

# Adelaide Marie Champion de Cicé



ADELAIDE MARIE CHAMPION DE CICÉ

CO-FOUNDER

SOCIETY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE HEART OF MARY

1749-1818

M. du Rostu  
Jeanne Ancel

January 1978

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<u>Forward</u> .....	5
<u>Introduction</u> .....	6
Chapter I .....	8
Beginnings.....	8
Call and Spiritual Maturity .....	14
Mother de Cicé’s Project .....	19
Providential Meeting with Father de Clorivière .....	23
Mother de Cicé’s “Novitiate” .....	34
Chapter II .....	43
Father de Clorivière’s Inspiration Complementarity of the Two Projects.....	43
The First Commitments – February 2, 1791 Mother de Cicé, Superior General .....	54
Seed-time in Brittany .....	60
Mother de Cicé’s Arrival in Paris.....	68
Mother de Cicé’s First Vows .....	72
Chapter III .....	80
In the Eye of the Storm .....	80
In the Shadow and the Silence of rue Cassette .....	89
Memorandum to the Bishops. First Circular Letters. The First Arrest of Mother de Cicé. ....	93
Chapter IV .....	98
Trial of the “Infernal Machine” .....	98

Under Police Surveillance .....	106
Sojourn in Provence .....	111
Return to Paris .....	119
 Chapter V .....	 123
Father de Clorivière's Imprisonment	
Mother de Cicé, His Irreplaceable Collaborator .....	123
Transmittal of a Memorandum to the Sovereign Pontiff,	
Pope Pius VII, 1804 .....	129
New Approach to the Holy Father .....	138
1805 - A Difficult Year .....	147
Final Years of Father de Clorivière's Imprisonment, 1806-7-8 .....	154
 Chapter VI .....	 171
Mother de Cicé in Her Writings and Her Correspondence.....	171
Mother de Cicé's Last Years.....	183
-The Audience at Fontainebleau, 1813	
-The Re-establishment of the Society of Jesus in France, 1814	
-New Approaches to the Holy Father in Rome	
-The Two Societies during This Period	
Death of Mother de Cicé.....	189

PRINCIPAL WRITING OF MOTHER de CICÉ and DOCUMENTS CONCERNING MOTHER de CICÉ

DOCUMENT.....	
I.	Resolutions (about 1765)..... 197
II.	Notes on the Direction of Father Boursol, 1774..... 198
III.	Retreat (end of September, 1776)..... 201
IV.	Retreat (on the Feast of the Assumption, August, 1783) ..... 202
V.	Project of a Pious Society (1785) ..... 205
VI.	Letter to Father de Clorivière (mid-October, 1787) ..... 209
VII.	Vow of Obedience to Father de Clorivière, June 6, 1791 ..... 214
VIII.	Resolution to Keep Her Vows Faithfully (undated) ..... 215
IX.	Retreat of Pentecost, 1792 ..... 217
X.	Statement of Mademoiselle de Cicé in Her Own Defense at the Trial of the “Infernal Machine” ..... 218
XI.	Draft Letter to Father de Clorivière in View of A Request for Approbation of the Society (1813?) ..... 221
XII.	First Circular Letter (undated) ..... 222
XIII.	Second Circular Letter (undated)..... 226
XIV.	Father de Clorivière’s Letter of April 30, 1791..... 228
XV.	Excerpts from Madame de Saisseval’s <u>Memoirs</u> ..... 231
XVI.	Excerpts from Abbe Carron’s <u>Life of Mother de Cicé</u> ..... 237
XVII.	Some Archive Notes about Mother de Cicé ..... 238
XVIII.	Letter from Father de Clorivière to Mother de Cicé, January 29, 1808, on the Death of Madame de Carcado ..... 239

## FOREWORD

The present volume Adelaide Marie de Cicé, Co-Founder of the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary is not a biography of our first Mother. Several biographies already exist, each with a special focus.<sup>1</sup> This volume is rather a study in the series already begun at the request of our general government in order to permit the Daughters of the Heart of Mary to go to the heart of certain major aspects of the life of their founders, their religious Society, and thereby their own vocation.

The completed series, in logical order, comprises the following volumes:<sup>2</sup>

- God Prepares, which relates the providential preparation of Father de Clorivière and Mother de Cicé for their charism as founders.
- The Project of Father de Clorivière, which outlines certain characteristics indicating the particular place of the Society among other religious societies.
- Founded on the Rock, which studies in their historical context some of the principal documents left by the founder.
- Adelaide Marie Champion de Cicé, Co-Founder of the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, which aims to point to the personal contributions of Mother de Cicé to the conception and life of the Society, and at the same time strives to present her spiritual portrait.
- Approbations Given by the Church to the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, which shows, by presenting the successive approbations, the ecclesial crowning of the work of our founders.

---

<sup>1</sup> Guy-Toussaint Carron, "Abrege de la Vie de Mademoiselle Adelaide Marie de Cicé," in Nouveau Justes dans les Conditions Ordinaires de la Societe., Lyons – Paris, 1822, 1827.  
Louis Baunard, Adelaide de Cicé et ses Premieres Compagnes, Roulers, 1913.  
Anonymous, Marie-Adelaide Champion de Cicé, Paris, 1961.  
Andre Rayez, Formes Modernes de Vie Consacree, Adelaide de Cicé et P. de Clorivière, Paris (Beauchesne), 1966.  
Biographical data about Mademoiselle de Cicé will be found in the following:  
- Jacques Terrien, Histoire du R. P. de Clorivière, Paris 1891.  
- H. R. Casgrain, La Societe des Filles du Coeur de Marie D'apres ses Annales, Paris, 1899 Vol. I.  
- Marie-Edme Fournier de Bellevue, Le Pere de Clorivière et sa Mission 1735-1820, Wetteren (Belgium), 1933.

<sup>2</sup> Chronologically, the volume Approbations Given by the Church to the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary appeared before Founded on the Rock.

## INTRODUCTION

The intensive study of the handwritten documents of our two founders during the preparation of the volume, Founded on the Rock, led us more clearly to discover the essential role of Mother de Cicé in the life of the two societies, notably during the imprisonment of Father de Clorivière.

In fact, during that time, the two founders could communicate only by letter. Thus we have the numerous letters which are preserved in the Archives of the Society and which, with several other works, were edited in 1948.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, if these letters reflect the external events of the period they also reflect – through the replies of Father de Clorivière – the personality of Mother de Cicé. Therefore, why not also research other aspects of her life as echoed in documents dating before and after the founder's imprisonment?

It seemed to us that in following the usual method, viz. a careful study of writings in their socio-historical context, we would be able to make a new contribution to a more complete and intimate knowledge of our first Mother. In that way her daughters would be able to have a clearer vision of the irreplaceable contributions made by the humble Mother de Cicé to the Society both as co-founder and as exemplar of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary.

We are privileged to possess some handwritten documents relating to her interior life as an adolescent, as a young girl and as a mature woman. We are, therefore able somehow to grasp the principal facts of her life from the beginning and to follow their development. Thus, the Project for a Pious Society, conceived and outlined according to the personal aspirations of our first Mother assumes a more precise value since parts of it prefigure essential points in the future Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary.<sup>4</sup>

Father de Clorivière's direction, aiding Mother de Cicé to discern and to carry out God's designs for her, permits a sketch of her spiritual portrait during that period.

It is also important to observe – against the background of the upheavals of the French Revolution, the plot of the Infernal Machine, the sojourn in Provence, etc. – the unity and development of an interior life whose dominant traits had already been strongly formed.

Finally, during the long period of Father de Clorivière's imprisonment, Mother de Cicé demonstrated her full capacity as co-founder. She filled an irreplaceable role in taking the place of the founder in difficult and delicate missions at a time when he was unable to act directly.

---

<sup>3</sup> Lettres du Pere de Clorivière 1787-1814, Paris, 1948 – 2 volumes. Translation: Letters of Father de Clorivière, New York, 1953.

<sup>4</sup> A. Rayez, op.cit. pp. 372-375.

Her letters to her daughters in her last years touchingly evoke Mother de Cicé's life at that period, constant and enervating work carried on by one who was very ill, accents of humility of a soul constantly tending toward a greater and purer love.

Her death in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament was the culmination, the consecration of the spiritual orientation of an entire lifetime.

\* \* \* \* \*

This volume will perhaps be most enlightening from the point of view of its deepening our knowledge.

The principal steps in Mother de Cicé's life are well-known. Her adolescence and her laborious spiritual seeking have already been studied.<sup>5</sup> But in the present work we have intentionally concentrated on two essential aspects of her legacy, jointly with Father de Clorivière but also individually, her role as co-founder and her interior life.

We would add that this study cannot be read rapidly. It also seems not to lend itself to being read aloud. Rather does it call for a slow and attentive reading, helping us better to discover the one who was "chosen by the Lord out of pure mercy to be the foundation stone of the new edifice which He was raising to His own glory and to the glory of His holy Mother."<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Notably ibid.

<sup>6</sup> cf. Talk written by Father de Clorivière for the first vows of Mother de Cicé.

## CHAPTER I

### BEGINNINGS

Adelaide de Cicé was the twelfth child of an ancient noble family which had been established in Brittany since the fifteenth century. She was born in Rennes on November 5, 1749, and baptized the same day in the parish church of St. Aubin. Her mother was about 47 years of age. Her father, 69, died the following year on November 26, 1750.

The responsibility for the entire family then fell heavily upon Madame de Cicé. Adelaide was the youngest of the eight brothers and sisters still surviving, most of them living away from home. She would therefore be raised in a rather austere atmosphere.<sup>7</sup>

When she was about ten years old<sup>8</sup> she made her first communion in the Visitation Monastery at Rennes probably in the convent called "Le Colombier." No information has remained to us of this event which must have deeply affected her.

But Mother de Cicé's first biographer, Abbe G. T. Carron, related three significant childhood episodes quite consonant with the delicate and generous temperament which was subsequently to affirm itself.

She was at most six years old and was confined to the same room as one of her young relatives at a time when both had contracted smallpox. The little relative often cried out with pain. Adelaide told her, "Oh, let's not complain. We must suffer all things for the good Lord."

Several years later:

In helping to dress her, one of her governesses said to her (she must have been about 10 years old), "You do not love the Lord sufficiently for you are the victim of your preferences. You seek too much the comforts of life." Immediately in holy ardor she wished to make reparation for the meanness of which she was accused and she wounded her tiny arm.

Indeed, as a little girl she already showed a great tenderness for poor children. She distributed to them all the alms which she begged from neighbors on their behalf. She often said, "Let us love Jesus Christ and the poor."

Some of Adelaide's handwritten documents have furnished precious information on her life from her fifteenth to her twenty-second year.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Adelaide does not seem to have left her family during her childhood and adolescence.

<sup>8</sup> Letter of September-October, 1788, to Father de Clorivière: "I was but ten years old."

<sup>9</sup> These documents, preserved in the Archives of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, are reproduced in the Appendix of

The first such document (Document I, Appendix) written in fine schoolgirl penmanship is undated but probably belongs to 1765.<sup>10</sup> It contains the retreat resolutions of Adelaide as an adolescent. The opening lines already indicated a tendency characteristic of her entire spiritual life:

For a long time I have been very unfaithful in all the promises I have made to my God. From now on I wish to observe very strictly everything which I must do either in order to avoid offending Him or in order to please Him. From now on I am going to love Him as much as within me lies the ability to do so.

Adelaide de Cicé would thenceforth always strongly reproach herself for the tiniest infidelities or acts which she judged to be such. Because of her thirst to give herself absolutely to God, she would not be able to excuse herself for these faults.

The second retreat resolution revealed another dominant trait of her spiritual life:

I wish also to avoid pride above all my other sinful passions because I tend to pride more than to all other vices, because pride is the basis of nearly all my other bad actions and because I wish to do all in my power to sacrifice my pride to the vengeance of my God.

An increasing humility would lead her to this incessant sacrifice of herself in order to expiate everything which would appear to her -- sometimes unduly -- to be a betrayal of her love.

The combat to be waged in order to dominate her pride appeared clearly to her:

I wish also to thank all those persons who will kindly correct my faults and to them I will be obliged. I would have the intention thereby to mortify my self-love...I also wish not to be ready at all times to excuse myself when I am told that I have done something wrong and I will not seek to justify myself by departing from the truth.

This need of extreme loyalty to herself would accompany her throughout her life. Far from seeking to justify herself, she would unsparingly accuse herself of the most involuntary reactions of her sensitive nature.

These lines reveal also a tendency against which she had to react:

I also wish never to be moody. And in times when I would most wish to abandon myself to melancholy, I will rejoice and offer to God this little sacrifice of my own will.

---

this volume together with later documents. Roman numbers will be used to refer to the respective documents.

<sup>10</sup> A. Rayez, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-132.

Clearly this adolescent girl of fifteen is seen as knowing her besetting temptations and intending to combat them with the generosity of a soul desirous of loving God “as much as within me lies the ability to do so.”

The little plan of life she mapped out for herself at the end of her resolutions also showed the solid piety with which Adelaide approached her life; to arise promptly, to attend Mass (followed by a quarter hour of meditation), to read, to work, to obey her mother in all things, in the afternoon to make another quarter hour of meditation, in the evening to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, during the day frequently to raise her heart to God. The conclusion was forceful:

With the grace of my God...I wish henceforth to live and die in these resolutions.

Were these spiritual and practical orientations taken with the assistance and under the control of a director? It would be difficult to know. However, other notes written by Adelaide and providentially in our possession prove that her young life on the spiritual level was closely followed by a saintly director renowned in Rennes, Abbe Boursol.

Abbe Boursol’s personality is rightfully of interest to us because of his influence on Adelaide in her adolescent years.<sup>11</sup> Let us observe these characteristics as reported by his contemporary, Abbe Carron:<sup>12</sup>

He demanded above all, the fulfillment of one’s duties of state and counseled a sweet and tranquil attention over oneself in order not to do anything which might displease God.

He recommended frequent communion and Abbe Carron reported that the room Abbe. Boursol occupied in St. Yves Hospital in Rennes had “a little window opening out on the main altar of the chapel.” It was not astonishing that Father Boursol had communicated to those under his direction a fervent Eucharistic devotion. He would urge them also to practice the presence of God and toward this end to use frequent “aspirations” or ejaculatory prayers. He composed some himself and we possess entire series of them transcribed by Mother de Cicé who must have nourished herself on them. Perhaps she too had composed some of her own.

We shall quote only a few of hers which manifested a spirituality which would be dear to the Daughters of the Heart of Mary:

At 9 o’clock in the morning when Jesus was crucified (to say) to the Blessed Virgin, “Hail Mary” while reflecting on the sword of sorrow which pierced her heart.

. . .Towards 3 o’clock when He gave us Mary as our Mother as He was dying:

---

<sup>11</sup> A. Rayez, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-132.

<sup>12</sup> G. T. Carron, “J. A. Boursol,” *Modeles de Clerge*, Paris, 1787. Vol I, pp. 147-319.

“O Jesus, grant that my final sigh may be an act of pure and holy love of you. Say this very desirable and favorable word to your Mother in our behalf: ‘Behold your child.’”

“O Mary, receive us as your children and be the Mother of our souls.”

Toward night when His side was opened:

“O Jesus, like the lance which inflicted a bleeding wound in your side, pierce my heart with your divine love.”

“Hail Mary.”<sup>13</sup>

Several excerpts from the letters between Adelaide and her director reveal the work of grace in her soul.

On August 22, 1771, the twenty-two year old Adelaide, about to leave for the country, wrote to Father Boursol:

I am taking with me the books which you were kind enough to lend me....I take the liberty of writing to you to ask if you would permit me to receive communion when I find the opportunity to do so, more frequently than every eight days.

His response is meaningful especially in consideration of how rare frequent communion was during those times:

Yes, Mademoiselle, with all my heart and with utmost satisfaction, I grant you permission to receive your heavenly Spouse as frequently as you can. I am convinced that He will greatly delight in a heart which seems to me today more than ever devoted to Him, devoted forever and exclusively to His service and His love.

Father Boursol did not doubt the mastery of grace on Adelaide’s soul.

There are other equally convincing letters:

On Wednesday I shall place you especially into the hands and under the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin. By a special claim she is your good and tender Mother because she has obtained for you the grace to have her divine Son, her only Son, as your Spouse.

The following excerpts manifest Adelaide’s receptivity to grace even when she went beyond the rules of prudence. In the above-quoted letter, her director had written to her:

---

<sup>13</sup> A. Rayez, op.cit., p. 104 ff.

On Wednesday I shall have you make the vow of chastity for a certain period of time so that you might contract with the Lord a union more perfect than ever.

Carried away by her love which made no reckonings, Adelaide made on her own initiative not a temporary vow but a perpetual vow of chastity. She thereupon received a strong rebuke. Several sentences reveal what smarting remorse must consequently have disturbed her delicate conscience:

I did not know, Mademoiselle, that you (had made)...a vow which I had permitted you only for a certain period of time...and you yourself have experienced how dangerous it is to disobey. It is an essential fault which has been followed by many others. God has forgiven all of them....It even seems that this all-lovable God Who is all love for you – far from punishing you - - heaps you more than ever with his graces....Once again maintain a simple resolution, firm and unshakeable, incessantly asking God to affirm you in it until your last breath. But do not make it a vow.

He insisted:

It is not truly the spirit of God that caused you to make a perpetual vow in disobeying; it is the spirit of the demon...The same spirit has caused you unworthy regrets and a shameful repentance because you consecrated to God a freedom that you had only from Him.

Consequently you have fallen into many faults that have been felt by His divine Heart and have been very hurtful to the delicacy of His love.

It can be surmised how deeply such reproaches must have affected Adelaide in her inmost being. Fortunately, they were followed by these words of encouragement:

I am delighted that you have been so faithful that you were able to receive communion without going to confession. I exhort you to continue doing likewise until you return and to receive communion as frequently as you possibly can.

On Easter Monday, 1774, the saintly and energetic Father Boursol died suddenly in the pulpit. This unexpected death which aroused a great emotion in Rennes was a very heavy blow for Adelaide. She decided immediately to commit to writing the essential directives she had received from Father Boursol. This handwritten statement (Document II, Appendix) has an inestimable value for us. It permits us to grasp in lifelike fashion the principal traits of the spiritual stature of Mother de Ciché, then 24 years old:

He always told me that this God of goodness and mercy willed to lead me to Himself by love, that this delightful<sup>14</sup> path would ease my road to heaven,

---

<sup>14</sup> In that period, the expression did not denote anything sentimental but only the attraction of the spiritual life.

that it would remove all obstacles and direct me to everything which my God is asking of me.

This next paragraph reveals her usual anxieties:<sup>15</sup>

How many times he told me that God loved me as much when I had the infinite misfortune of abandoning Him as He had loved me before that time! Indeed, Lord, all my ingratitude, all my crimes<sup>16</sup> did not succeed in estranging You from me. I was assured by You that Your designs have not changed and indeed You let me experience this in the depths of my heart.

A revelatory statement followed:

It is necessary, O my God, that You Yourself impress these truths on a soul before it become truly convinced of them.

Then, almost prophetically:

The saint who was speaking to me on Your behalf, told me two weeks before his death that my God desired me entirely for Himself. These were his very words: "Oh how He wants you perfectly for Himself! And what an outstanding place He has prepared for you in heaven!"<sup>17</sup>

Your servant, now enjoying the infinite happiness of possessing You, told me also that God Himself was undertaking my sanctification, that His Spirit and His Divine Heart would lead me completely. On your behalf he assured me, O my God, that at the proper time You would let me know what You are asking of me provided I were faithful in listening to Your voice deep within my heart.

Next was this reflection which is so wise in the light of Adelaide de Cicé's excessive delicacy of conscience:

How often, Lord, have I not been told not to yield to the anxiety and disorder which would separate me from You. I have been assured that it was easier for me than for anyone else, never to offend You. I was taught to return to my God by going back into my heart at the very moment when I felt I was straying.

This was followed by the statement which is often quoted as announcing Adelaide's special vocation:

---

<sup>15</sup> There are herein certain linguistic exaggerations typical of the style of that era and typical of the style of Father Boursol.

<sup>16</sup> In the spiritual writers of that period, crimes was the equivalent of faults. cf. A. Rayez, Priere et Oraison, p. 77, note 5.

<sup>17</sup> A selected place.

I was also told in Your behalf, O my God, that I was destined to be a mother of the poor, a spouse of Jesus Christ and a seraph in this world and in the next.

