sort of envy of them; as if humility were to keep us from seeing what good God has put in us, and

could ever be contrary to gratitude and to truth; And all these imperfections lead to the third kind of failure, into which one runs the risk of falling, when one becomes attached to humility, without being sufficiently guarded against the illusions of malice and attached to one's own judgment. This failure consists in closing one's heart to everything that those who hold the place of God can tell us, to raise our courage and excite us to a generous forgetfulness of ourselves and a great confidence in God, with regard to us and everything that concerns us. We obey everything else, we have no trouble to conform our will and even our judgment to their feelings in other matters, except for this point. We imagine that charity blinds them to our account; that they judge favorably of us only because they do not see the bottom of our heart and that they judge others by themselves. We do not see that, by reasoning in this way, we reverse the order of obedience and that, under the pretext of humility, we prefer our judgment to that of our Superior, and that, in everything that concerns our interior, we keep the disposition of ourselves and we make ourselves the arbiter (= we judge alone!) of our conduct. This defect is never very considerable before God, because it does not take away good will and that, moreover, it is subtle and covers itself so well with the veil of humility, that it is difficult to discover it, except with a particular light of the Lord. However, it has fatal consequences, it deprives her of many graces, it keeps the soul enclosed in its own will; she does good but not what God wants of her; she refuses to do many things, many acts that God requires of her; she is exposed to a lot of inner turmoil and I do not believe that in this disposition, she ever reaches the perfection that God intended for her.

See, my dear daughter, if, in what I have said, there are several things which resemble you, but, if you discover this, do not be disturbed; On the contrary, bless the Lord for having given you this light, which he only gives you because he wants to make you perfectly agreeable in His eyes. To have recognized evil, given the depth of good will that the Lord has placed in you and the sincere desire that you have to please him, it is like being corrected. But here are some rules that you have to follow carefully.

1 ° Reject immediately with courage, any feeling which, under the pretext of humility would tend to diminish the great confidence that you must have in God.

2 ° Recognize with the deepest humility and the sentiments of your unworthiness, the graces which the Lord has liberally showered on you and do not doubt that there are great designs on your soul, and that you would be very guilty if you did not answer with all your power, out of pusillanimity and lack of confidence.

3. These grand designs are the work he has entrusted to you. This work is not of your choice but of his. He wanted, he still wants you to care for it, and it is partly on this care that the success of the good work depends, and do not doubt that by choosing you, he has given you everything that is necessary for that, even if it is not according to worldly perceptions.

4 ° Be intimately persuaded that His conduct, on you, and on me, is an effect of his paternal kindness and of his wisdom which leads everything to its ends;

5 ° Revive the confidence of your daughters, be superior indeed (= in reality and not only in words) and be circumspect (= caution, attention paid to what we do).

6 ° In your pious exercises, be more passive (= let yourself be guided by the Spirit of God and not by your own will) than active. For your perfection, count on the work of God in you, more than on your industry.

This is the only agenda you need. A more detailed one would be harmful.