

3. Letter to Adelaide of April 30, 1791

In *Correspondance 1787-1804 P.-J. de Clorivière et A. de Cicé* présenté par M.-L. Barthélémy p. 126-129

Mademoiselle and my dear daughter in our Lord,

I have just received a letter from Paris, which informs me that seven people, both priests and clerics, entered the Association of the poor priests of Jesus . But they add that this is not the case with that of Mary. Those who had already joined are dispersed, because the community of Miramiones, where they had received shelter, was itself dispersed. They point out, it is true, that there would be many persons suitable, and ready to enter this Society, but it requires a person to lead them, form them, etc., and this person has not been found. I am sure that this first item of news will please you; I will share with you my reflections on the second.

It is in Paris, it seems to me, that one and the other Society must begin. The evil comes from there, the remedy for this evil should also come from there. The good done in the capital will easily spread to the provinces. There we will find more means and resources to do good with and there we can proceed in a more secret and sure manner, until the time comes to work more openly and when God's work will be strong enough and extensive enough so that we not fear the light of day.

The time has come to do something great for the Lord. The great evils from which religion suffers, the still greater evils with which it is threatened, and which follow as a natural consequence of those from which it currently suffers, both demand and seek prompt help. We must save as many people as we can from shipwreck. It is the surest way to ensure our own salvation and there is nothing more agreeable to our Divine Master. I tell you that he desires this, that he expects this from our love; that we can rightly think that this is the reason for so many graces he has given us; and if, for want of courage or confidence, and through fear of work or dangers, we refuse to second his adorable designs, would this not be in us a blamable infidelity, which would render us incapable of receiving the gifts that his kindness intended for us? I am convinced about this in my own regard. Although I do not perceive in myself, from any point of view, anything which would not be calculated to discourage me, nothing which might persuade me that I could undertake a thing so great for God, however I would believe myself very unfaithful, if I did not do on my side all that depends on me to fulfill the designs which are far beyond my strength, but which seem to me to come from him.

As for you, Mademoiselle and very dear daughter, what do you yourself think ? What are your sentiment? Can you think, can you say that God has not given you great graces; that our Lord has granted you from childhood his sweetest blessings; that he has not instructed you and directed you in the paths of justice by means of his ministers? Has he not inspired you for a long time with a desire for perfection? Has he not given you the desire to work for the perfection of others? If he does not permit you to consecrate

yourself to him in the cloister, he has shown you a means of doing it in the world. He has given you the grace; his guidance of you in recent times; the care which he has shown to detach you from everything, to draw closer and closer the bonds which attach you to him; are not all these graces which should not remain idle, or which should bear fruit only for you? Dilate your heart; give wings to your desires, or rather revive within you those which the Divine bounty has so often inspired in you. Desire to do everything, to suffer everything to gain a few souls for Jesus Christ. Forget yourself; do not stop to look at your weakness and your miseries; think of Him whose Almighty Arm will sustain you, if you fix your eyes on Him instead of keeping them fixed on yourself.

Have you guessed now who is the one that I believe is chosen by God to procure for His Holy Mother a great number of dear daughters? It is necessary that she have a great desire of perfection, of zeal for the perfection of others. That she be ready to sacrifice everything to procure both the one and the other; that she be detached from the goods of this world, and from the vanities of the time; that she love to talk of God to the poor; that without having been a religious, she understands the obligations and the practice of the Evangelical Counsels. As to natural qualities, it is necessary that she have prudence but not that of the world; that she be adaptable; that she know how to accommodate herself to different souls to win them all for Jesus Christ. That she be not fearful of difficulties; that she be resourceful and have some experience in the ordinary things of life. Now I find all these things in a person whom the Lord sent to me a few years ago, and whose perfection I sincerely desire.

I believe I must say to this person that she is the instrument, which God wishes to use to execute his design. I shall not tell her that she has all the qualities necessary for this; but I can assure her of this, that if good will is not lacking, God will supply abundantly for all the rest. It was only at the very moment when the Apostles began their mission that he changed them to other men. It is thus that he often acts with us, especially for those works, which are not in the common order of Divine Providence. He wishes that we dispose ourselves as far as is possible on our side, and that, without anticipating too many future difficulties, we do at the present time all that his lights indicate to us; then when difficulties arise, he arms us and clothes us with his strength to overcome them. The person of whom I speak is still too sensitive, she has not enough faith, which makes her easily fall into perplexities and then the devil seeks to trouble her by means of subtleties which he presents to her mind. This harms her a lot and prevents her from advancing in the ways of God. But the Lord has given her docility, and this virtue, supported by graces which will be the reward of her fidelity, will dissipate the obstacles which hold her back and will make her triumph over them.

However, I do not want to prescribe or command anything. Let this soul probe herself, let her examine her dispositions after consulting the Lord. I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit, who communicates Himself to the humble, will make known to her what he expects from her, and what she can do that will be more in accordance with His good pleasure. If this soul, as I suppose, wishes to abandon herself to His guidance, and has no

other desire than to accomplish His Holy Will, I do not doubt but that He will place in her all the dispositions which the designs He has in her regard demand. It is by these dispositions that the interpreter of the Lord's Will in her regard can make it known to her in a more certain way.

I am writing this from the countryside, so that you have more leisure to reflect about it, and because it could happen that tomorrow, when I go to *La Croix*, I will not have enough time to explain myself to you. However, I will have to tell you about my arrangements.

I am, my very dear daughter,

Entirely yours in our Lord

... Signature covered by Jesus and Mary