The document concluded with Adelaide's supplication which was so providentially granted on the day she met Father de Clorivière:

O my God, lead me Yourself to the director who is to conduct me directly, perfectly to You. I place my soul into Your hands. Do with me what You will.

Because we are accustomed to considering Mother de Cicé in her association with Father de Clorivière in the great adventure of founding the Society at the height of the French Revolution, we perhaps do not dwell long enough on studying the effects of grace in the first part of her life.

Adelaide had just attained her mature age. For a long time she had heard the call to exclusive love of God. With her deep sensitivity of temperament and her extreme delicacy of conscience, she reacted to her least shortcomings to the point of anguish. Her interior tension was all the greater because she desired her love and generosity to be limitless.

To better grasp and penetrate the stages of her life which are to follow we must bear in mind the already evident traits of her spiritual make-up.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### CALL AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY

We left Adelaide at the age of twenty-four. We return to her two and a half years later through another handwritten document (Document III, Appendix). It was written at the close of a retreat in the autumn of 1776. It must be studied attentively so that we may follow the path of grace in her soul, especially since the resolutions she made at the end of those days of reflection were to orient her entire life.

Several of the resolutions she had made in 1765 were made more precise and were affirmed after this retreat of 1776. First, there were the practical resolutions, the two quarter hours of mental prayer during the day became two half hours, the ejaculatory prayers were incorporated into "the holy exercise of the presence of God," during Mass there would be meditation on the Passion; daily communion was to be continued as long as authorization for it would be given. Obedience to Madame de Cicé became more demanding and assumed a particular emphasis, "to obey my mother as a religious obeys her superior."

Her struggle against self-love and natural sensitiveness extended to their very first manifestations:

I will not for a single moment interiorly or exteriorly be ill-tempered with persons who may have hurt me. I wish to heap on such person friendship

and kindnesses and in this regard never to consult the reasons which human prudence would dictate to me for acting otherwise.

There would be no limits to her seeking for a total charity:

My God, allow to enter my heart only the fear of displeasing You and the desire of loving You.

Such total charity would be the object of an almost heroic, demanding purification her whole life long.

Recalling no doubt, Father Boursol's prediction, she would wish to renew with the ardor of a seraph the consecration she had made of her entire person to her "divine Spouse." This revealed the fervor of her most intimate dispositions.

Finally after a vehement self-accusation, excessive in regard to her "abominable infidelities" (they were such as a matter of fact in her eyes), she expressed her outpouring gratitude for the graces with which she had been favored especially:

...the precious gift of my vocation which you deigned to grant me today.

This precious grace granted to her whom Christ had already "chosen as His spouse," must be the call to enter the religious life. The experiment made at the Visitation Convent several months later would doubtlessly be the result of that light as she received it.

In order to understand fully Mother de Cicé's soul, the final lines of the retreat notes of 1776 must be studied. They contain a key-concept which will dominate her entire spiritual life:

I falter in writing those last lines - not because I am resisting Your will, but - out of fear that I may not know Your will as it truly is. For I want only what You want, my Divine Jesus.

The expression "I falter" marked the anxiety of mind and heart in her who loved and would forever love the divine will no matter how crucifying it would be. But – and this is characteristic – in that love, she also persistently feared not knowing the divine will as it truly was.

The retreat resolutions closed with the total submission of herself to the divine will:

I implore You to make whatever You will of me provided that Adelaide belongs entirely to Jesus, her Spouse.

To seal her absolute offering of self, Adelaide wrote the last words (those we have underlined) with her own blood.

On April 30, 1777, having received her mother's permission, Mille. De Cicé entered as a postulant the Visitation Monastery known as "Le Colombier," in Rennes. Her mother, Madame de Cicé, who could not live completely separated from her daughter, was admitted to live outside the cloister as a boarder as was the custom of that period.

Adelaide's letters to her director indicated that she was undergoing temptations which quite frequently accompany entrance into a new state of life. Father Le Beurrier's replies were interesting because of their firm attestation to Mademoiselle de Cicé's religious vocation.

But a greater trial awaited Adelaide. Her brother, Bishop Jean-Baptiste de Cicé, at that time Bishop of Auxerre, improperly intervened in his sister's life. He asked the Bishop of Rennes to act to block a vocation which upset family plans. Madame de Cicé's health, he asserted, necessitated her return to her own home; also that she be under the care of her daughter whose place nobody else could take.

We know Adelaide well enough to understand that despite her suffering, perhaps her confusion in this matter, she could not but yield to what had been presented to her as God's will.

Very probably in the fall of 1777, she again took up her life of humble and hidden devotion to her mother in the family home. She divided her days between family obligations and service to the poor. The latter would assume an increasing place in her life.

The years passed but ardent pursuit of her sanctification did not falter in Adelaide. Once more we have the witness to this in the resolutions taken when she was 33 years old on the occasion of a retreat made six years after leaving the Visitation.<sup>18</sup> No document could be more enlightening. It was entitled, Retreat on the Feast of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, August, 1783. (Document IV, Appendix).

Since the text of these resolutions is a very ample one, we will emphasize only the points of convergence with previous resolutions and new elements. The resolutions of 1783 began as follows:

I resolve to ask God incessantly for the grace to preserve and increase in me each day the horror of sin He has inspired in me. I want to avoid sin with the greatest care. More than all the evils of this world I would fear all voluntary sin and I resolve to expose myself to all misfortunes rather than ever to commit one single sin deliberately.

The next five lines renewed fidelity to a plan of life notably to times of prayer. It can be seen that the plan was a well-established habit. Particularly to be noted is "the careful practice of the exercise of the presence of God," already mentioned above, a practice which she would follow throughout her life.

In three places in the resolutions, Adelaide made reference to her past faults. She spoke of "the abyss of misery" from which God had so many times rescued her, of "the blackest ingratitude" which should have removed Him from her forever and of the determination to

---

<sup>18</sup> We have no other data about this retreat.

practice “hate and disdain” due to herself for having rendered herself “guilty of so many acts of ingratitude towards a God Who is so good.”

These expressions may seem excessive to us. Nevertheless, they reflect Adelaide’s most sincere sentiments before the grandeur and holiness of God. They reflect also her horror that the least stain might tarnish the purity of the love she had vowed to Him. Her extremely sensitive and delicate temperament doubtlessly increased the force of these sentiments. Yet does not the Holy Spirit, with sovereign mastery, make use of nature to strengthen and purify love in a soul which yields itself completely to the action of grace?<sup>19</sup>

Among the new elements integrated into Adelaide’s resolutions, let us note first of all the one which would be of prime importance throughout her life, especially amid the upheavals of the French Revolution:

I wish to receive all happenings as coming from the hand of God – be they great or small, happy or unhappy – and I wish to do this the first moment that I reflect on things as they occur. I wish to recognize the divine will and to rejoice in its being accomplished in all things.

Here we find in advance one of the orientations dearest to Father de Clorivière’s heart. The Holy Spirit was preparing the heart and soul of the future co-founder. To this resolution she added lines which were very personal in their tone of humble distrust of self and adherence at all costs of God’s will:

If my weakness does not permit me always to see God’s will in afflictions, I wish at least to submit myself entirely, asking God for a more perfect disposition if that is what He expects of me.

There followed a resolution she had taken long before but which now became deeper and more mature:

I want to be unalterably sweet-tempered and extremely kind to my neighbor, to esteem my neighbor as much as I disdain myself. I will try never to act out of temper or inclination. I will not bear for a single instant the slightest resentment against anyone. On the contrary, I will make it my duty to fly towards occasions of pleasing persons who have caused me sorrow. I will be delighted to find these precious occasions for pleasing the

---

<sup>19</sup> In his work, The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Father M. M. Philipon, O.P., wrote (p. 309): “The more a soul is God-centered and the more animated it is in a special way by divine charity, the more it is like God and the more it shares in God’s detestation of evil. This sentiment of divine hatred of sin resounds in the depths of that soul’s being, and in turn the soul shares in God’s overwhelming opposition to sin.

In the case of Mother de Cécé, it will be, in a striking manner, a question of an overwhelming opposition to sin and to the least failing by a natural sensitivity – a sentiment whose perduring permanence is explained only by a consuming desire to love and glorify God “as a seraph” would.

Lord and I will see to it with the help of His grace that such occasions do not escape me.

I also wish not to complain about anything.

On this occasion as on so many others, Adelaide de Cicé was not content with good intentions. Rather she entered into concrete details. It might be emphasized that she never sought her own perfection for herself. Instead she directed everything to love of our Lord.

The next resolution is noteworthy. Does it not prefigure with remarkably specific points what will one day be the practice of poverty in the Society?

I resolve to cut out all useless expenditures for myself and in this regard to limit myself to the merely necessary in my condition. I will regard what I possess as belonging to the poor more than to myself. As much as I can, I will not refuse any poor person. I desire to possess nothing in this world in order to attain the possession of Jesus Christ unless it is something with which I can relieve his suffering members.

Adelaide wished as much as possible personally to live as a poor person. What she possessed belonged first to the poor, those unfortunate ones she wished to help whenever she encountered them. For – and herein lay the ultimate sense of her poverty – she wanted to give up possession of everything in order to possess Jesus Christ and relieve “His suffering members.”

This kind of poverty was so close to her heart that she insisted one last time at the conclusion of her resolutions:

With regard to what I own, I wish that it were possible for me in my position to dispose of nothing except by obedience, especially as regards me personally, desiring to detach my heart not only from my possessions but also from all things in order to attach it only to Jesus Christ.

These indeed are echoes of a religious soul which wished “to lose” all things in order to gain Jesus Christ.

Next Adelaide renewed a resolution she had made in 1776:

I wish to obey my Mother in the smallest things unless there are good reasons not to do them, in that case I will make a respectful explanation to her.

There followed a desire of apostolic outreach which had not previously manifested itself:

I will neglect no occasion to lead her (her mother) to God. I will do as much when dealing with my neighbor to whom I will always render all the services which depend on me while at the same time asking God not to distract me from His presence....And I want to devote myself to arriving at that happiness (which I expect more from the pure mercy of God than from my

efforts) of the interior presence of God within me. For that reason I will maintain silence as much as possible in my position.

Adelaide then had recourse to the Virgin Mary's protection for her life of union with our Lord:

After my divine Savior, it is in this good Mother that I wish to place all my trust. On all occasions I wish to give her testimonies of my thanks for all the graces I have received through her intercession particularly for the grace of my conversion which she most certainly often asked of her beloved Son.

There was another resolution inserted among the rest which brings an additional dimension to Adelaide's spiritual portrait at that period:

I resolve to fast every Friday unless my health prevents it only if, dear Father, you permit me this little mortification which I would like to accompany with some others especially in these days because I have infinite need of patience and I have never made any mortification which was in the least proportionate with my offenses.

Here we discern the spontaneous response of a loving heart which at all costs wishes to make reparation for the wounds caused by her shortcomings.

Adelaide then summed up her interior dispositions at the end of her retreat:

With all my strength, I want to tend to the faithful practice of this maxim: "Everything to please God, nothing to gratify me."<sup>20</sup>

Then came these very revealing lines:

These resolutions. . . I already feel them weakening a bit at times. This idea alone would cause me despair if at the same time God did not inspire in me the confident hope that He Himself wishes to put an end to my ingratitude.

These are the principal characteristics and outstanding marks of Adelaide's personality. They would orient her quest in the years to come.

\* \* \* \* \*

## MOTHER DE CICÉ'S PROJECT

---

<sup>20</sup> Like many other maxims this one was part of a popular spiritual treasury used by the pious faithful. Later, this maxim would be found in a letter written to her brother by St. Bernadette Soubirous.

Madame de Cicé died on January 17, 1784, at eighty-four years of age. After her mother's death Adelaide went to live at the Carmel in Rennes which like the Visitation Monastery, received women residents. She had been very attached to her mother whom she had "never left" and who loved her "exceedingly."<sup>21</sup> It was therefore necessary to allow her sorrow to abate and to reflect in solitude and prayer on the orientation she would give her life. Long since consecrated to the Lord, how must she respond to the interior call now that she was freed of family obligations?

Her August 1783 retreat resolutions manifested the major place occupied in her spiritual and apostolic life by concern for the very poor, the "suffering members" of Jesus Christ. It was no doubt that concern which led her after her stay at Carmel to go to live at the Hospital for Incurables where abandoned terminally-ill patients were received. But the "Ladies of the Incurables," although completely dedicated to the most frightful suffering, were not religious and they made no vows. Adelaide did not find at the Hospital for Incurables what she was seeking.

From the Hospital for the Incurables she went to the house of the Bude nuns (also called Retreat Sisters because of their dedication to retreat work for women). Adelaide knew them well for she had probably made at least three retreats at their convent: a group retreat at Pentecost, 1774; a private retreat in 1776; and perhaps the retreat for the feast of the Assumption, 1783. The Bude nuns also ran small schools for poor children and assisted the sick in the area of their convent.

Adelaide then went to live at the Bude Retreat House in about 1785. She brought with her linens, furniture and all her belongings.

As will be seen later, the Retreat Sisters made simple, temporary vows and followed a rule requiring much prayer but they formed only an association.

God had other plans for Adelaide.

We have her three successive sojourns: The Carmel, The Hospital for Incurables, The Retreat House, in order to research the place where according to the greatest probability she wrote her Project, a plan of prime importance for the future Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. It is plausible that she drew up the text in 1785 or thereabouts at the Retreat House for it was in fact the rule of life of the Retreat House in Rennes which Adelaide de Cicé incorporated into her proposed project for the new form of religious society she envisaged.

Document V in the Appendix gives the complete text of the Project. Our present work will aim to emphasize particularly the salient points discernible from a careful reading.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Mother de Cicé's letter to Father de Clorivière, September of 1788. In it she describes her family situation and her financial state.

<sup>22</sup> The commentaries in this section of the present volume presupposes a prior, complete reading of the Project. We did not wish at this point to go through the text paragraph by paragraph.

We consider first the title of the Project for it indicates the end pursued:

To the Greater Glory of God. Project for a Pious Society.

Let us at once discard all ambiguity about the meaning of the adjective “Pious.” In that era only members of orders who pronounced solemn vows were recognized as “Religious.” This did not in any way detract from the religious authenticity of the life in the other Institutes and indeed it was a truly religious life which Adelaide de Cicé was seeking. The future would show this unequivocally.

From the very first lines of the Project, the design of a community life was clearly affirmed:

The idea is that several persons would join together and would live in common at either a retreat house or hospital, despite the fact that they would still remain contributors to the community where they would have established themselves.

Such coexistence in the midst of another community may at first glance appear astonishing. Did Adelaide envisage it as definitive in order to take advantage of an already established framework and thus free the Sisters from the multiple material restraints that would have hindered them from giving themselves totally to prayer and works of charity? Nobody can say. Perhaps experience might have dictated other solutions to her. But the Sisters (this is the name given in the Project) would be living a separate life within the religious framework outside of the Society. Only liturgies in the chapel and eventually certain apostolic works would bring her Sisters into actual encounter with the religious in whose convent they would be living. Reading, meals, work and recreation would find the sisters together. They would be living in obedience to the Superior they had chosen.

Doubtlessly recalling her postulancy at the Visitation Monastery and the benefits she had derived from it, Adelaide de Cicé specified the Rule which was to inspire the life of the Sisters:

Insofar as possible they will follow the spirit of St. Francis de Sales and the wise Constitutions of the Visitation insofar as these may fit in with the works of charity undertaken according to the first plan of the Saint for his Institute uniting the active life with the interior life of his Daughters.

“Insofar as possible....” Adelaide did not propose unconditionally these first Constitutions of the Visitation. It is clear that she expected to have lived the Project with others before giving specific details. Nevertheless the orientation was clearly indicated, it was a question of uniting the active life and the contemplative life and this is the second salient point in the Project.

A great part of the Project is devoted to prayer life. It included Mass, office, two half-hours of mental prayer – one-half hour after the thirty-minute period of reading and one-half hour before the Blessed Sacrament after vespers – recitation of one or two rosaries, reading of the lives of the saints or other reading during manual work, “frequent” visits each day to Our

Lord in His Sacrament of love” and visits during “all their comings and goings in the house and even outside.” This was characteristic of Mother de Cicé’s Eucharistic devotion. There was to be a serious concern for avoiding occasions of useless distraction except when charity required it.

It is hoped that there will be enough members to permit each one to spend an entire week, or at least several days, without going out, thus preserving the spirit of recollection. However, the small number and the needs of the neighbor might determine otherwise.

“The needs of the neighbor....” After having contemplated the Lord in prayer, the Sisters were to find Him and serve Him in their brothers.

Some would attend to visits to the sick either on the outside or inside (it would always be well to settle where there would be some poor persons and some sick ones nearby) and to good works. The others will occupy themselves in work in common as much as possible for the church or for the poor.

Later on Adelaide de Cicé added a new dimension:

They will be occupied in the retreat work or other good works of their respective houses.

In still another paragraph (and here let us note that the Project as written up did not really follow a pre-established plan) we find these lines which prefigured clearly the spirit of the future “Society of the Heart of Mary”:

They will have no anxiety about themselves so that they will be entirely devoted to prayer and good works and will offer themselves to God through obedience to perform all works which Providence will assign to them. Thus they might be called the Daughters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin since through Mary they will be offering themselves to Our Lord in order to fulfill all of His wishes while wanting nothing for themselves except the spiritual and temporal good of the neighbor.

“Do whatever He tells you.” This total availability to God’s will was already fully expressed in Adelaide de Cicé’s Project. Later the Constitutions of the Society would have nothing to add on this point.

The problem of religious vows was not yet touched. At first glance it seemed to have a restricted place in the Project but in fact it was subjacent to the entire text. Immediately after the brief introduction, “The idea is that several persons etc.”, there are found these lines:

They will make for one year only the simple vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.

This corresponded to the customs of that era concerning societies and associations of this type. The same holds true for this statement found further on in the Project:

It will be a free state of life with commitment for only one year. If this is a satisfying form of life, the commitment will be renewed each year through the hands of the Superior on the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

But the text gave very clear specifics, i.e. it is the superior who designates the sisters who will “attend to visiting the sick...” “or attend to other good works...” “depending on whether the superior deems it necessary.” The sisters would offer themselves to God “by means of obedience” to carry out the good works which Providence will ask of them. The sisters will not make visits unless necessary but only “for purposes of charity,” “with the permission of the superior to whom a complete report must be given.”

Finally there was this paragraph on the practice of the vow of poverty. We quote the paragraph in its entirety:

The simple vow of poverty will not prevent each one from having the benefit of personal inheritances but the simple vow of obedience will permit her to use them only with the express permission of the Superior. Each member will turn over her entire income to the Superior who will use it for the support

and the needs of the members<sup>23</sup> of this society and devote the remainder to the different needs of the poor. In this way the members’ goods will be held in common, as among the first Christians, in order to serve the various needs of their indigent brethren.

How could we not see in this (except in a few details) the spirit of the vow of poverty as it was later to be practiced in the Society; the honestly necessary, the community purse, the sharing of goods with one another and with the poor according to the needs of each one as among the first Christians...?

It would most certainly be easy to note also the points of the Project which are alien to the Society as conceived, viz., life exclusively in community, frequency of exercises in common, only temporary vows, surrender of personal management of one’s goods, etc. But such debate would be pointless. Such as it was perhaps at its first draft but already firmly outlined with regard to essential aspects, the Project already revealed the spirit of the future co-founder of the Society of the Heart of Mary.

---

<sup>23</sup> Payment to the Community receiving them. This community would provide lodging and meals.

\* \* \* \* \*

### PROVIDENTIAL MEETING WITH FATHER DE CLORIVIÈRE

During her stay at the Retreat House in Rennes in 1787, on the eve of her thirty-eighth birthday, Adelaide yielded to her family's insistence. She went to the mineral waters at Dinan doubtlessly because of the pulmonary weakness from which she would suffer all her life long.

She had already spent some time in the city of Rennes, staying – as she did on this occasion – with the Ursuline Sisters of St. Charles where Father de Clorivière used to hear confessions. We must recall that in September, 1786, he had been named superior of the College (Seminary) of Dinan. Perhaps Adelaide had already met him there. This would explain that the first letter from Father de Clorivière which she had kept was dated July, 1787, presupposing a correspondence already in course, at least in its very beginnings. Adelaide did indeed have a director in Rennes, Jesuit Father de la Croix. However, he did not seem to have completely understood the problems facing the person he was directing. Adelaide, in turn, was undoubtedly struck by Father de Clorivière's spiritual depth. Be that as it may, it was on Saturday, August 4, 1787, feast of St. Dominic<sup>24</sup> that Mademoiselle de Cicé revealed her conscience to the guide who (she had a presentiment) had been sent by divine Providence. She told him of her "Project" which was the fruit of a long maturation. In it he saw hidden "the designs of God on me."

