

20b. The "rich experience" of the imprisonment of Clorivière according to François Morlot

In Pierre de Clorivière, François Morlot, DDB 1990, beginning of chapter 13.

Chapter 13 To Persevere

On reaching the house that Madame de Soyecourt offered him in the old Carmelite convent - the place of martyrdom of Gabriel Desprez de Roche -, Father de Clorivière had time to meditate on the five years of seclusion he had just lived. Beyond the suffering he had endured, a rich experience was revealed:

1. He had experienced arbitrary detention. Protesting his innocence, wishing and requesting his freedom, he found himself sharing the fate of all these political prisoners who, over the centuries, have done nothing more than displease the government in power. He was even more appreciative of the fact that a declaration of human rights is just an empty word if the structures of the rule of law do not provide for its safeguard and protection. Above all, he learned to live in an evangelical spirit, this condition which he had not chosen: in the love of God and of neighbor. As we have seen, each letter written with a hope of liberation ends with a few words of surrender to the will of God. There is humor in these lines which he draws shortly before his exit from the Temple when the transfer order seems to be delayed: *"I see in this the will of the great Master, who, for ends worthy of his wisdom and of his kindness, which tend to our good, lets the malice of men and demons act. It is astonishing that so many prayers for me, made so urgently and with fervor, have not yet prevailed against all that hindered my deliverance. I am no less grateful to those who prayed and acted for me. Their prayers were not wasted, and I hope that our divine Master will deign to supply my helplessness and reward them in a manner worthy of him."*
2. Sharing the fate of other political prisoners, he manifests to them the charity of Christ: he shares his food parcels with them, he listens to them, absolves them, sometimes even shares communion with them. And his charity extends to the emperor for whom he prays frequently, while he holds him in captivity. Isn't making Latin verses for the military victories of his jailer also a form of humor and a form of love?
3. No doubt Peter-Joseph had dreamed of various forms of martyrdom, but had he imagined that he would spend a year in a mental hospital? And now he becomes the brother of the insane, kindly greeting the one who knocks down his breviary. What proof of patience in a man with such a quick temper! What self-control! But also what a humiliation! Does he not see there what he asked with Ignatius: "Pass for a man of nothing and a fool for Christ who first passed for such?" Sometimes being

present in the world goes so far, and the tears of Dr. Dubuisson's boarders when Clorivière leaves them prove that his stay was not in vain.

4. He experienced poverty and destitution like never before. He who has always had a servant in his service must light his fire every winter morning, maintain his cell and be satisfied with a food that is unlike the delicacies of Mlle de Cicé: the nails with which he is afflicted for a few months show that the hygiene of the Temple was not foolproof. Again he didn't seek anything: he only shared the common lot.
5. The period was also hard because it revealed the fragility of the Foundations. Despite the correspondence which he maintains (written with the light of a candle), in spite of the constant efforts of Adelaide de Cicé and her assistants, the male groups pass through one crisis after another, and very often the Women's society suffers as a result. The pusillanimity of the bishops before the imperial decrees, the incomprehension of the members before an innovation whose scope they did not measure, their apostolic burden in the midst of a complex clergy slowed the momentum of the first days; It seems - the founder is not clear himself on this subject - that the number of members has gone from 70 to 30; in any case, many hopes have vanished.

Clorivière continues to work calmly and to reflect: his intuitions of 1790 are clarified; he is unfortunately alone for this task: he did not see beside him those who could have helped him to deepen the life project which he set in motion; he was unable to reunite ever-dispersed companions to deliberate with them for the future. Admittedly, the Society of the Heart of Jesus will continue to live after his death, but already much weakened, it will not stand the test of time for long; even if the last persons who knew him, Michel Faucheux, of Orleans, and Jean-Baptiste Hubault-Malmaison, of Paris, still survive in 1860, even if a descendant of Tours did not die with Malmouche until 1886, the Society as such has long since disappeared. On the other hand, the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary will continue to develop during the XIXth century. Of course Clorivière does not know all this future. And yet despite his crises, despite the discouragement that awaits him, he continues his work: his first care was it not to ask the General of the Company for authorization to continue this essential task?