

8. Spiritual Testament of Fr de Clorivière

D'une lettre à Mademoiselle de Fermont

in *Lettres de prison 1804-1806* présenté par M.-L. Barthémémy, p.693 à 695

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To Mademoiselle de Fermont

Mlle and dearest daughter in Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank you for your kind letter; this is the first I have received from you directly, but it is not the first of your letters that I have read, because care has been taken to communicate to me about all those that you write here, because we know that they make me happy and that they edify me. You ask me for a letter; it is something that I cannot refuse you, since you believe that it can be of some consolation and some edification for your soul. Should I not regard myself as the servant of all the servants of God who, like you, are devoted with all their heart to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary? Should I not, as far as I can, help them fulfill their holy commitments? You will, you say, regard my letter as my Testament, and you will be more faithful to putting into practice what I will tell you by looking at it as the expression of my last wishes.

This idea appeals to me, my dear daughter, because it transports me to the moment which must be the object of our keenest desires, to the moment when our soul, freed from the bonds of this miserable body, will be able to throw itself freely into the bosom of the God of mercies, in the arms of our divine Redeemer. It is not that I am bored of the present life, while it will please the divine will to keep me here; it even has advantages which the future life does not offer us. We can suffer here, after the example of our divine Master, constantly acquire new merits, work to win a few souls for God.

All these things, and especially the large harvest that can be made here at all times of suffering and ills of all kinds, is made to soften the bitterness of our exile a little. But the happiness of having God, of no longer offending him, of no longer seeing him unworthily offended by men, of loving Him only as much as it will be given to us to love Him, and of being eternally, indissolubly united to those who love Him with the purest love, in the beautiful abode of divine charity: all these considerations must no doubt draw our desires higher and make us long for death. So I will follow your idea and make you my legatee; I can, without doing harm to the other heirs of either family, bequeath great things to you, things of a very great price, especially since I will not get them out of my poverty, but from the inexhaustible treasure which you possess in the Divine Hearts of Jesus and his Holy Mother, over which "the God of goodness" willingly gives us special rights, by calling us more especially to the service of these Sacred Hearts.

I therefore bequeath to you, my dear daughter, in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, through the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the object of their divine love and the main instruments of their love for people:

1 ° A heart all ablaze with the purest and most generous love for the divine Hearts to which you have devoted yourself.

-Love so pure, that admits of no alloy of self-love, no attachment to all that is created, no imperfect conformity with their good pleasure.

-Love so generous that being a living image of these divine Hearts, it can have no feelings but theirs; love that draws its union to them ever closer, and continually offers itself as a victim to the Divine Majesty to suffer every cross, every humiliation that may be sent for its salvation, for the glory of his name and the good of his Church.

2. A Great Esteem, A Great Love for your holy vocation.

Think of the wonderful favor the Lord has shown in calling you rather than many others, to the little family dedicated to the Heart of his Blessed Mother, so that you may be one of its cherished daughters of this beautiful Heart and have a very special share in her love and protection.

This esteem for your vocation must be proportionate to its high aim. Remember that God, by calling you to the greatest conformity with the Heart of his Holy Mother, and therefore with his divine Heart, calls you at the same time to the most perfect charity, to all that is most sublime in the teaching of the Holy Gospel and in the examples he gave us.

If he leaves you in the midst of the world, it is so that inheriting the apostolic spirit which the Heart of Mary possessed in the most eminent degree, you can, like her, contribute, by your example more than by any other means, to change the face of the earth and to renew among Christians in these latter days, the fair days of the youthful Church.

Be assured that, if you are faithful, He will give you abundantly all the graces you need to overcome the obstacles that you meet in the world. He had you, and us, specially in mind during his prayer that he made to his Father on the eve of his Passion: " I pray not that you should take them out of this world, but that you protect them from evil and from the contagion of the world" .

Your love for your vocation must make you careful to observe exactly the Rules contained, either in the Plan and the Rule of conduct, or in the Summary with our explanations, or in the Circular Letters, however perfect they may be; but, follow the spirit rather than the letter. The letter admits of many exceptions; the spirit of none. It makes us observe the Rules even when we do not observe them.

Be careful, as far as you can, to read and meditate on some of them every day, humbly asking God for light to fully understand the meaning and grace to practice them.

3. Great Zeal to acquire Evangelical Perfection and a prudent ardour to spread its love in every heart that may seem capable of such love. Evangelical perfection is the precious pearl to be bought at the cost of all that we possess. At all times, it was necessary to

detach ourselves from everything, to renounce everything, to follow Jesus Christ. Now detachment is more necessary than ever. It will be needed even more so in the difficult times that have been predicted and that are nearer than they were. Strive therefore, with holy discretion, to spread the love of perfection by working to spread the good work that the Lord has entrusted to us.

4. Unalterable Gentleness, Deep Humility. All these virtues must specially distinguish the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, as they distinguished their divine Mother and her divine Son. You must excel in them. Set an example to all, exhort them, animate them, watch carefully over them, warn them of their faults, it is your duty; but in the bottom of your heart, always take the lowest place.

You must sometimes use firmness, but let gentleness always prevail. Above all, have great patience, and always be ready to listen to all who would like to open their hearts to you and manifest their conscience.

Never doubt that the divine Savior will give you and all His faithful servants, all the light and grace needed to accomplish what I have just told you, and which I bequeath to you as my last will and testament.

Humbly prostrate in the presence of God I earnestly pray for this; and with this intention ... I give you His holy blessing, in the name of his Divine Heart and the Heart of his Blessed Mother. So be it.

I recommend myself to your good prayers, and am in the Lord, all yours.

Peter Joseph