With his vast supernatural experience, Father de Clorivière must have rapidly understood the soul thus opening out to him. He must also have felt the rare quality of Adelaide's personality. With the greatest attention, he would listen to her on many occasions. During the inevitable absences on his part or hers,<sup>25</sup> he would continue his counsel in letters. These absences have proved felicitous for us since – especially during Father de Clorivière's long imprisonment – they provided a correspondence of inestimable value.

After the first meeting on August 4, Father de Clorivière, who was interested in getting to know Adelaide better, suggested that she make the retreat he was to preach at the convent of the Daughters of the Cross in Saint-Servan. The letters exchanged afterwards permit us to follow the deepening of spiritual relationships between the future founders of the Society. In fact, Adelaide kept the letters which Father de Clorivière sent her as well as the drafts or copies of the first letters which she wrote to him during the same period. Through one of her letters we learn that the devil seemed to have waited to trouble the retreat at Saint-Servan by casting anxiety into Adelaide's soul.

---

<sup>24</sup> Later Father de Clorivière would recall this date with emotion. Cf. Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), pp. 138, 288, 359. Since the post-Vatican II reform of the liturgical calendar, the date of the feast of St. Dominic has been changed.

<sup>25</sup> A. Rayez, op.cit., Part III, pp. 211 ff.

I felt such haste to leave the retreat house of La Croix that it seemed the very earth was burning my feet.

She wrote in mid-October of 1787 to Father de Clorivière. It is true that after having followed Father de Clorivière's advice and confided her Project to Mother Marie of Jesus, superior at La Croix, she regained some peace but there remained the "perplexity of not knowing how to work out a solution."

We can surmise that in having given such advice, Father de Clorivière was already envisaging the possibility of a stay for Adelaide at the Convent of La Croix where she might have found a place favorable to trying out her Project.

Unfortunately we now have only a fragment of the letter she wrote on leaving Saint-Servan describing her retreat and her future problems. But Father de Clorivière's reply, dated Dinan, September 29, 1787, gives enlightening specifics in his judgments on the spiritual life of his correspondent and her Project. Only the principal passages will be given here.

The first paragraph indicated the climate of faith of Father de Clorivière's direction:

I have read with attention the detailed account you sent me of what is taking place within you. The confidence you show me makes me hope that the Lord will not allow me to say anything which would not be for His glory and for the good of your soul. That is what I earnestly ask of Him through the intercession of His Holy Mother.

There followed two paragraphs commenting in detail on Adelaide's description of her "imperfections" and "evil inclinations." Father de Clorivière's reply was at once clear and suited to encouraging this troubled soul:

You still have many imperfections, your bad inclinations are not yet mortified as they should be; vanity, envy, cowardliness, one by one give you painful struggles; they often influence your conduct. You are even overcome sometimes and you lose sight all at once of your better resolutions. Well, what conclusion should you draw from this? That you are here on earth in a time and place of warfare<sup>26</sup>...Cowardly souls are content with themselves...Those who make generous efforts to advance in perfection perceive, on the contrary, that they are full of defects....

Enter then into the designs of God. This knowledge which He gives you is an effect of his goodness....Would you be less miserable if you knew less about your miseries...? Pray, work, but do not be disquieted. Your work is necessary but it should be peaceful work. Count much less on your own efforts than on the goodness of the Lord....

---

<sup>26</sup> Father de Clorivière would subsequently repeat this image both on the spiritual and temporal level.

The next lines must have resounded strongly within Adelaide:

Although you should not leave your miseries inasmuch as they are an obstacle to the purity of love, nevertheless you must bear them. Resign yourself to them since God Himself puts up with them and permits them. He can draw His glory from them. They are perhaps useful to your soul as dung is to the soil...Bear them with patience as long as God is not pleased to grant your prayer. May these miseries serve to keep you always in a holy fear and you will derive great advantage from them.

Then there were counsels on prayer:

Your manner of prayer seems good to me. Don't ever be worried because you cannot adhere to the subject of your meditation. The prayer of love is better and that is what you are making. Great liberty is necessary. Act in such a way that prayer may be not only easy but agreeable...Little by little your prayer will simplify itself....You will act less and God will act more. My little treatise on prayer<sup>27</sup> will tell you what you must do.

After having strongly counseled his correspondent to ask her confessor for permission to receive communion daily, Father de Clorivière spoke of the Project:

As to your plan, you are awaiting a decision from me and I feel drawn to give it to you after having consulted the Lord and said Holy Mass for that intention. You may go to LaCroix. But this supposes that your confessor is of the same opinion. The work that you propose is in itself very good.

Father de Clorivière insisted again on the need for her to obtain Father de la Croix's consent:

If your confessor is of another opinion, do not insist....If he approves of this step, do not seek any other advice.

The final decision, therefore, was left to Father de la Croix. For Adelaide this was to be a long and painful time of waiting, a veritable purifying proof to prepare her the better to see "the designs of God" for her.

"We must do the works of the Lord with prudence," Father de Clorivière continued closing with these prophetic words:

Time is a great teacher. It manifests little by little the designs of the Lord in our regard. We must be content with knowing what it pleases the Lord to make known to us. It would be foolish for us to wish to raise the veil entirely if He only wishes it to be raised in part.

---

<sup>27</sup> His "Considerations on the Exercise of Prayer and Meditation," composed in 1788, remained in handwritten form until 1802, date of the first edition.

Faithful to the directive given her, Adelaide therefore submitted to her confessor in Rennes the possibility of a trial for her Project with the Daughters of the Cross in Saint-Servan. He proved to be very reticent and saddest of all for Adelaide he judged that the greatest obstacle came from her, from her character, even from her inconstancy. In a long, undated letter written in response to Father de Clorivière's letter of September 29, 1787, Adelaide gave a point by point account of what she had discussed with Father de la Croix as well as his reactions. She also revealed to Father de Clorivière the various movements which were troubling her spirit, fear alternating with hope and an immense desire to know God's will.<sup>28</sup>

It must be repeated that in this entire situation there never entered the idea of definitely giving up her Project. It was because she saw God's design for her that Adelaide suffered so much over the obstacles on her path. Her seeming inconstancy would vanish as soon as the action willed by God would replace the beginnings abandoned as fruitless almost as soon as they had been outlined.

While awaiting the hour for such action, Adelaide was in a cruel, perplexing situation between her regular confessor, Father de la Croix, who barely approved the Project, and a new director, Father de Clorivière, in whom she saw the providential guide sent by God:

I often asked the good Lord to make me know a person to be head of this good work provided it were to succeed for His glory. I will admit to you Father, that almost as soon as I became acquainted with you, I hoped that the Lord would grant me this grace. And the more I go along, the more I desire to place myself entirely in your hands to do whatever will be more pleasing to our Lord. If He were to inspire you to permit me to make the vow of obeying you, I feel my difficulties would vanish. I would direct all my efforts toward the obedience I would be rendering to Our Lord Jesus Christ through you.

Quite correctly, Father de Clorivière refused this vow of obedience which Adelaide was not to make until June 6, 1791 (See Document VII in Appendix). But he did not however, refuse to continue counseling her. On November 27, 1787, he wrote to her:

Your soul is very dear to me because I believe it is very dear to Our Lord and if it pleases our divine Master to use me to help you fulfill His merciful designs on you, be assured that I will strive to respond to everything he might ask of me in this.

The promise of his support was an anchor of hope for Adelaide who suffered from perplexities caused by the reticence of Father de la Croix and increasing mistrust of herself engendered by those silences.

---

<sup>28</sup> Appendix, Document VI, for this long letter, which is particularly important to understanding Mother de Cicé's thinking at this time.

Her one hope as she wrote to Father de Clorivière:

The only thing that would make him (Father de la Croix) see a semblance of possibility in this project is your feeling on the matter. He told me that all I needed to do was to write to you about it, that you might possibly have had new thoughts about it... He urged me to maintain myself in the disposition of doing God's will when it will be known to me and frequently to say to Our Lord, "Speak, your servant is listening...."

Now all my desire is that I be shown God's will and I hope that all my concern will be to follow it. You have given me Father de la Croix's decision as the sign by which I am to recognize God's will. I have obeyed you....He recommends the matter to God and does not prohibit me from concerning myself with it but he himself states no opinion and I believe that he will do so only on the information you will send me.

At this point there was, therefore, a half-open door and Father de Clorivière, in his letter of November 27, seemed favorable to Adelaide's making a trial period with the Daughters of the Cross despite Father de la Croix's objections.

The remarks that Father de la Croix made to you seem very wise to me. You ought to distrust your character, but I do not believe that your distrust should go so far as to arouse within you an excessive fear and hinder you from doing what you believe to be the will of the Lord.

And since family reasons and other reasons seemed to render some delay necessary, Father de Clorivière returned to the idea already expressed in his letter of September 29:

God's work is never accomplished without difficulties....

Know how to join humility and confidence and you will never find obstacles that you cannot surmount. I should find it difficult to persuade myself that the desires that you have do not come from God or that He would give them to you in vain. Constantly attach yourself to His will and get rid more and more of your own will.

The will of God generally shows itself by degrees. It is not necessary to raise the veil which covers our eyes. This would be rash presumption. We must be content to know what He wishes and carry it out faithfully. It is by this fidelity that one merits to see it develop as if by degrees and then finally to see the accomplishment of all the design of God in our regard.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Father de Clorivière's own life is a remarkable exemplification of these lines.

There followed these lines which seemed definitely to approve the trial period at the La Croix Convent:

When you see the time is at hand that you can go to La Croix, you will doubtless not forget to let the Superior know so that she may keep a suitable room for you. If circumstances permit, it would perhaps not be out of order for you to take the route which passes through this place and I could then talk over with you what you will have to do and the way you should act at La Croix in the beginning.

Such a response presented all the elements needed for Adelaide to feel encouraged to persevere in the path which the Lord seemed to be clearly pointing out for her. Her conclusion would thus be all the greater when the whole matter would again be questioned brusquely. This would be a final trial which would confer a definitive value on the spiritual discernment to follow.

During January, 1788, Adelaide again communicated with Father de Clorivière who had written to her on November 26, 1787. Since that letter Father de la Croix had proved to be more than ever reticent. These lines reveal Adelaide's point of disturbance:

I fear I will never be able to fulfill God's designs in a more perfect form of life....There are moments when I fear that my project is but an illusion of the devil who – under pretext of a greater good – wants to turn me away from God's path for me.

Father de Clorivière responded on February 4, 1788, to this anguished letter. At first he reassured Adelaide that her faults were not "something so frightening but only a matter of continual combats and humiliations." He counseled her not to interrupt her daily communions which she needed "to advance without stopping as she pursued the painful but sublime road" by which Our Lord was leading her.

As regards the Project, Father de Clorivière began by placing his penitent on guard against a too strong desire to leave the condition in which God had placed her. Such desires might spring "from natural instability of the mind which enjoys change, or even from a subtle self-love which grows weary from walking behind others."

There followed the description of the signs of the spirit of God:

Those desires which come from God are accompanied by peace and calm. They reanimate our ardor. They make us work with more care at our perfection. When they bear on something out of the common order, there is something more pressing, more urgent about them. But there is nothing about them which should lead to impatience because they rest for their accomplishment on God Who makes known His will in a clear and positive manner....God smoothes the way and brings it about that many things concur to point out to us what we have to do. The advice of a confessor is without doubt one of the principal things.

Find out by these signs the nature of your desires and if they show the appearance of holiness, if they are holy in themselves, then you should follow them. Do not make up your mind; do not act until you are very sure that they come from God. It does not seem to me that your confessor has given his entire consent; that is why I speak this way. If we think differently, it is I who am deceived and not he. It is he to whom you must listen and not I.

Then Father de Clorivière invited his correspondent to suspend all decisions without nevertheless definitely closing the door on the Project:

Consider only whether you have these marks of the Divine will which I think I see in you. You could be deceived therein. I could also be deceived without God having been offended.

Despite the fact that this consideration was kept open, it is easy to perceive what reverberations these reflections might have had on a nature as sensitive as Adelaide's. For us it is an occasion to see our first Mother witnessing to her humility, her docility, her perfect loyalty and her deep attachment to the "designs of God" for her which are also the "designs of God" for us.

Adelaide's letter to Father de la Croix on February 11, 1788, revealed a fear which was not to leave her throughout her lifetime and which was to be her torment:

I fear that I may be deceiving you in deceiving myself about my dispositions.

But further in that letter she insisted again:

I have not conquered the disquiet I feel, viz., that I may be deceiving you while deceiving myself. But I can answer myself that by God's grace I wish for nothing more than that you clearly see my dispositions in this as in all things, that you see also what I believe are the motivations which lead me on and in which I fear deceiving myself. For I need infinitely to distrust my self-love which I find everywhere.

Above all, I am troubled about what I told you concerning the signs mentioned by Father de Clorivière to discover whether my desires come from God. I told you that I thought I was aware of some of those signs. But, in reflection, I feel how much my self-love can easily deceive me on that. Only you must judge, not I, and I absolutely abide by what you will decide for going ahead with the project or abandoning it.

We do not possess Father de la Croix's reply but Adelaide furnished its essential points in her letter of mid-February to Father de Clorivière.

It seems that Father de la Croix had been impressed with Adelaide's integrity for he had replied that "he had never had opposition to the project whose execution he foresaw as

difficult but he told me that he favored a trial period.” Then she wrote this liberating sentence, “Father is indeed pleased to see that my entire plan is in your hands.”

The last page of her letter is of tremendous importance because it shows with what certainty the spiritual discernment was made:

I believe I can say that I have never felt greater peace, calm and satisfaction than when I received your first letter.<sup>30</sup> In it I glimpsed for the first time a faint possibility of carrying out what I feel able to call God’s designs for me – without however, being exempt while saying this from the fear of deceiving myself....Nothing has spurred me on in virtue so effectively as the hope of being called to lead a more perfect life in which I can love and serve Our Lord in a completely different way and contribute to making Him served and Loved. I feel also that these views have given me much more courage. ...I have never had greater hope and desire to serve God than after you made me see the possibility of my project.

Those are precious lines indeed revealing the mounting strength which will bear fruit at the hour chosen by God.

We do not know whether Father de Clorivière replied to Adelaide before his letter of March 27, 1788, in which he seemed to agree fully with the intentions of his penitent. He studied objectively the plans submitted to him and gave us a precise description of the life which our first Mother hoped to lead:

I am seeking to give myself a clear, concrete idea of your designs and I am going to lay before you here what I think of them. You will tell me I have understood them well. Only after that can I say anything positive on the subject.<sup>31</sup>

You wish to give yourself up altogether to works of charity following the attraction that Our Lord has given you for this kind of work and to enjoy the advantages of religious community life....The object of your charity is not precisely the poor who are in the hospitals because they seem to you to be receiving sufficient help. It is rather the poor who are abandoned in their homes and who are often in the greatest misery and it is in order to be in a position to help them that you think you should keep the ownership of your goods....

You wish to join to these works of charity the merit proper to the religious state,<sup>32</sup> the practice of the Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience as far

---

<sup>30</sup> Letter of September 29, 1787.

<sup>31</sup> I.e., “tell you something positive.”

<sup>32</sup> Religion here means “religious life in the manner of that era.”

as this practice is compatible with the exercise of these works of charity which I have just mentioned.

Father de Clorivière had perfectly grasped the two major facets of the Project, religious life and apostolic charity. His letter continued with specifics on conditions for carrying out the trial period in the midst of a religious community as Adelaide desired. It was to be “a type of period of probation or of novitiate.”

The house of the Daughters of the Cross seemed to respond to the conditions but Adelaide would not find there anybody to associate to her Project:

I do not believe that your project would be of a kind to allow you to associate anyone else to this kind of life nor could you propose any other end to yourself than your own perfection unless, when you make the trial, God should enlarge your views which could very well happen. Desire only His good pleasure in everything; ask only for that and you will see it accomplished in yourself perhaps in a manner very different from what you think.

Those were indeed prophetic words.

Adelaide replied in the beginning of April. The end of her letter is particularly interesting since it recalls the principal points of the Project:

My first plan was to join with a few women of like mind as myself in order to perform together the spiritual and corporal works of charity and to encourage each other in the practice of serving God and our neighbor for the love of God, Our Lord.

It is also my desire that we have a particular devotion to Our Lord and His Blessed Mother, and that all our exercises of piety and works of charity be done particularly in the name of Jesus.

Adelaide repeated the condition of the Project to insist on what was later to become the characteristic of the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary:

I thought we would enjoy the freedom of dedicating ourselves not to one particular work but to all works which Providence might entrust to us and obtain for ourselves only the spiritual and temporal good of our neighbor.

At this point the unfinished draft copy of the letter ended. But the essential had been completely stated.

The period which followed saw the beginning of the first political troubles which were to agitate Rennes and all of France, upheavals announcing the coming Revolution. Some of Adelaide’s relatives, notably her brother Augustin, were involved in the political conflicts of the hour. On this occasion Father de Clorivière permitted us to see the influence which he deemed Mademoiselle de Cicé capable of exerting on the people around her:

There are times when one finds souls well-disposed to receive the good advice one can give them. Such is, it seems to me, the situation in which you are at present. They will listen to you willingly and I am well persuaded that you will not neglect the occasion to introduce into the souls of these persons who are with you the sentiments of piety which the Lord has given you.

It mattered little then if the departure for Rennes was deferred.

Adapt yourself to the circumstances that we must look upon as signs by which Divine Providence manifests His will to you.

This was an instruction which more and more would be applied in the course of the life of the two founders.

At the end of July, 1788, Adelaide, who was in Dinan wrote to Father de Clorivière. He had been too occupied to see her at any length. With the approach of the definite step to be taken, she felt herself gripped by the anguish which so often tried her and which through grace became an instrument of spiritual purification:

I am more than ever frightened to go to the Convent of La Croix. I am experiencing doubts, repulsion, fears....Everything terrifies me.

Nevertheless, she understood that only total submission of herself to God would give her the peace to which her heart aspired:

After communion I asked Our Lord to make Himself Master of my heart and to grant me the grace of being His in entirety and not half-way.

Father de Clorivière's rather brief reply of July 28 attested to the purity of conscience which the Lord demands of those He wishes totally for Himself:

I believe that you ought to be more faithful than ever to your Communions. These disturbances that you feel are not a reason for depriving yourself of them. They do not even appear culpable to me; you are right, however, in thinking that they have their source in some imperfection which the Lord wishes you to correct. The graces that He has given you and is still giving you require from you a more perfect attitude, a more continual recollection, perhaps even more sacrifice. Without the spirit of sacrifice, you will never be fitted to execute His designs no matter how much good will you may have.

There followed this appeal to Adelaide's personal responsibility:

You must consult the Holy Spirit and be very faithful to following His voice.

And finally, there were these counsels:

What I advise strongly and what should be the principal fruit of your Communion is an intimate attachment to the adorable person of Our Lord, an attachment which will make His presence habitual which will unite you to Him with respectful familiarity and detach you from everything else in such a way that all your most just and natural affections will become altogether spiritual.

From his next letter dated August 5, 1788, we take only this new encouragement for Adelaide to simplify her meditation:

Your meditation, it seems to me, should be rather in silence and recollection than in action.

Later in that letter he made the following reference to the political disturbances of the moment:

We do not know what disastrous events we are preserved for.

A bit before August 15, Adelaide – still in Dinan – wrote Father de Clorivière a letter revealing her thirst for the Eucharistic Presence and the graces attached to it for her. This was occasioned by a letter from a well-intentioned friend concerned about Adelaide's austere life and long visits to church:

Madame de Carman who writes me...cannot understand the great need I have to spend as much time as possible before the Blessed Sacrament. Much less can she know what is taking place in me to be in church regularly for adoration. I truly regard it providential that I have been in this place during this holy time!<sup>33</sup>...In my almost habitual dispositions, I do not know what would become of me if I did not go to church.

Then, referring to her interior anguish, she added:

. . . I cannot conceive the change occurring in me at certain times. In the presence of Our Lord all my fears, my sorrows disappear. My courage increases as well as my desire to give myself to His service without reserve. And my resolution to surrender myself to all He wishes of me then strengthens me more and more. After that, I am amazed at Our Lord's graces for a subject as unworthy as I.

Father de Clorivière then wrote to Adelaide on the evening of the Assumption. It was a very skillful letter which she could show to her friends who were disturbed by her austerities. He included a brief personal note telling her she could continue the way of life she had adopted, provided she took the necessary precautions for her health.

---

<sup>33</sup> Probably a time of perpetual adoration.

Another rather brief, undated letter from Father de Clorivière to Mademoiselle de Cicé at Dinan must have preceded her going to the Convent of La Croix in Saint-Servan. The letter was an appeal to confidence. Its last sentence concerning the political agitations was suggestive:

As to business affairs, leave to everyone liberty to think as pleases them. You, without allowing yourself to become involved in personal interests, accustom yourself to see nothing but God and to wish all that He wishes.

“Wish all that God wishes...” This was the profound desire expressed in the resolutions already taken at the end of the retreat of 1776 when in renewing the “consecration” made to her “divine Spouse,” Adelaide added:

I am ready to carry out His will as He manifests it.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### MOTHER DE CICÉ’S NOVITIATE

Finally on September 8, 1788, Adelaide moved into the convent of the Daughters of the Cross. There she would, as it were, place herself in the school of the religious life conducted by Mother Marie of Jesus. As a member of their community set-up, Adelaide would take part in the activities of service to the poor while awaiting the still remote fulfillment of a Project whose future remained uncertain.

Adelaide was almost thirty-nine years old. She had been favored with singular graces since her adolescence. In the course of several deceiving experiences, she had sought to fulfill the call of God. Three years earlier she had conceived and drawn up a project for a new form of religious life and the carrying out of the project posed serious problems. In the face of the obstacles encountered, her delicacy and uprightness of conscience made her fear that she herself might be the principal stumbling-block to God’s designs for her. This precipitated a spiritual crisis which caused her a long suffering and which at the same time would maintain intact her conviction of being called to a vocation outside the traditional framework of the religious life of that era.

Once the major obstacles were removed, notably Father de la Croix’s opposition, there still remained many exterior difficulties for her to overcome before devoting herself completely to the test of religious life at La Croix Convent.

Under humble and truly self-effacing appearances it was an already well affirmed personality who on that September day in 1788 crossed the threshold of the convent of the Daughters of the Cross.

The superior, Mother Marie of Jesus, who received her and continued to form her, was fifty years old. Father de Clorivière esteemed Mother Marie of Jesus as a woman of interior life.<sup>34</sup> She also held the esteem of Adelaide who had already met her. In order to accept this very special type of novitiate amid the La Croix community, it was necessary for Adelaide to have a great breadth of spirit and a disinterested concern for the greater glory of God.

Indeed the Daughters of the Cross followed the spirit of St. Francis de Sales. And had not Adelaide herself written into her Project that the members might follow “the wise constitutions of the Visitation” as St. Francis de Sales had at first conceived them?

The community at Saint-Servan abounded in apostolic activities: retreat work, a day school and boarding school for little girls and adolescent girls, workshop, residence for women, etc.

Adelaide’s arrival on September 8 coincided, undoubtedly by design, with the beginning of the community retreat which she would follow in its entirety.

On that day Father de Clorivière wrote her a short encouraging letter drawing her attention to the dangers she habitually encountered in her spiritual life:

. . .No longer look backward. What would be the purpose of anxious returns to the past but to discourage you and deprive you of the graces for which the Lord has destined you....Never fear that you will go astray by throwing yourself blindly, so to speak, into the arms of God. Trust and self-surrender are two virtues which until now you have not known very well but which henceforth must be your torch...Frequently ask the Lord for these virtues. He will grant you everything you ask.

Do all the good you can but always with the sanction of obedience. I say no more to you in this connection. Obedience covers everything.

During the retreat Adelaide drew up a long letter to Father de Clorivière who was at the time preaching parish missions. That letter touched on various questions spiritual and material. It was clear that Adelaide had seriously prepared her departure from Rennes and had placed her affairs in order. But she wished to keep Father de Clorivière informed of everything that concerned her. She wished also to ask advice on what to do during her novitiate. It was apparent that she had a deep desire to place everything under the control of obedience.

Following the custom for resident women, Adelaide’s maid had accompanied her to the convent of La Croix. Like so many future Daughters of the Heart of Mary, Mademoiselle de Cicé already faced the problems of maintaining appearances as far as her family and social milieu were concerned while at the same time keeping her heart detached from all things.

---

<sup>34</sup> Letter of March 27, 1788. After the dispersion of her community in 1792, Mother Marie of Jesus became a Daughter of the Heart of Mary, and remained such until her death in November of 1800.

She asked Father how she must relate to her maid. She no longer wished to be served since “giving orders even to one sole person is not at all proper for someone who has come here to be the least in the house and to be trained in virtue.”

There followed significant details. Was she to keep her watch or buy a simpler silver one? Should she get rid of all superfluous clothing she had brought to La Croix Convent? How was she to distribute her alms? Then she posed this very important question:

How must I relate to the superior? What permissions must I ask of her?  
Must I give to the poor only after she has given me her permission to do so?  
Would I not be dispensed from that when I am outside the house on unforeseen occasions?

Knowing that Father de Clorivière was very busy preaching missions, she asked that he write on his return to Dinan. She also wished to know if she might occasionally visit relatives when she went to Saint-Malo.

Wishing to be a religious in all things, she wished to have the same food as the Daughters of the Cross but this seemed difficult because she took her meal at the boarders’ table.

Also she wrote:

The Sisters’ penances in the refectory<sup>35</sup> would help me overcome my self-love. But I do not keep from you, Father, the fact that this would embarrass me especially because all the other boarders would see it. Nevertheless, Father, if you think I should try to do it, I will ascertain from the Superior if it is possible.

She then came back to the subject of her relations with Mother Mary of Jesus:

I told the Superior that Our Lord has placed me in her hands since you have put me there. I begged her to tell me of my defects and to have the charity to give me the advice she thinks appropriate.<sup>36</sup> She showed me much kindness and she spoke to me of the account of conscience which is made to her.<sup>37</sup> Please tell me Father, if that is your plan for me. I will do my best but I will suffer embarrassment more because of my self-love than because of lack of practice.

---

<sup>35</sup> References to coulpes (accusations of faults) which used to be made in the refectory.

<sup>36</sup> “Suitable” – i.e. Counsels suitable to a given situation.

<sup>37</sup> The account of conscience made to a superior was customary at that time in religious congregations. Father de Clorivière outlined a model for the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. Certain abuses in the practice led, in the next century, to its suppression for all religious.

At this point we admire Adelaide's transparent humility. She never concealed but rather pointed up the tendencies of her nature which she had to overcome in order to be faithful to grace.

Along the same line of total dependence, she drafted a letter to Father de Clorivière describing her financial state and the division of the family inheritance among her brothers and sisters.

I thought, dear Father that it would be useful to you in directing me toward what you think God is asking of me, to know more of my financial position. What I write here may enable you to ask questions I had not thought of. My responses to them will acquaint you with everything that concerns me.

Her letter ended with this repetition:

I think it is useful for you to know the extent of my income so that you can judge how I am to use it.

Indeed, her letter reflected a poverty of dependence.

In the beginning of October 1788 another letter again reflected Mademoiselle de Cicé's state of desolation. Many times in her life we find these periods of internal upheavals before which her good will, her purity of intention and her heroic generosity would remain powerless, but this letter marks the last time we have her own description of it. In the period after the French Revolution we glean echoes of similar situation only through the letters of Father de Clorivière. In reading such letters we must recall her trials during her novitiate.

Permit me Father to report to you my feelings since the retreat. I am undergoing a continual experience of restlessness, disturbance, discouragement, sorrow and tendency toward evil. Then I pass in an instant from this state of pain, insensitivity and indifference for my salvation to a state of peace, confidence, joy, horror for the least faults and ardor for perfection, charity towards my neighbor, zeal for my salvation and desire to obtain it. In the negative state I feel only indifference, moodiness and sometimes even bitterness towards my neighbor. It seems that all I can do is prevent this disposition from being noticed for it does come through and I then find myself not quite attentive or considerate towards the persons with whom I live.

She next related what must have been particularly painful to her:

In that negative state I also feel a very great withdrawal from prayer. I feel so disturbed that I cannot concentrate (at least concentration seems impossible). The violence I would have to do to myself to make me pray as I should, seems beyond my strength and I consider useless the efforts I would be making to put myself at peace. It then seems indispensable to abandon prayer in such a state and I really would take such action since I see the futility of anything I do in that negative state. However, I am held back

from such action when I experience that feeling at the time of community prayer.

Adelaide's confusion concerning this internal turmoil can all the more be measured in her perhaps excessive but nevertheless sincere recognition of finding within herself the source of her suffering:

I find in myself a depth of self-love so deep-rooted that I fear lest it be the motive of all my conduct. I sometimes repudiate these wicked motives which take possession of me and control my speech and actions but the feelings of vanity still give me satisfaction. I am really convinced as you have told me that my troubles come only from pride, for I admit that the least thing upsets me. The fear of all that might humiliate me or draw the slightest scorn on me is usually the first cause of the trouble and turbulence in which I almost always live.

There is exaggeration here. The same Adelaide was ready publicly to make a *coulpe* in the refectory and she was preparing shortly to adopt the manner of dress of poor persons.<sup>38</sup>

To react against that self-love she was asking Father de Clorivière's permission to make a general confession which would be a most difficult experience for her. Knowing how easily turmoil took over the conscience of his penitent, Father de Clorivière remained silent on this request.

Writing to her on October 21, Father de Clorivière broached another subject, Adelaide's charitable activities carried on in all the ardor and delicacy of her love for the poor. He advised her before making any decision to refer to the guide whom God had given to her in the person of Mother Marie of Jesus.

He then wrote the following concerning an unforgettable episode in Adelaide de Cicé's life: the change of dress as of October 4, 1788, feast of St. Francis of Assisi:

I am not astonished at the little warfare that is being waged against you but all the reasons that they give you do not seem solid to me and certainly do not counterbalance those which have caused you to act. The change that you have made in your exterior has not been the result of a passing movement of devotion. You have reflected for a long time and you have omitted nothing which could help to make you know the will of God. If others act otherwise you do not blame them. But they should know that God does not lead everyone along the same paths. No one could do what you have done with less fuss. There would have been none if these good persons had not made it. Besides, you do not attach any importance to this

---

<sup>38</sup> Let us recall that in this era the different classes of society had their respective manner of dress, and all deviations in custom seemed unthinkable.

step which they make so much ado about. You only seek to bury yourself alive and live for God in a perfect forgetfulness of the world.

Father de Clorivière praised the prudence with which Adelaide accomplished her change of dress to the dress of the poor. A religious of the Convent of La Croix who had witnessed the event left a most precious account of it. The statement contains an error in date (1790 instead of 1788) quite understandable in a text written long after the events described.

In 1790 Mademoiselle de Cicé came from Rennes to the Sisters of the Cross at Saint-Servan to spend some time as a resident boarder. She was dressed in the manner of her social class....Compassion for the underprivileged seemed to be her predominant trait. She dedicated herself to all such works. Not having sufficient income to relieve the needs of the poor as she desired, she made up for it by privations and above all by the entire sacrifice of all sorts of finery.

That was not sufficient for the ardor of her charity for the poor. On October 4, 1790, the feast day of St. Francis, she put on a plain dress of black wool very ordinary and simply made, a dress as was worn by working class women. A black apron and a little cap of the same plainness were added for her Sunday dress. On weekdays she wore a black skirt and blouse with a blue cotton apron. In this costume she gave medical treatment in the community parlor to all the poor persons who came for her help. When they were unable to come to her or when she feared that walking might have been injurious to their health, she herself went out to their poor little homes. There often finding them lying on the floor or on rotten straw she would return to the convent to get clean straw, firewood, soup and everything else her saving permitted...

Mademoiselle de Cicé led this kind of life and performed these good works until one or two months before the sisters of La Croix convent were obliged to follow the revolutionary law ordering the evacuation of all religious houses.

That such a type of life should have aroused criticism from those about Adelaide is not surprising. As we saw above Father de Clorivière very serenely put matters into their proper perspective. Better than that, he defended Adelaide against Father de la Croix who must have shown disapproval of her work for the poor and also for her stay at La Croix.

You have not left him in ignorance, thus I do not see that he should blame you. It was not precisely a contemplative life that you wished to join to the works of charity but a life where you would be able to practice the religious virtues especially Poverty and Obedience. You could not find a better place for this than the one you have chosen. I urged him to find one for you at Rennes. You looked there in vain.

Several days later Father de Clorivière again wrote about this matter:

I have read the letters which your good friends at Rennes have written to you and I see nothing there which would make me change my mind or which ought to change your conduct.

Then he commented on criticisms of Adelaide:

These are the ordinary complaints of even pious persons who do not know what it costs to divorce one's self from the world when God gives the invitation and you cannot doubt that He has invited you.

There followed this paragraph which is particularly interesting for it shows how much Father de Clorivière believed in "God's design" for the future co-founder.

Others admire your step as holy but they say that you are naturally inconstant and that they cannot believe that you will go through with it....It is for you, Mademoiselle, to pray and to attach yourself with constancy to the Lord in order that you may find in Him a strength and a constancy which you will not find in yourself. Besides it is good for you to show that if up to now you have not been remarkable for your constancy it was doubtless because you had not up to this time, found the path along which the Lord wanted you to walk.

Adelaide would thenceforth have to follow this path to its very end in docility to God's will despite fears, despite sorrows both interior and exterior, despite trials of all sorts which would mark the habitual course of her life until her very last days.

At this time political tension was mounting and under the pressure of events and of her family, she would momentarily be obliged to leave Saint-Servan to return to the Retreat House at Rennes. She soon left the Retreat House also to accompany her brother Augustin to Saint-Brieuc. She then returned to Saint-Servan and for a rather long time lived with the Ursulines of Dinan.

During all these displacements Father de Clorivière encouraged her to persevere in fulfilling the divine will:

Think only of serving God as best possible. Leave to Him the concern of setting the time, place and manner in which you must do it.

On January 14, 1789, he wrote in an effort to place her on guard against the least turmoil:

Perfection is indeed more God's work than ours.

He exhorted her once more to "Listen to" the Lord in meditation:

....rather than talk to Him. Do not allow meditation to cause you disturbance.

A month later feeling that Mademoiselle de Cicé was perhaps anxious for her family, he forcefully called her back to a supernatural vision of events.

After all, even if we must grieve over the calamity of our brothers and especially over everything that can offend the Lord and cause the loss of the neighbor, must we for that reason lose our peace and surrender ourselves to despondency?

He advised Mademoiselle de Cicé to find in the most intimate depth of her heart the unchanging peace which is the very peace of God as regards external matters:

Consult the Lord. Desire only the accomplishment of His will. Do not forget what you have promised Him so many times. Seek only the Lord. He will not fail to let you know what is most pleasing to Him.

Thus to remain firmly anchored in the Lord amid the vicissitudes of the world is the first requirement for accomplishing God's wishes for oneself and others.

On April 11, 1789, Father de Clorivière wrote to Adelaide who at the time was probably living at the home of her brother Augustin:

I thank God for your present dispositions. I believe as you do that the retreat and silence are what you should seek especially. But I think at the same time that you should give in to the desires of a brother whom you see to be in good dispositions and to whom you will be useful. I am too much interested in all that concerns you not to share the anxiety you feel about him.

Events took an increasingly disturbing direction during the year 1789. For example, in the area of religion, the Constituent Assembly formed from the Estates General, decreed on October 28, 1789, the suppression of all emissions of religious vows as well as the suppression of all orders and congregations in which such vows were made. (This referred to solemn vows which were recognized by the civil authority.)

We know how forcefully Father de Clorivière as pastor and as religious publicly protested against those measures in his sermon of March 25, 1790, from the pulpit at Saint-Sauveur in Dinan where he was the Lenten homilist.

Denounced and suspected by the civil authority, he resigned his post as superior of the College of Dinan. With permission from his bishop, Most Reverend Cortois de Pressigny, he decided to leave for the United States – for Maryland. There one of his former Jesuit confreres had been named Bishop of Baltimore.

On July 12, Father de Clorivière wrote to Mademoiselle de Cicé;

I am anxious about your news....Inform me...if you think it advisable that I return to Dinan at once. I am ready to do so if it is expedient. If I must remain here a few days more, write me at your leisure the news you will have received from Paris.

These lines indicate that Father de Clorivière depended on Mademoiselle de Cicé's judgment of the advisability of his returning to Dinan. In times to follow there would be many occasions evincing the great confidence which he placed on her thinking.

In that same letter (July 12, 1790), he added this line referring to the voyage to Maryland on which Mademoiselle de Cicé was to accompany him:

I shall have plenty of things to tell you about the trip. Everything here is favorable....Pray God that everything will redound to His glory.

The letter of the following day, July 13, 1790, was of paramount interest for it was written six days before the 19<sup>th</sup>, the memorable date of the inspiration which brought forth the two societies.

I am at present in the country at the home of my brother-in-law.<sup>39</sup> Your letters reached me there and I count on remaining the rest of the week unless they write me from Dinan that I can return there and that my presence is necessary. Then I shall leave immediately although I have given my word to the Daughters of La Croix to preach for them on the feast of St. Vincent de Paul next Monday<sup>40</sup> ....

You see I am uncertain as to what I shall have to do. How then can I tell you what you ought to do? I believe that at this moment we must wait to take a fixed determination until we see what will be done in this critical conjuncture in which we find ourselves.

After having assured Adelaide that she was entirely free to remain at Dinan or come to Saint-Servan, he added:

Let us bless divine Providence in everything. There is nothing that cannot turn to our advantage when we know how to conform ourselves to the adorable designs of Providence.

The closing lines of that letter seemed truly dictated by the Holy Spirit:

Let us live in hope and redouble our prayers while awaiting the events which the morrow may bring forth.

---

<sup>39</sup> Marc Desilles de Camberton, who at that time lived in Fosse-Hingant, a few kilometers from Saint-Malo.

<sup>40</sup> The date of the feast of St Vincent de Paul has been changed in the post-Vatican II reform of the liturgical calendar.

## CHAPTER II

### FATHER DE CLORIVIÈRE'S INSPIRATION COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE TWO PROJECTS

On that July 19 morning in 1790, Father de Clorivière had promised to preach the homily in honor of St. Vincent de Paul in the convent of the Daughters of the Cross in Saint-Servan. Suddenly, "on finishing his morning meditation," he received the vivid inspiration which he reported on more than one occasion;<sup>41</sup> "of a Society adapted to the circumstances of the Church of our day," a Society whose Plan had been shown to him "as in the blinking of an eye yet in rather great detail."

Sometime later (according to tradition it was Wednesday, August 18)<sup>42</sup> he received a second inspiration of a "religious Society of Young Women and Widows as might be established in these calamitous times."

We will not describe the first inspiration which is so often evoked, but will concentrate rather on the second which directly concerns the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary.

The first Plan for the Society of the men was written:

I hesitated about presenting my work to the Prelate.<sup>43</sup> This undertaking seemed to be beyond my strength. It occurred to me that I would be considered an eccentric for having entertained such an idea. But the thought that it came from God and that through it I would know God's will, conquered my fears. I therefore resolved to submit my incertitude to my Bishop. I had just made the resolution when the idea came forcefully to my mind that I was to do for women<sup>44</sup> something similar to what I had just done for men. This thought seemed to me to have all the marks of a true inspiration.

After imploring light from the Holy Spirit I at once set to work to carry out what I had been ordered. At the same time I recalled two sentences from

---

<sup>41</sup> Constitutive Documents, p. 17 ff.; p. 53; p. 470 ff.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 22. Father de Clorivière himself indicated that the Plan for the Society of Men was completed "within the octave of the Assumption" and that "soon afterwards" he "prepared a Plan for a Society of Young Women and Widows. . . ."

<sup>43</sup> Most Rev. Cortois de Pressigny, Bishop of Saint-Malo.

<sup>44</sup> "Personnes du sexe" – a term used in that era to designate women.

the Gospel which stand at the heading of the Plan of the Daughters of Mary. In these sentences I believe I saw the development and the spirit of all I had to say. And so the Plan was soon drawn up as such and was then printed.

The two sentences which inspired the author with "the development and the spirit," i.e. the Plan of the future Society are:

Do whatever he tells you. (John 2:5)  
There is your mother. (John 19:27)<sup>45</sup>

Had Adelaide had any knowledge of Father de Clorivière's Project before Archbishop Cortois de Pressigny's approbation of September 18? It seems almost certain that she did. Father de Clorivière must have conferred with her at length. He had been directing Adelaide for some time. He had reflected on her Project for a Pious Society. How could he not have thought that the Lord had providentially placed Mademoiselle de Cicé on his path with the view of having her cooperate when the hour came in His mysterious designs?

As regards Adelaide, so humble, so detached, she must in thanksgiving have received confidence in this new Plan whose central ideas providentially matched those of her own Project.

At this point a question arises: "Did Mademoiselle de Cicé's Project have a direct effect on Father de Clorivière's?" This cannot be affirmed with total certitude.

In August, while still under the influence of the luminous inspiration of July 19, he had a second inspiration similar in thrust. Father de Clorivière indeed had a thorough knowledge of Mademoiselle de Cicé's Project. Certain elements of her Project must have claimed his special attention. It is not altogether impossible that these facts stored in his sub-conscious integrated themselves spontaneously into his sudden conception of a religious society for women. Be that as it might, the convergences of thought in both co-founders were remarkable:

- (a) It was truly a religious society of a completely new form which Adelaide de Cicé wished to organize to respond to needs which had not been met until that time.  
It was truly a religious society of a completely new form which Father de Clorivière wished to establish to respond to the immediate needs created by a political situation hostile to the Church and religious life.
- (b) The same pluralism of works and consequently the same availability were established as key factors by the generous love characteristic of the two founders.

Adelaide very specifically wrote:

---

<sup>45</sup> John 2:5 and John 19:27. An error in interpretation has incorrectly marked two other quotes which would appear only in 1802. They are not contained in the First Plan, the original of which is preserved in the Archives of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary with the heading: Dinan, Brittany, August 27, 1790.

They (the Sisters) will be entirely devoted to prayer and to good works and will offer themselves to God through obedience, to perform all the works which Providence will assign to them.

She also wrote:

Through her (the Blessed Virgin) they will offer themselves to our Lord in order to fulfill all His wishes while desiring nothing for themselves except the spiritual and temporal good of the neighbor.

In his turn, Father de Clorivière wrote:

To make up for the destruction of religious Orders, the Daughters of the Heart of Mary would embrace all the various kinds of works of mercy and piety which all the Orders together used to undertake.

He also wrote that:

Their charity must lead them prudently to succor all the ills of the neighbor but above all they must have as object to heal the needs of the soul.

- (c) The Sisters' apostolic fruitfulness was in Adelaide de Cicé's thinking entrusted to our Lord through the Most Blessed Virgin. As a matter of fact, Adelaide was thinking of a Marian name suitable for the Society.<sup>46</sup>

Likewise, in the Plan of 1790, the apostolic fruitfulness of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary is entrusted to our Lord through the Virgin Mary: Do whatever my Son tells you. And the name of the Society was designated immediately: They will bear the name of Society of Mary.

- (d) For the two co-founders the simple vows of chastity, poverty and obedience were the safeguards of the authenticity of the religious life of the members.

Mother de Cicé had a conception of the vow of poverty quite original for her era. In order to be able to provide for the needs of the poor in all circumstances, the Sisters were to keep their inheritances but submit to obedience the use they would make of them.

Father de Clorivière had an analogous idea: if the members kept the civil ownership of their goods, it was in order to safeguard the secret of their religious life. But the use of those goods would be entirely submitted to obedience.

- (e) The vow of obedience in Mother de Cicé's Project embraced not only the use of possessions but also all the circumstances of the life of the Sisters: works of charity, family visits, etc.

In Father de Clorivière's Plan, obedience had a central function embracing the entire life of the members.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> "They might bear the name Daughters of the Presentation of the Most Blessed Virgin."

- (f) A certain freedom of action was left to the members in Mother de Cicé's Project. In an era when religious never went out alone the Sisters were to be able to circulate freely to visit the sick, to go see their own families, etc.

Conforming to the needs of the times and to the nature of the Society, Father de Clorivière was truly innovative in this matter: the Daughters of Mary could live alone or remain with their families and maintain their profession if the glory of God and the service of souls required it. But they could also live in community if the Superiors deemed it preferable.

- (g) The example of the early Christians and of their common use of possessions was used by Mother de Cicé. She foresaw that the Sisters would place their income at the disposition of the superior in charge of the expenses of their common life.

Reference to the early Christians and to their "Cor Unum" had an important place in Father de Clorivière's thought and teachings both when he recommended the sharing of possessions among the members of the Societies and when he spoke of the spiritual unity which must prevail among the scattered members.

- (h) Finally, there was the convergence of an absolutely fundamental orientation: the essential role given to the interior life.

Both co-founders insisted on the necessity of recollection and prayer and gave prime importance to the daily hour of mental prayer.

Did not this profound unity find its expression and its fulfillment in both Mother de Cicé and Father de Clorivière in the depth and intensity of their Eucharistic contemplation - a depth and intensity crowned by the death of each one of them in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament?

However, there is one divergence and it is not without significance.

Gradually under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Mother de Cicé brought her Project to maturation in order to respond to the love of God pressing her to assist Him in His "suffering members," in a form of life which would consecrate her entirely to Him.

Suddenly, in response to revolutionary events the same Holy Spirit inspired the two plans in Father de Clorivière, already many years in the religious life.

From this very divergence there came forth a complementarity, a source of riches for the new Society.

---

<sup>47</sup> Conference on the Vows of Religion: Conference 12: "If the perfection of obedience thrives among us, all the other virtues will also thrive there in the same proportion. If that virtue does not thrive among us, there is no hope that our Society will become established or even that it grow after its establishment."

Providence led Father de Clorivière and Mother de Cicé to meet on the eve of the birth of the Society whose development would from then on be the fruit of the joined efforts of their entire lives.

\* \* \* \* \*

Father de Clorivière received on September 18, 1790, the very encouraging written approbation of Archbishop Cortois de Pressigny for both Societies.<sup>48</sup> He planned to stop in Paris then proceed to Rome to seek the Supreme Pontiff's approbation. On September 24, he was in Rennes from which city he wrote to Mother de Cicé. He arrived in Paris on September 30.

Before leaving for Paris he had as he later wrote:<sup>49</sup>

...appointed to head the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary and to see to its establishment a person whom he believed the Lord pointed out to him for the task and who seemed to him endowed with the qualities necessary for such an undertaking.

That person was Mademoiselle de Cicé.

On her part, Mademoiselle de Cicé was not going to let Father de Clorivière depart without once more submitting to his direction every aspect of her life which was entering a new, more "religious" phase because of the mission entrusted to her. She knew Father de Clorivière was very busy. She therefore wrote her various problems in such a manner that he would have room for his reply on the same sheet of paper. The following letter has become a precious document in which we find the major traits of Mademoiselle de Cicé's spirituality as well as the characteristics of Father de Clorivière's direction. For that reason we reproduce the entire text despite its length. A careful reading of the letter will offer a true portrait of our first Mother.<sup>50</sup>

Letter of M. de Cicé

I would very much wish to know, Father, whom you would advise me to see during your absence and if you think I should

Marginal Response of Fr. De Clorivière

The Confessor at the house if that is possible.

---

<sup>48</sup> Constitutive Documents, p. 22, note 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>50</sup> The handwritten original is not dated, but its contents permit placing it in September, 1790, without risk of error.

continue to go to confession to Father de Ste. Claire as I did during your travels.

As to my residence until your return, I think you expect me to live at St. Charles unless events force me to leave there.

I ask you to tell me if I may and if I must fulfill my desire for daily Communion which you have requested me to do.

What exercises of piety do you prescribe for me? If you approve, my intention is (whenever I am free to do so) to follow the schedule of exercises at this house, the Office in common, the hour of mental prayer even though I sometimes do not know how to use the time since I do not apply care in doing it well.

For I certainly am much less advanced in this than so many other people who are but beginning to give themselves to God. I go to it almost always with my mind full of all sorts of things. And sometimes when I find myself calm in the presence of God with a holy affection, I feel I am losing time because I am not any better after this mental prayer even though while making it, it seemed to me that I was most fervent.

That will especially do me good since I feel the need to occupy myself with things that keep me in the presence of God and are not a source of anxiety like conversations in which I do not fare very well.

Even though I find no pleasure in these contacts, my pride and my vanity make me concern myself only with persons and I no longer keep my heart and mind free. This disturbs me a great deal. That is time lost. Also I commit faults of which I cannot render an account to myself for lack of vigilance.

Also, I desire nothing so much as the

Unless reasons arise requiring you to move from there.

Nothing would be more advantageous.

Apply yourself seriously to mortification of the senses and mortification of the passions. Repress your natural activity. Love recollection and solitude but let charity lead you to works of mercy. I strongly approve your following the schedule of the house.

Do not place any obstacle to the consolations that God would wish to give you but do not desire them with too much eagerness. Receive them with wonder. Bear the lack of them with humility. Do not be discouraged. It is good will which God asks.

Do not completely shun society but do not give yourself over to it. You must plan to draw to God the souls in society with whom you deal. Never show the distaste and boredom you might be experiencing in society.

Divine Providence will no doubt one day give

happiness of being associated by obedience to truly interior persons who are occupied only by things of God, who fill their days with prayer, silence, practice of good works, especially those inspired by zeal for souls. Even if it were only to teach catechism to children and to persons needing such instruction – a task for which I had no attraction in the past – I would desire this without giving up the corporal works of mercy if the occasion to practice them should again arise. At present, works concerning the soul are closer to my heart.

What you have said to me about the vows which you intend to incorporate in the projected Society gives me all the more joy, because for a long time, this has been the object of my desires. At that time I was thinking only of simple vows renewed each year. I was a bit fearful of irrevocable commitments for non-cloistered people not entirely separated from the world (because of the practice of works of charity) even though the only reason I wished to maintain relations with the world was for the needs of the neighbor.

Nevertheless, I do think that such persons know better than I do how to behave in those matters and how to keep themselves in the presence of God and in the practice of custody of the heart. I do not know how to do this at all. It is true but it is rare that sometimes those types of things bother me less and that I do not lose my peace on occasions when I would ordinarily do so. I would not know how (it seems to me) to give you a correct enough idea of my fickleness and my inconstancy in goodness despite my strongest resolutions. Carrying out these resolutions would have changed me completely if I had been faithful.

Be gracious enough Father, I implore you, not to overlook the need I have of being led by obedience. I even regret and would wish

you the means of satisfying the desire it inspires in you concerning the practice of the evangelical counsels. But one must wait for these moments.

You will have no fears about your inconstancy when you will be docile in following the advice of those who hold God's place for you.

You are about, I believe, to do partially what I did at the Convent of the Cross but do not rush into anything. You still need a little time to see if the situation is really suitable. I would be a bit doubtful if the plan you propose is to have its effect.

that it were possible during your absence and until your return that you had placed me under some person whom I would obey in all things like my Sister Marie of Jesus.

I think it would be perhaps the best preparation for later entering the Society which you direct, for I would then find myself completely formed in the practice of obedience and humility. The thoughts and fears caused by my inability in all things make me desire more than I can tell you to live until my death in the faithful and continual practice of obedience.

I would also like to share with you an idea I have had. Remaining here this winter I would wish permission to eat in the refectory because of the reading and the silence. This would suit me better than novelties read elsewhere. If I were not given the permission because of the penance made in the refectory I could be waiting at the entrance and take my place after the penances since they are made at the beginning of meals. It is not that I am not disposed to making similar penances. You know my disposition in that matter.

I ask you the favor, Father, of giving me your opinion in writing not only on the things for which I consult you but also on any matters which might be useful to me and which the good Lord will inspire in you. With all my heart I desire by His grace to make your counsels my rules of conduct. I hope these counsels will serve as curbs to my straying from what Our Lord asks of me during your absence.

If remaining in this house is still your wish for me, it occurs to me that it would perhaps not be impossible for me to live there somewhat as an aspirant. The choice of Mother St. Charles, has strengthened me in that idea if you approve. The trouble and anguish which I nearly always experience make a rule and obedience necessary for me. That life would have the advantage of

making me withdraw even more. I feel strongly that my increasing suffering which I do not bear well, is due to my relationships with the world.

They cause me anxiety and distraction. This makes me want to diminish such relationships as much as possible.

In those questions are found the deep aspirations which had given rise to the Project for a Pious Society and which now involved the total dedication of Adelaide de Cicé to the Society projected by Father de Clorivière. Those questions also revealed God's total control over her as well as an increasing tension between contemplation and action. Only a love purified by suffering would later resolve that tension.

Before taking the coach from Rennes to Paris, Father de Clorivière wanted to reassure Adelaide one last time. He wrote to her from Rennes on September 24, a short while before his departure.

Place your trust in the Lord. He will sustain you in the great work which He wishes to confide to you for His greater glory and in consequence of His predilection for you.<sup>51</sup> Can you doubt that He sustains you and that He gives you the lights and the prudence necessary for this good work? The weaker you are, the better instrument you are to show forth His glory. Let us pray for each other.

On September 30, Father de Clorivière arrived at the Missions Etrangères Seminary on Rue du Bac, Paris. He would remain there until March 1791. These five months would be laden with experiences which he related in numerous letters to Mademoiselle de Cicé. We will quote only the principal excerpts relating to the co-foundress.

In Father de Clorivière's letter of October 27, there are given to Adelaide the following urgent counsels:

Abandon yourself entirely to the Lord and let Him be the Sovereign Master of your soul so that He may do whatever pleases Him with it and in whatever way it pleases Him. Will you not be better in His hands than in yours?... Every time you find yourself turning back into yourself thus depressing yourself...give up at once this self-concern and lose and bury yourself in the thought of the Savior of mankind.

---

<sup>51</sup> "The great work" is "the Society which you project" mentioned by Mother de Cicé in her previous letter. The two inspirations met in the designs of Providence. In a letter to Mother de Cicé in Aix on August 22, 1802, Father de Clorivière will mention to her "the good work for which the Lord seems to have chosen us equally, you and me."

Plunge yourself into the wound in His side. Be lost. Let yourself pine away in His adorable Heart, not by a sensible flame of love but by a kind of annihilation of yourself. Faith should accomplish this in you....God...desires an entirely pure heart and the purity which He demands in order to communicate Himself to us is incompatible with all the attachments to created things whatever they may be. It is painful to a heart as sensitive as yours not to hold on to anything. But is it not enough for us that God wishes it? Could you fear that He would not be enough for you?

Further in the same letter he gave the following directive which was so harmonious with the spirit of the Society. He was referring to the defections already resulting from upheavals caused by the Revolution:

How the Church is afflicted everywhere! Even in the Catholic clergy of England<sup>52</sup> there is a division and a great division. How the sufferings of Holy Church swallow up all our own sufferings! How light should seem the sacrifices which Our Lord can ask of us in comparison with the evils in Religion.

A part of Father de Clorivière's letter of November 6, 1790 related to the spiritual progress of Mademoiselle de Cicé:

What it is good to do at a given time is not equally suitable at all times.

When you first began to serve God, many practices were recommended to you which were then very useful but which would not be so at the present time. We must, it is true...at all times examine our conscience frequently etc. but not always in the same way. In the measure that we advance...we do this in a much simpler manner which does not require the soul to leave its state of recollection and does not hinder it from being more occupied with God than with itself. It is thus that I should like you to act.

Towards the end of a letter dated December 7, Father de Clorivière confided to Mademoiselle de Cicé the uncertainties he was experiencing as regards the planned foundations:

My views are always the same with regard to the Mission in America. As to further ideas I have conceived for the glory of God, they will be in everything that which will please Him. I am not worthy or rather I am entirely unworthy, to be the instrument<sup>53</sup> for anything so holy.

Half of the letter of December 21 is a letter of spiritual direction. Mademoiselle de Cicé must have written to Father de Clorivière that she was treating her health too cautiously and that therefore she requested corporal penance. Father de Clorivière who knew her well, found it

---

<sup>52</sup> This refers to the French clergymen who were émigrés in England.

<sup>53</sup> This expression is often found in Father de Clorivière's writings. Cf. Constitutive Documents, pp. 18, 175,283, etc.

difficult to believe this. He placed her on guard against a desire for mortifications which could be subtle refuges for self-love. In order to reassure her, he wrote several lines which we reproduce because they correspond to the habitual action of the Lord on the souls He desires entirely for Himself:

Often our Divine Master hides from the soul who loves Him, what He is doing in her and what she is doing herself to correspond to His love. To further reduce self-love in that soul He permits that she be subjected to many weaknesses, that she feel them very much and that she even fall into a great number of little faults which although almost involuntary humiliate her very much.

Father de Clorivière's letter of December 27, 1790 contained above all, information about the proximate departure for Maryland. To foil suspicions Father wrote in this way in order to have assurance on Mademoiselle de Cicé's decision: "Let me know if your friend Adelaide is still of the same opinion," i.e. also ready to leave for Maryland.

In the letter of January 14, 1791, we learned that Father de Clorivière had to give up his planned trip to Rome. The companion on whom he had counted had disappointed him. Besides, because of alternate dates suggested, he considered that "this trip to Rome could not be made without greatly endangering the chance for the voyage to America." Also on January 14, 1791, Father de Clorivière sent to Saint-Malo the official paper committing him to a "reservation on the ship for Maryland."

On that mid-January day the Maryland departure was therefore well decided. However, before the actual sailing date, an official document had to be prepared both in Brittany and in Paris. Thus he wrote this rather enigmatic statement:

Ask the Lord for the strength to accomplish His Holy Will and also for the strength you need to do something for His glory and that of His Holy Mother. I believe that the time has come to work for that. Let us place all our confidence in God.

As Father de Clorivière was to recall later when he spoke of February 2, 1791:

It was time to begin the good work under the auspices of the august Virgin Mary, in the confidence that the Lord would deign to bless an enterprise aiming only for His greater glory and the service of His Church.<sup>54</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>54</sup> Commentary on the Apocalypse, "Politics," Ch. VIII. cf. also Constitutive Documents, p. 27. The text was revised in the summer of 1794.

THE FIRST COMMITMENTS OF FEBRUARY 2, 1791  
MOTHER DE CICÉ - SUPERIOR GENERAL

Father de Clorivière wrote a long letter on February 5, 1791 to Adelaide de Cicé still at the St. Charles Convent of the Ursulines in Dinan. He described for her the moving, secret ceremony of February 2 at Montmartre. Six priests (including Father himself) had made their first consecration while two others had done the same in Brittany. A layman had also been received on February 4 thus raising the total number to nine.<sup>55</sup> We know that on the same day, February 2, Adelaide had made the same commitment<sup>56</sup> together with four Daughters of Mary at Saint-Malo, one probably at Saint-Servan, others at Parame and three in Paris. Reflecting on the emotion which our first Mother must have experienced on reading that letter of February 5, we reproduce here the part about the Society of Mary of which she was in fact co-foundress.

I come now to the Society of the Mother. This is less advanced here.<sup>57</sup> There are however, three persons who on this same day made their offering and to unite them more closely I drew up a formula of Association which I am going to write from memory<sup>58</sup> for I do not have it here before my eyes.

"We...on this day...proposing to ourselves nothing save the glory of God, the honor of His holy Mother the glorious Virgin Mary to whom we consecrate ourselves forever as her servants, her disciples, her children and whom we humbly beg to take in our regard the part of Lady, Mistress and Mother, unite to form a spiritual Society under the name of the Society of Mary with the intention of walking as closely as possible, with the help of grace which we humbly ask for, in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Most Holy Mother; proposing to ourselves, if God finds us worthy and wishes to make use of us for that end, to cause the spirit of perfection to flourish again, first in ourselves and then in the persons of every state of life of our sex whom God calls to a more perfect state, by giving ourselves and leading them to give themselves to the practice of the virtues common to Christianity until the time arrives when we shall be allowed to bind ourselves to the practice of Chastity, Poverty and Obedience according to the rules of the Society of Mary.

"In taking this action, we nevertheless place the entire Association in dependence on the approbation of the Holy Church whose submissive and obedient children we will always be... In the hope of obtaining this approbation, we sign ourselves...."

---

<sup>55</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English), p. 35.

<sup>56</sup> Since the letters of this period were sent to the Ursuline Sisters of Dinan by Father de Clorivière, it is possible to conjecture that Mother de Cicé made her consecration in that convent.

<sup>57</sup> That is, "Less advanced in Paris than in Brittany."

<sup>58</sup> This text differs slightly, in form only, from the signed declaration.

I have placed at the head of the list the name of Adelaide as the first stone of this Society. The three other persons<sup>59</sup> must add their names if they have not already done so. I have sent a paper to this effect to some others. I shall take upon myself the duty of Superior until, their number being increased, they can elect one.

I had with me this formula of Association and I had offered it to the Lord at the same time as the other one.

We have observed the place which Father de Clorivière had already assigned to Adelaide de Cicé. Her name had been placed at the head of the Formula of Association "as the first stone." Moreover, when he indicated that he had assumed the office of superior until the time the Sisters would be able to elect one, he undoubtedly was already thinking of Adelaide de Cicé for this function.

Father continued:

It was a good thing to tell you not to give any publicity to the Association at your home. None has been given here. But you will transcribe the formula of the Association and sign it and I will send you if possible, some observations and general instruction on the manner of acting. I shall do this as soon as possible.

Then there followed these lines which evoked the graces proper to the budding Societies:

As we advance it seems that we become more enlightened and that matters, at first confused, develop little by little...

Pray much to the Lord that I do not place any obstacle through my fault, to His designs which seem great and full of mercy. It is His undertaking. Let Him act and let us not spoil His action by mixing our Own with it. It belongs to Him to conduct us, to us to allow ourselves to be led in everything by Him.

Father de Clorivière then gave prudent counsels for accepting new subjects without being hasty, whenever Providence would send some.

The postscript of the same letter contained an interesting observation that at the Mission Etrangères there were two engravings of the Blessed Virgin which "would suit the Society very well." One bore the inscription, "Behold your Mother" and the other, "Do whatever He tells you."

---

<sup>59</sup> The three other persons would be Felicite Deshayes, Michelle-Sophie Lejay, and Marie-Catherine Dupéron. Cf. A. Rayez, op.cit., p. 402, note 105.

After the February 5 letter, Father de Clorivière sent Mademoiselle de Cicé another dated February 23, 1791.<sup>60</sup> It informed Adelaide de Cicé of an important happening and it began like this:

I would have so many things to tell you. Our Lord and your holy Guardian Angel will do it for me....I am sure that you will adore God's designs and submit to them as I do with the most perfect resignation.

Father then indicated that he had written to Archbishop Cortois de Pressigny to advise him of the ceremony of February 2, 1791 and of his own (Father's) proximate departure for Maryland:

Regarding the statement which I believed was my duty to make to him regarding my present situation and the success of the project he had approved, a success which gave him the greatest pleasure he definitely decided that I must remain in Europe and that the greater glory of God required it. After that, I was obliged to change my decision.

It was then Adelaide de Cicé's turn to make her election concerning the Maryland voyage. Father de Clorivière gave her the elements on which to base her decision:

See now what it is you must do and what you must judge before God most in accordance with His glory and your own spiritual welfare. I am saying the same thing to our friend, Father Gautier.... Whatever the pain I would feel by separation from the two of you, the sacrifice is already made if both or one of you believe that you would render greater service to the Master in America. There you will do good and you would do it with less danger and strife. Here at home you will also do good, perhaps even a greater good and you certainly will have more to suffer and to fight. With all this in view, make your decision.

Against such arguments Adelaide de Cicé's decision could have no doubts but she needed the sanction of obedience. She felt obliged to write to Father de Clorivière who replied with assurance on March 7:

I received your letter on Sunday evening....The principal matter requiring a positive decision is the voyage to America. It would be difficult for me to decide it for you. To do this, I would — under the circumstances — need to perceive clearly God's will for you and I am unable to perceive it. The reasons which caused my Bishop to tell me to remain here persuade me also to say the same thing to you.

---

<sup>60</sup> Perhaps there were others in the interim, but we are not aware of it.

He knew his correspondent very well and he knew her to be in unison with him. So he repeated the determining statement:

You would do good in America but it seems to me you would do greater good here and that here you would find a greater harvest of sufferings. The letters of March 14 and 16 listed useful articles to be sent to the missionaries who were leaving for Maryland. These letters also gave the approximate dates and sojourns of Father de Clorivière in Brittany. He hoped to see Adelaide de Cicé there.

The letter of March 26 was mailed from Saint-Malo where Father de Clorivière had arrived on the eve. He lived at the home of Madame des Bassablons in Pont-Pinel. Among the letters to follow, there occurred a passage in the letter of April 5 which seemed a preface to the one of April 30.

Henceforth strive only to strengthen yourself in your present resolution by the grace of God - to abandon yourself entirely to His holy will and to do for your part everything that will depend on you to correspond to His Will. If you do this I have firm confidence that the Lord will be with you. Let us never cease drawing His divine help upon us by our humble, peaceful, constant prayer.

Then Father de Clorivière spoke of the various stops he intended to make in Brittany but mentioned that most importantly he had to see Mademoiselle de Cicé. According to his previous suggestions she had returned from Dinan to the Convent of the Daughters of the Cross in Saint-Servan. It was at the Convent that Father de Clorivière had a long letter delivered to her on the eve of their meeting. In the letter which was the fruit of his prayer, he asked Mademoiselle de Cicé to accept the heavy responsibility of Superior General of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. Despite its length, we reproduce the letter in its entirety. It belongs to all the Daughters of the Heart of Mary:

I have just received a letter from Paris which tells me that seven persons, priests and clerics, have entered the Association of the poor Priests of Jesus, the Society of Mary; those already associated were dispersed because the Community of Miramiones where they had received shelter has itself been dispersed. They point out, it is true, that there would be many persons suitable and ready to enter into this Society of Mary, but it requires a person to lead them, form them, etc. and this person has not been found. I am persuaded that this first item of news will give you pleasure. I am going to tell you of my reflections on the second item.

It is in Paris it seems to me, that both Societies should 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 shall find more means and more resources to do good with, and there we can proceed in a more secret and sure manner until the time comes to work

openly and when the work of God will be strong enough and extensive enough so that we need not fear the light of day.

The time for undertaking something great for the Lord has come. The great evils from which religion is suffering, the even greater ones with which it is menaced and which follow as a natural consequence from those from which it suffers now, both require and beg for prompt aid. We must, with ourselves, save as many persons from shipwreck as we can. It is the most certain means to assure our own salvation and we can do nothing more agreeable to our Divine Master. I tell you that He desires this, that He is awaiting this from our love, that we have reason to think that it is the end for which He has given us so many graces and, if for the want of courage or confidence or through fear of work or dangers, we refuse to second His adorable designs, would this not be in our case a blamable infidelity which would cool His love for us and would render us incapable of receiving the gifts which His bounty has destined for us? I am convinced of 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, nevertheless I should believe myself to be very unfaithful if I should not do on my part all that depends on me to fulfill the designs which are far above my strength but which seem to come from Him.

As for you, Mademoiselle and very dear daughter, what do you yourself think? What are your sentiments? Can you think, can you say that God has not given you great graces, that Our Lord has not granted you from infancy His sweetest blessings, and 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 during these later 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 things graces which should not remain idle or which should bear fruit only for you? Open your heart, give wings to your desires or rather, reanimate in yourself those which the Divine bounty has so often inspired in you. Desire to do everything, to suffer everything to gain some souls for Jesus Christ. Forget yourself, do not stop to look at your weakness and your miseries, think of Him Whose all-powerful arm will sustain you if you fix your eyes on Him instead of keeping them on yourself.

At this point Father evoked the traits needed for the future Superior General. In so doing, Father was giving the portrait of our first Mother:

Have you guessed now who is the one that I believe chosen by God to procure for His Holy Mother a great number of dear daughters? She must

have a great desire for perfection and zeal for the perfection of others. She must be ready to sacrifice everything in order to procure both the one and the other. She must be detached from the goods of this world and the vanities of the time and love to speak of God to the poor. Without having been a religious she must understand the obligation 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 personalities in order to gain them all for Jesus Christ. She must not be fearful of difficulties. She must be resourceful and have some experience in the ordinary things of life. Now I find all these things in one person whom the Lord sent to me several years ago and whose perfection I sincerely desire.

Finally he wrote this decisive sentence:

I therefore believe that I must tell this person that she is the instrument which God wishes to use to carry out His design.

Father knew the opinion which Mother de Ciché had of herself. He added the following to reassure her and to keep her in the truth:

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 wanting, 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 into 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 part and without foreseeing too many future difficulties, we do, at the present time, all that His lights point out to us. Then, when difficulties present themselves, He arms us and clothes us with His strength in order to surmount them. The person of whom I speak is still too sensitive. She has not enough faith which makes her fall easily into perplexities and then the devil seeks to trouble her by means of subtleties which he presents to her mind. This harms her much and hinders her from advancing in the ways of God. But the Lord has given her docility and this virtue, sustained by the graces which will be the reward of her fidelity, will dissipate the obstacles which hold her back and will make her triumph over them.

Now Mother de Ciché had before her all the factors necessary to respond definitively to God's designs on her. But this election had to be made in full liberty. Father de Clorivière continued:

However, I do not wish to prescribe or command anything. Let this soul sound herself. Let her examine her dispositions after having consulted the Lord. I do not doubt that the Holy Spirit Who communicates Himself to the

humble will make known to her what He is expecting from her and what she can do that will be most conformed to 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 will of the Lord in her regard can make it known to her in a more certain way.

And Father concluded:

I write this from the country in order that you may have leisure to reflect upon it and because it could happen that tomorrow, when I go to La Croix I should not have enough time to explain myself to you. I must however, inform you of my plans....

No record of that extraordinary meeting of the two founders has remained. This veil of silence perfectly suits the first Daughter of the Heart of Mary, daughter of the one who had "kept all these things in her heart."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### SEED-TIME IN BRITTANY

At the close of his long letter of April 30, 1791 Father de Clorivière wrote:

Next week, I do not know what day the traveler goes to the Isle. He will be there only a short time because he is being urged to return to Paris.

The "Isle" meant the Isle of Jersey, a British possession in the English Channel not far from the coast of Brittany. A goodly number of French émigrés had settled there to escape the Revolution.

Two rather long letters of May 16 and 23, 1791 from Father de Clorivière to Mademoiselle de Cicé (she was then at Saint-Servan) mentioned persons encountered and the apostolate to them without specifically identifying the apostolate. Perhaps Father de Clorivière, who was then a suspect in the Dinan area, had absented himself in order to escape manhunts.

The long letter of direction bearing the heading Limoelan, (near Broons) June 8, 1791 indicated that he had returned to Brittany and was living at his brother's. In that letter Father de Clorivière urged Mother de Cicé to respond with love and confidence to God's designs for her.

His designs are great. You can, no doubt and you ought indeed to recognize that they are much above your weakness and your capacity. You should even recognize, I wish it much, that no one is less suited than you are to procure the glory of God. But at the same time you should abandon yourself entirely to the Lord so that His Holy Will may be accomplished in

you as perfectly as possible....What He is expecting from you is something too great for you to be able to depend in any way on yourself. You cannot count on yourself you can only count on Him. The weakest instruments become strong when they are in an All-Powerful Hand.

These lines, as well as many others, once again reveal the founder's firm direction and the humble sentiments which the new Superior General had about herself. This total surrender of the "instruments" to Providence would endure throughout her whole life.

In that same letter Father de Clorivière repeated:

This is His work. He alone can make it succeed and bring it to perfection. It is not even necessary to be anxious about success because it depends only on Him, nor to seek to peer into the future because the knowledge of that is reserved to Him, nor to try too eagerly to foresee the means which we must take because He alone knows those which are suitable and which He will suggest to us at the proper times.

In closing the letter Father de Clorivière gave Mother de Cicé the following clear indication of the direction her responsibility would be taking:

After I left you on Monday morning at St. Anne's, two ladies whose names I had given you (Mlle. Chenu and Mlle. Faribeu), came to see me in the sacristy. They spoke to me of the Society of Mary. I told them all I could but directed them to come to you.

One of those ladies was Mlle. Therese Chenu, who later served as superior of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary of Saint-Malo and its environs.

The next letter written seven days later, on June 15, 1791 was sent from Rennes where Father de Clorivière had had to take refuge quite suddenly. On the Feast of Pentecost he was preaching at Broons. In his sermon he once more enlightened the parishioners on the dangers to their faith wrought by the pressures and upheavals of the Revolution. Father was reported to the authorities but friends warned him in good time. He therefore departed at once. He mentioned that this prevented his finishing "for our daughters" the Directory which he hoped to give to Mother de Cicé before his departure for Paris. His next letter still written in June would be mailed from the capital.

Father de Clorivière gave Mother de Cicé the responsibility of establishing the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary in Brittany and of recruiting new members there. Providentially Mlle. Amable Chenu described in her recollections her first encounters with

Mother de Cicé. These create for us a new portrait of her whom we will never sufficiently know. The clarity of Amable Chenu's account revealed to us (that):<sup>61</sup>

One morning as we<sup>62</sup> were going down the road to visit a sick woman we met Mademoiselle de Cicé accompanied by her maid. It was the first time I had the honor of seeing her. My sister recognized her, greeted her and introduced me to her. Mademoiselle de Cicé was as a matter of fact coming to see us but did not know precisely where we lived. As soon as she entered the house she fell upon her knees and recited with us the Little Rosary of the Blessed Virgin (10 Hail Mary's) and the Litany of the Sacred Heart.<sup>63</sup>

Never had I felt such devotion in prayer-so infectious was her fervor. She read us the plan of the Society and left it with us so we might make a copy. In her presence I felt like the disciples with our Lord at Emmaus. She did not wish to remain for dinner with us as she had to leave for Dinan that afternoon. She told us she would return soon, since after each of her trips she always went to the convent of La Croix at Saint-Servan.

This account vividly depicts what those first encounters with Mother de Cicé must have been. They reveal to us also the supernatural radiation of her very person.

The account of the second meeting with the Chenu sisters also contains telling details:

Several weeks later....she arrived with her maid who brought us a piece of roast beef and a small loaf of bread lest we might have been unprepared by their surprise visit. She was very simply attired in a black dress and a long mantle and bonnet of the same color. But there was in her whole person a mixture of greatness and humility which gave her infinite charm. She wore a lovely gold ring and a medal of the Holy Family. She had received the medal as a gift from one of her brothers who was a bishop. After a frugal dinner which her maid, Mlle. Le-Marchand, also shared with us (for Mother de Cicé told us she was a saint and they always took their meals together),<sup>64</sup> Mademoiselle de Cicé read to us the dispositions necessary for preparing for our Oblation.

At this point one of the little nieces of the Chenu sisters arrived noisily. Mother de Cicé graciously interrupted her religious explanations to caress the child,

Mlle. Chenu concluded:

---

<sup>61</sup> Annals, Vol. I

<sup>62</sup> The two sisters, Amable and Therese Chenu.

<sup>63</sup> Evidently these were well-known prayers and susceptible, therefore, of uniting hearts in Jesus and Mary.

<sup>64</sup> A very unusual thing in an era when masters and servants kept their proper distances.

Nevertheless, despite the annoyance I experienced in this, I remained with an example of virtue which I will never forget. Nor shall I ever forget the look of peace and grace shining in Mademoiselle de Cicé's face.

She then resumed her reading and gave us a commentary on it with an unction that moved me to the depth of my heart.

In this almost evangelical simplicity Mother de Cicé continued to sow the first seeds of the Society in Brittany while Father de Clorivière was preparing for her arrival in Paris.

\* \* \* \* \*

In order to better grasp the prudence and the daring which already characterized the respective actions of Mother de Cicé and Father de Clorivière in the first days of the Society, it is well briefly to recall the political and religious upheavals which were agitating France in that period.<sup>65</sup>

On February 13, 1790, a decree suppressed the official recognition of the solemn vows of religion and forbade emission of solemn vows in the future. This was followed on July 12 of the same year by the "Civil Constitution of the Clergy," through which the clergy of France (practically separated from Rome) was placed in dependence on the civil authority. The following November 27, all bishops and ecclesiastics were required to take the oath of fidelity to the Constitution and the nation under pain of being pursued as disturbers of the public peace. On January 4, 1791, 42 of the 44 bishops sitting in the Assembly made a public refusal to take the oath. A great number of priests also refused. From that moment these bishops and priests were declared "outside the law." Many bishops thereupon immigrated to other countries, notably England. Within France many "unsworn" priests<sup>66</sup> went into hiding and carried on their ministry in secrecy. Denunciation of priests and hunting of priests extended throughout the provinces.

On September 3, 1791 the Constitutive Assembly completed its mandate. It was replaced by the Legislative Assembly composed of elements which were inexperienced in politics and above all anti-religious.

These events incited passions. Suffering and insecurity increased and provided the context and tone of Father de Clorivière's letters to Mother de Cicé from Paris. These events give us an understanding of the setting in which Mother de Cicé effected necessary changes during the early days of the Society in Brittany.

---

<sup>65</sup> For greater detail, cf. Founded on the Rock.

<sup>66</sup> That is, having refused to take the oath."

Not to be overlooked are the means of transportation of that era, coaches or one-horse carriages. To ride in them required the greatest circumspection of speech with fellow-travelers whose political opinions were not known. In those troubled times any unknown person might be suspect.

Father de Clorivière's first letter of June 1791 reflected that atmosphere. He had hardly arrived in Paris when he wrote to Mother de Cicé:

Amid the ferment in which we now are, I shall not speak to you of leaving. We must await a period of calm. While waiting you will be able to work usefully for the glory of God where you are and this is the only thing that you desire. In the midst of vicissitudes and the general upheaval, our souls should enjoy an inalienable peace. . . .Our nature can experience painful alternations but the soul should rise above all that it experiences and rest firmly in God.

Father de Clorivière's journey from Brittany had not been without risks but:

A zealous patriot who had never seen me was my safeguard, the passport of an ex-mayor was of great service to me in two municipalities; my angel led me as by the hand so that enroute I twice had the happiness of celebrating Mass. I remain in solitude here (at the Missions Etrangères) and I am very much in repose amid the tumult.

In the same letter Father de Clorivière mentioned the arrest of the King. He concluded his letter by saying:

They desire you here very much but you would have to live in private and expect to suffer very much. It is not yet the time to come.

The next letter was dated simply "Paris, 1791." Point by point it answered the questions of Mother de Cicé on the new members and persons suited to assure their formation. Then Father de Clorivière came to what concerned his correspondent:

As for you, my dear daughter, fear nothing so much as the excess of fear to which you sometimes allow yourself to go. The more you feel your weakness the more you must place your confidence in the Lord. He will supply abundantly for all that you lack. You cannot help but see that the Lord has blessed what you have undertaken during your sojourn at Dinan....I desire indeed that you should be persuaded that there is no instrument less suited than you are to advance the works of God. But remember that in the hand of God all instruments are equal; there is none which is not all-powerful when moved by an All-Powerful Hand.

In the next paragraph Father de Clorivière replied to a question of Mother de Cicé concerning food. He told her she was right not to make a habit of coffee while knowing when to take some without scruple in case of need.

On the other hand:

As regards use of wine mixed with water, you must permit yourself to take it freely since sensuality is much less humored. Since its use is advantageous for your health I do not permit you to stop it.

The gravity of the events they were living through did not in any way interrupt for Mother de Cicé or for Father de Clorivière their pursuit of religious holiness in the details of daily living.

There followed in the letter from "Paris, 1791" counsels to Mother de Cicé on how to address letters and packages she would be sending to Paris prior to moving there. "It is well in these times of upheaval to remain incognito." Finally Father de Clorivière expressed his regret in not yet being able to send "the Rule" (Rule of Conduct) on which he had made progress but which he had not yet completed.

Father de Clorivière's letter of August 3, 1791 announced to Mother de Cicé that he was sending "the rest of Chapter I (of the Rule of Conduct) and a good portion of Chapter II of which he had had a copy made. In that era handwritten copies abounded. Father de Clorivière therefore indicated to Mother de Cicé the various sheets to be circulated among the members in Brittany.

Father de Clorivière also referred to a delay in the mails which was to have repercussions on Mother de Cicé's arrival in Paris. But in all things Father saw the designs of Providence. The humble beginnings of the Society in Brittany had to be strengthened:

In this, God has His designs and we must adore them. He wills to give you the time to cement what you have begun.

A passage from the letter of Saturday, August 20, 1791, revealed the work undertaken by Mother de Cicé in addition to her movements from place to place. It concerned the first part of the Rule of Conduct:

The copy which you sent me is very correct and well written but I should have preferred you to have had it copied rather than to write it out yourself. Such work will tire you to death.

He added:

While you are in Brittany try to put everything on a good footing. Have copies of the rule made and send one to each place to the one whom you judge best suited to receive it....But, I repeat, do not undertake to make these copies yourself. The work would take too long and you have something better to do.

Then Father de Clorivière advised Mother de Cicé:

You will not have long now to stay in Brittany. His Grace the Archbishop of Paris (Archbishop de Juigne) has replied to his Vicar General<sup>67</sup> that he approves our project and that he considers it well fitted to procure God's glory. That is all I have been waiting for in order to tell you to come here where you are eagerly awaited. You will have our good friend Father Cormeau for a travelling companion. Write to him so you may plan to meet in Rennes.

The rather brief letter of September 3, 1791 announced that Father Cormeau could not yet leave for Paris. That might provide the opportunity for Mother de Cicé to make the much-desired trip to Saint-Brieuc.

Father de Clorivière's letter of September 12 summarized for Mother de Cicé certain lines from another letter he had just received from Quintin where Father Cormeau had been obliged to hide. The rather enigmatic expression indicated the precautions people were obliged to take at that time as well as the difficulties which Mother de Cicé would have to face:<sup>68</sup>

If Adelaide could come and find Madeleine (Mlle. Garnier, a future member) who cannot go far away at this moment, the two can visit Marie-Joseph (Father Cormeau) in his retreat. The conversation would not only be useful but would help to smooth away the difficulties of the long trip (trip to Paris). They could agree upon a plan which would perhaps succeed.

Father added:

Undoubtedly you can guess who the people are. I am also of the opinion that you should make this journey my very dear daughter. It will be for the glory of God and the consolation of a holy confessor of Jesus Christ. He is bringing you here for the same work.

The trip from Quintin would not be easy to undertake for Father said also:

I fear, however, that it will fatigue you too much. For this reason, if there is any concern about your health or if for other reasons due to circumstances which would turn you from this trip, I should not insist upon it.

Then, assured that he had given courage and peace to Mother de Cicé he concluded:

If what I say to you is more than a simple request it is in order that in an action of such importance you may have the strength and the merit which obedience gives.

---

<sup>67</sup> Letter of Most Reverend de Juigne, Archbishop of Paris, to Father de Floirac.

<sup>68</sup> For greater clarity, we occasionally add clarifications in parentheses.

The September 21, 1791 letter suggested that Mother de Cicé's arrival in Paris seemed imminent:

It is time my dear daughter in our Lord, to think seriously about all your arrangements for coming here.

He gave a series of instructions about packages to be shipped. Mother de Cicé, together with Mlle. Le Marchand and Agatha her cook, would live in the apartment then occupied by Father de Clorivière who had completed the formalities of transferring it to her. He requested Mother de Cicé to advise him of the exact day and date of her arrival. At the very end of the letter there occurred this most important statement about the name of the Society:

I do not see anything to change in the name of the second Society save that we might wish, in order for a greater resemblance with the first, that it bear the name of the Heart of Mary. This is not for me but for the Society to decide after having consulted the Lord thereon.

A paragraph from the next letter, September 24, 1791 witnessed to Mother de Cicé's apostolic activity during her last weeks in Brittany:

I shall be with you in spirit during your trip to L., S.B. and Q. (Lamballe, Saint-Brieuc and Quintin). I pray the Father of mercies to bless your obedience and I give you my own blessing.

Mother de Cicé was approaching the time of her departure. As was usual for her on the eve of an important change in her life she felt uneasiness, anxiety and fear of failure to measure up to grace.

In his letter of October 3, 1791, Father de Clorivière enlightened her on the profound meaning of such purification:

Take courage....Place all confidence in the Lord. What you are experiencing does not mean that He is going to abandon you or that your works are less agreeable to Him. On the contrary it is a mark of His love and protection, it is the pledge of a greater and more special assistance on His part....He desires that the sentiments of your misery and weakness which you are experiencing, will show you yet more sensibly that all you have done, all which you can do for His glory, is His work and that it leads you to have recourse to Him with more fervor.

Then, knowing how much the Eucharistic Presence responded to her deepest aspirations he added:

I understand how much it will cost you not to be able to live under the same roof as Our Lord. But you will be almost as near as if you were under the same roof and you can without much difficulty visit Him morning and evening. It will not be one hundred steps from the room where you will be to the tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament dwells.

Finally, to reassure Mother de Cicé on her arrival in the bustling capital where nothing would be familiar to her, he wrote:

Nor should you fear that I am leaving Paris. I have no thought of it and I shall not be so far away that I cannot see you every day and even oftener if necessary.

To understand Mother de Cicé's apprehensions it must be remembered that she would be in a completely new environment. There it would be her responsibility as superior of the Society to form new members none of whom she knew personally.

Father de Clorivière's letter of October 8, 1791 contained advice to Mother de Cicé about the Daughters of Mary in Brittany. It also mentioned that "Marie-Joseph," i.e. Father Cormeau, was still undecided about being able to leave for Paris immediately. It appeared necessary consequently that she remain at Rennes to wait for him to depart for the capital. There was this postscript to that letter:

What you recall having done three years ago on the feast of St. Francis was an act of surrender to the fulfillment of the Lord's designs for you.

Indeed at the Convent of La Croix in Saint-Servan on the Feast of the Poor Man of Assisi, Adelaide had dressed in the clothing of the poor in order the better to break away from the spirit of the world. Now, once again in the clothing of the world, she continued to live that breaking away interiorly for Christ and for the service of her brothers.

Father de Clorivière's next letter dated October 15, 1791 was sent to her at Rennes;

As for you my dear daughter, be full of trust in God. It is He who gives you the persuasive words to attract to Himself the souls on whom He has special designs of mercy. Follow with docility the holy inspirations He gives you. There are many signs indeed that it is you whom He has chosen for this work. Do not ask for more and do not wish to have on this subject a complete certitude free from all doubt....This kind of obscurity is very salutary for us and is an excellent means of practicing confidence, abandonment and love.

He counseled Mother de Cicé as co-foundress to speak about both Societies with circumspection and as needed.

At a time when hell, in punishment for our sins, seems to have the power to do all the evil that it wishes against men, virtue ought to act secretly and in silence in order to procure more surely and for a longer time the glory of God.

Father wrote again to Mother de Cicé at Rennes on October 28, 1791.

Her month's stay at Rennes seemed long. Nevertheless it afforded Mother de Cicé the time "to progress in the work of the Lord." This time also permitted Father de Clorivière to

schedule "a retreat to some holy hermits." He had just finished giving a retreat to a group of Carmelites and was preparing one for some ecclesiastics.

Everything was ready in Mother de Cicé's apartment in Paris. Father would then be living at 526 rue de la Chaise under the alias of Mr. Poiseaux.

His letter of October 31, 1791 was the last one sent from Paris to Rennes before Mother de Cicé's arrival in the capital on November 11. Her coming obliged Father de Clorivière to change his plans. He postponed his retreat to the hermits in order to be on hand to receive Mother de Cicé and Father Cormeau on their arrival in Paris. Once again he counseled Mother de Cicé to practice abandonment and confidence in her "painful state":

Let us abandon ourselves to Divine Providence with the sweet confidence that it will conduct everything and make it serve to His greater glory. This is the way I envisage the painful state that you are experiencing. God wishes that you realize by your own experience what you are capable of by yourself in order that you may attribute to Him alone all that you will be instrumental in accomplishing.

One more time--and it would not be the last--the humble Superior General would be obliged courageously to overcome her apprehensions in order to cast herself into the heart of the torment in the service of the Lord and of the Society.

\* \* \* \* \*

### MOTHER DE CICÉ'S ARRIVAL IN PARIS

Mother de Cicé boarded the coach for Paris at Rennes on November 6 or 7, 1791. Another person, no doubt traveling incognito, joined her. It was Father Cormeau, confessor of the faith. He had finally been able to leave his hiding place at Quintin and then to remain secretly in Rennes. He had been pursued in all sections of Brittany where he was well known as a former preacher of missions.

Discreetly he took his place in the coach. With him Our Lord was traveling, for Father Cormeau was taking with him some consecrated hosts. Mother de Cicé knew this.... The long four or five-day trip with stops at certain inns would be for the two travelers a time of silent adoration. It was "with Him" and "for Him" that they were going to face the storm, for the upheavals of the Revolution were worsening in Paris day by day.

The coach stopped a little beyond the Porte de Versailles. There several persons awaited the passengers who were dismounting. Mademoiselle Deshayes probably together with one or two other Daughters of the Heart of Mary, sought Mother de Cicé with their glance. A priest of the Society of the Heart of Jesus had come to receive Father Cormeau.<sup>69</sup> We can imagine the respectful emotion with which Mother de Cicé was accompanied to the little apartment on Rue des Postes where everything had been prepared for her arrival. Out of prudence Father de Clorivière did not come there till some hours later.

The Superior General's first days in Paris must have been spent in meeting the Daughters of Mary living in the capital city. And Father de Clorivière must have conferred with her about the necessary personal interviews and spiritual conferences.<sup>70</sup> Amid the full rage of the Revolution the life of a budding Reunion was organized seen only by God and His Mother.

Soon a family sorrow would befall Mother de Cicé as is revealed in a short note of Father de Clorivière dated only "Saturday morning, 1792":

Accept my sincere sympathy for the loss you have just suffered. I share both your grief at this loss and your consolation because of the pious sentiments of a brother at the moment which decides on all eternity. You have indeed reason to bless God and your brother has even more cause than you for this because of the happy combination of circumstances which procured for him the joy of having you near him at this time. The Lord is indeed good to those who seek only Him although His Hand seems to lie heavily upon them at times.

This note would indicate that Mother de Cicé had the consolation of brightening the last days on earth of her brother, Louis Toussaint, a navy officer. He had married in Paris. He died in the capital on January 28, 1792.

There followed an interval of several months in which there was no record of correspondence. Undoubtedly Mother de Cicé and Father de Clorivière met regularly to supervise jointly the first steps of the Society in Paris.

In the French capital disturbances were at their height. The decree of November 27, 1791 had declared under arrest the thousands of priests who had refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. In April 1792, war had been declared on Austria. The first reverses of the French army had resulted in panic. Suspicion increased. Everywhere there was the risk of informing and accusation. The churches and chapels whose priests had refused to take the oath were officially closed. However some churches were not affected for foreign properties still enjoyed freedom of worship. One such institution was

---

<sup>69</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière.

<sup>70</sup> The Conference on the Vows of Religion were written at the end of 1791 and the beginning of 1792. The Archives of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary contain the handwritten originals from the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference (incomplete) to the final one. These Conferences are all dated. The 7<sup>th</sup> Conference bears the date of January 7, 1792; the 12<sup>th</sup> and last, February 23, 1792

the Irish College in Paris. For some time it had been able generously to place at the disposition of the French clergy the College buildings which were protected by a certain immunity. At the Irish College a number of clandestine ordinations were held. They were usually preceded by retreats zealously preached by Father de Clorivière. At the end of these retreats it was customary for the group of retreatants to send a letter to the Holy Father as a moving affirmation of their loyalty to the Apostolic See. At the end of one such letter dated March 23, 1792, the first signature was that of Father Cormeau, pastor of Plaintel.

There is indication that Mother de Cicé and her companions must have provided help to the retreatants at the Irish College. The retreatants' letter to the Holy Father<sup>71</sup> on January 22, 1792 closed with these very interesting lines:

By this letter which all of us have prepared together...we implore of Your Holiness the apostolic benediction not only for ourselves but also for the pious association of very fine women who are dedicating their entire life as a sacrifice to the Sacred Heart of Jesus to whom they are devoted and the Immaculate Heart of Mary to whom they have especially consecrated themselves. These women assist us with their means....

Did this refer to the Society of the Heart of Mary? We can most surely assume that it did, given the proximity of Mother de Cicé's home and that of her daughters to the Irish College as well as the participation in the retreats by the Fathers of the Heart of Jesus. Thus, at the very dawn of the Society our first Mother was able to collaborate in those "spiritual works of mercy" for which she showed such predilection in her long letter of September, 1790 to Father de Clorivière.

The correspondence between the two founders interrupted since the end of January, 1792 was resumed the following July. Father de Clorivière's letter of July 11, 1792 showed that Mother de Cicé was still under the winepress of interior suffering:

You are too troubled now for me to think that I should or could exact anything new from you. Continue then to do as you have been doing with regard to your companions without telling them anything of what I have told you. I only recommend to you to take more care of your health because, from what I know of your condition, this is absolutely necessary.

Doubtlessly because of Mother de Cicé's scruples Father de Clorivière added:

I shall not oblige you to go to Communion tomorrow nor the day after and it will be sufficient if you come to confession Saturday morning. Do not even come on that day, which is Federation Day<sup>72</sup>, if you feel there is risk in coming so far.

---

<sup>71</sup> Vatican Archives. French Nunciature, Vol. 582, f. 266-268, n. 82 (original in Latin).

<sup>72</sup> Jour de la Federation – Bastille Day (July 14, 1789).

His letter of July 16, 1792 realistically described the dangers run by the co-founders. Extreme prudence was needed:

It would have been my dear daughter, a real consolation for me if, on this feast of our good Mother<sup>73</sup>, I had been able to celebrate it with you at Mt. Carmel. The Lord has arranged otherwise. May His Holy Name be blessed. Let us place our glory and our happiness in accomplishing His Holy Will in everything, however hard it may be. This is no small suffering for me and it cannot fail to be also for you, that I cannot leave here for a few days. I realize well enough and others have made me understand that it would be imprudent to do it.

He mentioned the numerous arrests which had been made in Paris and which would be followed in a few weeks by the September massacres:

You have doubtless learned that quite recently many priests were arrested, among them ecclesiastics of Saint-Sulpice who have been taken to the Carmes. Several nuns who reported yesterday to the office where they were to receive their upkeep were also arrested.

Finally, these words of Father de Clorivière indicated his fine equilibrium but they were such as to increase the fears of our Mother de Ciccé:

Last night we had a real alarm. I was not at all frightened by it and it did not prevent me from having a very restful sleep. However, our ladies<sup>74</sup> stayed up almost the whole night in order to be ready to flee.

In this environment of the Reign of Terror which was stalking all persons, Mother de Ciccé received the letter of August 7, 1792<sup>75</sup>. It was a letter grave in tone, almost solemn. In it the founder announced that she could make her first vows on August 15.

My dear daughter,

The peace of our Lord be with you.

I have been much concerned about you before Our Lord and I believe I ought to tell you in His Name and in the Name of His Most Holy Mother to prepare yourself to make your vows in the Society of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Mary, on the Feast of Her glorious Assumption, a week from today.

---

<sup>73</sup> July 16: Feast of Our Lady of Carmel.

<sup>74</sup> This probably means neighboring Sisters.

<sup>75</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition). P. 66. This letter gives the date and the month, but not the year. The original was dated the 7<sup>th</sup>, not the 8<sup>th</sup>.

I dispense you from your examens because of your excessive fear. I answer for you to yourself and before God for your dispositions. However, read the examen with care and enter as well as you possibly can into the dispositions which it demands....

The vows on this occasion will be for only one year.

It would be very difficult, not to say impossible, for you to make a regular retreat on account of your present situation, your eye trouble and the necessity you are under of going out, of talking to people, etc. But make as much of a one as you can without any anxiety from now until the Assumption.

Re-read with care the Plan and the Rules and Instructions on the Vows.

Animate yourself with great confidence and may Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. Amen.

The content of this letter is in agreement with the demands of a very exalted vocation. Mother de Cicé was liberated of everything that might arouse her scruples but she had to face her vocation as Daughter of the Heart of Mary and the vows she was about to make.

On August 11 and 14 she received two brief notes from Father de Clorivière who was counseling her to have peace and abandonment. The note of August 14 contained this interesting item:

I told Mademoiselle Dashayes and her N.<sup>76</sup> of the happiness you will have tomorrow. I also took the occasion to tell her to prepare for the same happiness herself on the coming Feast of the Purification...

The next day, August 15, Feast of the Assumption, Mother de Cicé sealed forever the offering which she had made on October 1, 1776 and signed with her blood. She now belonged "entirely to Jesus, her Spouse."

\* \* \* \* \*

### MOTHER DE CICÉ'S FIRST VOWS

There is no source which permits us exact knowledge of the year<sup>77</sup> and the place where Mother de Cicé made her first vows on the Feast of the Assumption. No doubt this took place

---

<sup>76</sup> "Her N." undoubtedly refers to "her novice" for Mlle. Deshayes was Novice Mistress.

<sup>77</sup> Father de Clorivière's letters concerning Mother de Cicé's vows do not bear indications of the year. As a matter of fact, we cannot definitely say it was 1792. It might have been 1793. See Founded on the Rock.

in a chapel or oratory known to Father de Clorivière, a place where the ceremony might be held in complete discretion.

From the talk which the founder gave on the occasion<sup>78</sup> we can imagine that, together with Daughters of the Heart of Mary, several priests of the Heart of Jesus must have been present. In that talk Father de Clorivière asked the Holy Spirit to place on his lips "words of truth which would edify all those who were listening to him," and he made reference to the fullness which the vows bring to the sacred commitment of priesthood.

The Archives of the Society contain the entire discourse exactly as it was handwritten. It is too long to be reproduced in its entirety but its principal ideas will be extracted. In fact, it is clear that on this unusual occasion Father de Clorivière described the essential traits of the religious society of which Mother de Cicé was "the cornerstone."

Through her, Father de Clorivière was directing his thoughts also to "all who would be following her."

The introduction, in the spirit of a contemplative who was familiar with these truths, evoked Mary who was in heaven body and soul. He evoked her as the object of an incessant praise of the blessed who "have learned what God has done for His Mother, the singular graces He has conferred on her, the Virgin's full reception of these graces" and the "joys which the Lord Himself derives from the perfection of the masterpiece of His hands."

The central theme developed by Father de Clorivière was this Gospel verse:

Mary has chosen the better portion and she shall not be deprived of it.  
(Luke 10:42)

He applied these words to Mother de Cicé in the name of the Lord:

On this day at the moment when you are following Mary's footsteps.... like her, you are choosing the better portion by attaching yourself by vow to the Society of the Daughters of her Heart.

He then announced the two broad divisions of his talk. The first, Mary chose the better part, aimed to show all the perfection which Mother de Cicé was able to bring to her sacrifice with the help of grace. The second, it will not be taken from her, aimed to banish all fear from her heart by recalling the great mercies of the Lord towards her.

First of all Father de Clorivière praised the religious life which Mother de Cicé was going to embrace:

---

<sup>78</sup> We cannot be absolutely sure that Father de Clorivière was able to attend the meeting himself in those troubled times or to give the talk he had prepared for the occasion.

What can man do that is more holy, more perfect, more pleasing to God and more fitting to witness to God one's thanks for all His benefits, than to make everything received from His bounty serve to His glory; than to make to Him the most complete sacrifice, the most irrevocable sacrifice of all things on earth — the sacrifice of one's body and all its senses, of one's soul and all its faculties, of himself?....We cannot conceive of anything on earth which is more sacred, more perfect or more closely approaching the state of the blessed in heaven...."

But, Father de Clorivière continued:

God gives Himself to us and we belong entirely to Him only by this renunciation and sacrifice of ourselves. And this sacrifice has its complete perfection only when we irrevocably and unreservedly consecrate ourselves to the Lord by our emission of the three substantial vows of religion or by a giving of one's self that is so perfect that it eminently contains those three vows and includes all their obligations.

There followed a long development of the excellence of each of the vows. By the vows;

...man makes the most complete offering of himself to God and the most perfect sacrifice of which he is capable in this life and....by this sacrifice he enters into the most holy and sublime state that is possible in this world.

It can be imagined how deeply those statements must have penetrated the heart and mind of those who heard them at the very time when revolutionary decrees were formally abolishing religious life.

Always concerned about giving a theological base to his teaching Father de Clorivière continued:

The soul faithful in responding to the sanctity and the sublimity of this vocation is here on earth the living image of the Savior of the world....From the first moment of His incarnation the Word made flesh, made of Himself the most perfect holocaust to His Father. Master of all things He stripped Himself of everything....He submitted Himself in all things to the will of His Father and even to the will of men.

At this point Father de Clorivière opened out for Mother de Cicé some Marian perspectives by which the Daughters of the Heart of Mary touched the very heart of their vocation. He called the Incarnate Word "the model of religious." Thenceforth Mother de Cicé would envision Him;

in the loveliest and truest of all His images, in His august Mother....in her admirable examples which are like a magnificent development of the great lessons of her Divine Son....Everything is admirable in the Mother of the Savior of mankind. There is no moment, no mystery in her life which does

not show her to us as the loveliest image of her Son, as the completed model of all the religious virtues.

Next came a thought characteristic of Father de Clorivière, orienting his listeners to the pluralism particular to the Society:

Various religious orders under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, devote themselves principally to honoring — in their spirituality and in imitation — one or the other of the different mysteries of the Virgin Mary. You, my dear daughter, and those who will come after you will, under the direction of the same Holy Spirit, consider all these mysteries together. You will consider all of Mary's virtues in the highest degree of their excellence by dedicating yourself in a special manner to her holy Heart under the name of Daughters of the Holy Heart of Mary. Thereby you are declaring that in that Heart which is all love for God and charity toward neighbor, you are henceforth deriving all your sentiments, ail your affections, all your life.

The body of Father de Clorivière's teachings, notably in the Circular Letters, presents this conformity to the Heart of Mary, the most perfect image of the Heart of her Son the Incarnate Word, as the very bond of the spirituality which he left as heritage to the Society.

After having thus exalted the benefit of the religious life the Founder added that such benefit so great in itself was great also in regard to circumstances. He then sketched a moving portrait of the destruction and upheavals of the Revolution, a portrait most vivid for those who daily witnessed those ravages: churches demolished, devastated or turned over to sacrilegious practices; altars and relics profaned; Christians martyred for the faith; priests imprisoned or forced into exile; the Holy Sacrifice celebrated in hidden places at the risk of one's life; monasteries destroyed; religious dispersed; vows of religious profession forbidden; the Name of Jesus Christ abhorred.

Father de Clorivière added, addressing himself to Mother de Cicé:

May this extol for you the glory accorded in all ages to religious profession.... But here is something very particularly for you. We must, because of this, rejoice with you in the Lord. Out of His pure mercy He has chosen you to be the first stone in the new edifice which He is raising to His glory and to the glory of His Blessed Mother. You are the first He has chosen to be His spouse in that edifice. We may hope that He will make use of you to attract to following Him a numerous band of virgins, a chosen people who by the fervor of their homage, by the purity of their love, by the practice of the evangelical counsels, will strive to make amends to Him for all the outrages of a godless world and for the offense to Him in the suppression of so many Orders which worked together to procure His glory and the salvation of mankind.

Father de Clorivière was fearless in broadening the horizon:

We may hope that what the Lord has done for you is the assurance of what He wills to do. But when He will ordain otherwise in the decrees of His eternal wisdom, the desires to contribute to His glory can come only from Him. They are desires so pure, so noble, so vast, embracing all eras, all places, and all classes of society. Their aim is to make flourish again everywhere....the holiness of the most beautiful periods of Christianity....Such desires cannot fail to be very pleasing to God.

Mother de Cicé has truly chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.

Entering then into the sentiments of Mother de Cicé, Father de Clorivière affirmed that he knew her weakness which was even greater than she could imagine but that this very weakness was itself a new reason for confidence. Mother de Cicé could say with the Apostle that in her great weakness lies her strength.

Aware of how much she feared that she would fail in fidelity in the exact observance of her vows, Father de Clorivière explained how the vows, far from being a burden, would be for her an aid in responding to her vocation. There followed these moving lines where he attested to Mother de Cicé's purity of intention as regards her commitment to the Society:

What motive could have influenced your vocation? I see no motive. Were you perhaps drawn by the example of others? You were the first to walk a path which before your time had not been marked out. Were you perhaps seeking publicity? Your sacrifice is known to God alone. Were you seeking to rid yourself of annoying duties? You assumed new ones without eliminating those you already had. Was it the sweetness of solitude? The Lord has retained you in the world. Was it to release yourself from all the cares and stresses of life? The religious life which you are embracing promises you no temporal gain....You cannot have proposed for yourself anything but to please Jesus, to follow His voice, to show Him a greater love and to contribute to His glory in the manner most conformed to His good pleasure.

Father de Clorivière again specified the essential end of the Society through which the Lord wishes to show the world:

that the world strives in vain to crush the practice of the evangelical counsels. That in the world and in spite of the world there will be preserved a chosen race. This race would not only refuse to kneel to Baal but would, moreover, tread constantly the thorny paths of holiness and by prayer and the practice of the most sublime virtues, contribute to the salvation of many and spread everywhere the good odor of Jesus Christ.

Then after recalling to Mother de Cicé the example of the earliest Christian virgins, Father de Clorivière proposed to her the example of the Queen of Virgins:

God did not permit that in any period of her life she live apart from the world so that you might attain to higher glory by following so beautiful a model.

Thus it was that on the Feast of the Assumption in the very eye of the stormy Reign of Terror which was increasing in Paris and, after having been reminded of the essential characteristics of the Society, the first Superior General offered herself to the sacrifice which totally bound her by vow to the Lord and His service.

We are able to sense the humility and the fervor with which she then pronounced the formula of her first vows:<sup>79</sup>

Most Holy Trinity... I, Adelaide Champion de Cicé, make to You this day, etc. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let us pause an instant at this crucial stage in Mother de Cicé's life. Let us review the dominant traits of her temperament and let us strive to grasp something of the mystery of her special grace.

She was then about 43 years old. Her natural and supernatural personality had been affirmed by reason of her age and circumstances. After long and painful quests guided by the Holy Spirit, she had just made her vows in the new-born Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. She no longer belonged to herself. She was totally given to the service of the Lord and of her brethren in and through the Congregation whose co-foundress and first Superior General she was.

The maintaining and growth of the Society during the height of the French Revolution and later under Napoleon's rule were to demand of her a courage that would attain heroism.

---

<sup>79</sup> Constitutive Documents, p. 111. Pp 111 & 112 reproduce a text handwritten by Fr. de Clorivière on both sides of a sheet of paper. Please note the date, August 15, 1793. It is the oldest formula in the Archives of the DHM: "Most Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God in three persons; and You, divine Jesus, Savior of mankind, You Whose Heart is all afire with love; prostrate at the feet of Your Infinite Majesty, and filled with confidence in Your mercies, all unworthy as I am, I ----, make to You on this day of the triumphant Assumption of the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God, under her protection, and in the Society of the Daughters of her Holy Heart, the Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience according to the spirit and form of this Society. I ask of You, my God, and I await from Your pure goodness, by the merits of Jesus Christ Our Lord and through the all-powerful intercession of His most Holy Mother, whose humble servant I wish to be all my life, the abundant graces I need to keep faithfully throughout my life the vows I have just made. Amen."

Her health was quite fragile marked by a malady of the lungs which would consume her throughout her life. This physical deficiency was accompanied by a great psychological and moral sensitivity. Her heart was exceptionally compassionate and open to all distress. Her conscience had reactions of an extreme delicacy. Its horror of the least taint of the most involuntary weakness was for her the occasion of deep turmoil. She felt unworthy and believed herself incapable of fulfilling her task.

These desolations — we would be tempted to say "this state of desolation" — marked in great part Mother de Cicé's crucifying life. Through Father de Clorivière's many letters of direction, the stages of her desolations can be followed day after day. This continuity might even cause a question on a superficial level. "Would not her illness have played an important role in these interior trials?"

Things must be judged from a higher level. Doubtlessly Mother de Cicé's state of health and her temperament exerted their share of influence on the unfolding of her interior life but the Holy Spirit habitually makes use of all the natural and supernatural resources of the human being in order to fulfill His designs.

On two occasions Father de Clorivière wrote to Mother de Cicé that the Lord had chosen her as a victim soul.<sup>80</sup> First he wrote:

I send you this general letter relative to our great undertaking in which you have borne all the burden for a long time since the Lord has chosen you to be a victim.

Several years later he again wrote:

Let Adelaide not doubt at all that she is a victim in whom the Divine Love is well pleased.

At certain times when Mother de Cicé's distress seemed to be at its height, Father de Clorivière clearly reminded her that her sufferings were of an exceptional order:

I say to you with assurance that what you are going through is neither punishment nor chastisement. It is a trial which will turn entirely to your advantage and to that of others....Be full of confidence as to the superior will, it is the only thing which can merit or demerit. The other will, founded on feelings, is not always in our power and it does not depend on us to rectify the feelings especially in extraordinary trials such as yours. Why does God permit these trials? Let us respect the secrets of the Lord. Let us not

---

<sup>80</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 57 and other pages. Throughout this work, references will be made to such texts. Cf. also Constitutive Documents, p. 444 (Statement of May, 1808): "to offer ourselves as victims, for the salvation of our brothers! The notion of victimhood was familiar to the spirituality of those times and it found fertile soil amid the atrocities of the Revolution." In September, 1791, Father de Clorivière wrote to Mother de Cicé: "Let us adore the secret judgments of the Most High...Let us offer Him the infinite merits of His Son, Jesus Christ, to appease His justice, and let us unite ourselves as victims to this adorable victim."

seek to know what He hides from us but let us be sure that all is directed by His love. He will make them known to us one day and then you will see if you are faithful, how these sufferings, these disturbances, these upheavals of every type will have been advantageous for you.<sup>81</sup>

There is no way more excellent nor surer to lead to God than humility and this is the way by which God conducts you. That is why He permits you to feel these interior repugnancies, these revolts, this sensitiveness, these returns of self-love, these jealousies that the demon excites in you in a manner which is not ordinary and which make us see plainly that the Lord, to try you, to purify you more and more, to give you the merit of the cross and in order that this cross turn to your own good and to the spiritual good of many souls, has allowed the spirit of darkness to attack you with much violence.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, there were these words written on March 11, 1808:

I am always interested in your state of interior suffering which has lasted, although intermittently, for a great number of years. I am often concerned about you before God and I should like to be able to bring you some relief. As for myself, I could only repeat to you the advice which I have given you so many times. If, as I think, you are firmly resolved and sincerely wish to conform yourself thereto the best you can with the help of divine grace, although it may seem to you that you do this only very imperfectly, although you feel in yourself great revolts of the will, your sufferings will not be less advantageous to you than they are bitter and difficult to bear. You will reap one day, either in this life or in the next, the most precious fruits. I tell you this in the name of the Lord.<sup>83</sup>

Reading these letters and even many others in which Father de Clorivière tried to explain to Mother de Cicé God's action in her regard, permits (it would seem) a comparison between her trials and those described by St. John of the Cross as the nights of the senses and the soul. Father de Clorivière himself invited us to make this comparison when he wrote to Mother de Cicé on March 22, 1808:<sup>84</sup>

It has occurred to me to tell you to take up again my canticle on the picture of Blessed John of the Cross. Your condition is depicted there. Perhaps you are able to recognize it.

---

<sup>81</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 175.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 383; also pp. 87-88 and p. 141.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 403.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. 405-406.

Coming from so expert and so prudent a spiritual master as Father de Clorivière, such witness cannot be taken lightly. Nor can the following, written several years before:<sup>85</sup>

If your miseries trouble you sometimes, may your soul plunge itself with all confidence into the salutary waters which Jesus has prepared for you. It will emerge all-beautiful and all-pure. It might even happen that it would have that purity necessary for admittance into heaven before the All-holy God.<sup>86</sup>

## CHAPTER III

### IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

On July 16, 1792, Father de Clorivière had informed Mother de Cicé of the arrest of many ecclesiastics and their subsequent imprisonment at the Carmes. Among them was Monsignor Gabriel Desprez de Roche, Vicar General of the diocese of Paris and priest of the Heart of Jesus. On August 13,<sup>87</sup> his servant who went to the prison to visit the Vicar General was searched. Seized from him was a note from Father de Clorivière asking the Vicar General for more extended faculties for carrying out his ministry in those difficult times. From that time on Father de Clorivière's name, address and priestly activities were known and an order for his arrest was issued. Having been forewarned in good time he was able to move to another place but we can imagine Mother de Cicé's anguish in learning such news.

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 93. This letter bore no date, but certain details permit its being placed definitely in the beginning of 1801, at the time of Mother de Cicé's imprisonment.

<sup>86</sup> It would seem that all has been said with these last lines, but we must add here a witness of great importance: the witness of the self-mastery which always characterized Mother de Cicé and the peace and exquisite charity she always exercised with her sisters, no matter what her internal struggles, which she never allowed to be detected. Many times Father de Clorivière, who received the reactions of many of the sisters, had to reassure Mother de Cicé on this point.

<sup>87</sup> M. E. F. de Bellevue, Father de Clorivière and His Mission, p. 139.

Soon events accelerated. From September 2 to 4, 1792, enraged mobs broke into the prisons and massacred those detained therein.<sup>88</sup> At the Carmes and in other prisons, four members of the Society of Jesus fell victim to what became known in French history as "the September Massacres."

One of Father de Clorivière's letters to Mother de Ciccé, dated "Tuesday evening," must have been written on September 4, 1792 the very evening of the massacres.<sup>89</sup> The letter once more expressed the supernatural views which guided Father de Clorivière in all his judgments:

Let us look at everything according to the views of Divine Providence and with the eyes of faith. We are in times when the Lord commands us to give ourselves up to a holy joy and the sweetest confidence. It is not that nature does not feel its weakness and does not fear to succumb. We should not be surprised after what Our Divine Master wished to experience in the Garden of Olives. But with Him let us rise above our fears, our weakness and our natural uneasiness. Let us I say, rise above this in spirit and this triumph over nature will be very pleasing to Our Lord Who permits in us this painful combat between nature and grace only to make the victory of grace more glorious and more meritorious. Let us then unite our dispositions to those of Jesus Christ in His Agony in the garden. I regard as blessed the fate of our brothers and the confidence I have of their lot does not allow me to pray for them. If God wishes to honor us by a similar death let us regard it as the most precious of His favors. Our care ought to be to dispose ourselves for it by the most entire abandonment into His hands. Let us pray for each other and for the Church with all the confidence and fervor possible. Perhaps we shall not have the happiness and glory of being among the number of victims immolated. However, it is certain that God asks at least the sacrifice of our will and we should make it without reserve and without limit.

After those lines, which revealed how much the gift of strength manifested itself in souls during those hours of bitter anguish, the counsels of prudence and abandonment which follow are all the more appreciable:

Whatever satisfaction it might be to see you do not come without necessity to seek the sick one.<sup>90</sup> Thanks be to God, the feeling of his weakness does not alter his confidence, his resignation or his peace. We are the Lord's and not our own. He can dispose of us according to His own good pleasure. But

---

<sup>88</sup> See Founded on the Rock.

<sup>89</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 67.

<sup>90</sup> Undoubtedly Father de Clorivière calls himself "the sick one." In the letters written soon afterwards from Villers, where he had sought refuge at a cousin's, he spoke of his return to health. Cf. Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), pp. 69-72.

also, if He wishes to save us, all the wicked aided by the fury of hell could not hurt us, not a hair of our heads will fall without His will.

Father de Clorivière did not overlook the two faithful servants who had followed their mistress to Paris:

Say from me all you can that will be most consoling to la Marchand and to Agathe. Pray also that when they come to visit us He will put in my mouth what to reply.

He also gave this final encouragement:

May she (Adelaide) place all her confidence in God. Some day she will rejoice at all that she is suffering for God. She should not be sorry for what will — in God's eyes — be the greater part of her glory.

The seal of suffering and sacrifice and their final consequences was thus, from the very beginning years of the Society, becoming apparent to Mother de Cicé.

An undated note written after the letter just quoted, implied that Mother de Cicé must have urged Father de Clorivière to leave Paris in order temporarily to escape being sought:

What you told me this morning, thanks be to God, has not troubled the peace of my soul. But up to the present my own reflections have led me to follow the advice that you gave me. I give you some advice in return and that is, from tomorrow on, remain in your home.

Father de Clorivière deeply feared Mother de Cicé's stays at the Hospital of the Incurables where, in characteristic charity, she was taking care of one of the patients.

There followed these lines revealing the dangers of the time:

I have about decided to go away. Come then as early as you can without causing comment.

The two founders, who were sharing responsibility for the Society, must indeed have had many matters to set in order on the eve of a separation of perhaps long duration.

Another note advised Mother de Cicé that Father de Clorivière had arrived without difficulty at Villers near Chantilly, at the home of his cousin.<sup>91</sup> But he added that Marie-Joseph (i.e. Father Cormeau) was unable to join him as planned. He therefore urged Mother de Cicé;

to see if there would not be some means of providing oneself with a room where one could live with some sense of security when the investigations have been made.

---

<sup>91</sup> Father de Mascrani.

A letter written at Villers, 19 September, 1792 was addressed to Mademoiselle Le Marchand, 8 Rue des Postes, but was intended for Mother de Cicé. It reflected Father de Clorivière's anxiety but also the efficient assistance our first Mother gave him and the confidence which he placed in her judgment:

I am, Mademoiselle, very uneasy at your news and the uncertainty of events makes your absence very painful and makes me find the time very long. I pray with all my heart that the Lord may watch very especially over her who has taken so much care of others and preserve her for us. Without the confidence I have in His goodness my worry would be even greater. Let us acquiesce in His Divine Will in everything. The will of God makes everything serve for His glory even when one's purpose is to fight and to destroy. Never let us lose sight of this, it is in the will of God alone that we find our strength and our rest. During these later times you have been His interpreter in my regard, like an instrument which Providence is using to shield me from many dangers. Have the goodness to continue to serve me in this way. Is it expedient for me to remain here longer or shall I leave soon? Shall I return to Paris or to St. Denis? Where will you stay, at least for a time?

In that same letter, after having requested some clothing he needed, he asked:

Where are you staying? Has anyone made a visit to one or the other place?<sup>92</sup> If it is possible, give me the news as soon as you can. Being away under these circumstances has its advantages but it also has its sufferings.

He added:

My health keeps up. I walk a great deal without however, going outdoors.

Such documents as these letters of inestimable value permit us to relive in some way the atmosphere of those times and the anxieties, if not the anguishes, felt by both Father de Clorivière and Mother de Cicé.

A long letter dated September 24, 1792 revealed the same concerns and the same uncertainty:

Your letter...has relieved me of much anxiety....I have already told you that I am not pleased to see you in that hospital with its unhealthy air. And my imagination, which has been at work during your absence, has already been picturing very sad things. I beg you, as soon as you can, go elsewhere with your invalid.

---

<sup>92</sup> Undoubtedly, Father de Clorivière's former apartment, the one he had turned over to Mother de Cicé.

To divert suspicion, Father de Clorivière continued his letter in speaking of "Adelaide's mother." By use of this name he was referring to himself. After mentioning his much desired return to Paris he again deferred to Mother de Cicé's advice:

But as she ("Adelaide's mother," i.e. Father de Clorivière) loves and esteems her daughter very much, she will leave everything entirely to her discretion and will regulate her actions by what her daughter tells her. If there should be any inconvenience as to her return she would like them to inform her at the same address.

The letter then changed in tone. Mother de Cicé in examining her faults, must have permitted herself an exaggerated anxiety. Father de Clorivière set matters aright:

This fear that you have of dis-edifying your companions is only imaginary. To think you dis-edify them would be to believe them very weak. Let us tell the truth. It is self-love which in some way is indignant against self and which takes fright at the trifles which make it see in itself weaknesses from which it believed itself exempt.

Writing on September 30, Father de Clorivière expressed in hidden language his hope soon to return to Paris. He therefore suggested certain arrangements which would permit him to remain in quarters which were more confined than ever. He proposed that Mother de Cicé, who was still living at the Hospital for Incurables with her patient, might return to the apartment on Rue Cassette.

If the thing is feasible, I mean to say if the health of the invalid will permit it, she could take her old room and the person who was occupying it (Father de Clorivière) will do admirably in the little closet near the attic. I also know that he would believe himself better off there than elsewhere and that for several reasons he would prefer that place to any other.

Later in the same letter he wrote:

As to the person about whom you are so anxious (Father de Clorivière himself), I do not see what great harm he will undergo if he is for some time on a diet. He is in good health and could live very well for some time on bread and water.

The last letter from Villers was dated October 8, 1792. In it Father de Clorivière recommended his servant at length. The letter revealed the delicacy with which he intended to recognize the kind work rendered by the servant. Nothing seemed definite as yet, about his return to Paris He concluded by writing:

Give me news from Paris, especially news of your own people in whom I am exceedingly interested.

Father de Clorivière returned to Paris it seems, shortly after that. There are no precise indications of his lodging at that time. The Archives of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary

possess some 20 handwritten papers not bearing the year in which they were written<sup>93</sup> but most of them must relate to the 1793-1794 period. The founders perhaps met from time to time but the danger was greater than ever. The Reign of Terror which burst forth in 1793 would rage in all its ferocity until the downfall of Robespierre in 1794.

We have already mentioned the massacres of September 1792 which followed the defeat of the French Army. But soon the victory of Valmy on September 20 restored the external situation. The Constituent Assembly took advantage of the restored order to proclaim the Republic on September 22.

King Louis XVI, accused as an accomplice of the Allied Armies against France, was condemned to death and beheaded on January 21, 1793. To facilitate the so-called measures of purification, France was covered with exceptional tribunals. The prisons teemed with suspects and heads rolled at the gallows.

Father de Clorivière's brother, Mr. de Limoelan, who had been involved in a royalist plot, was guillotined in Paris on June 1, 1793.

Father de Clorivière's sister, Sister Theresa de Gonzaga, a religious of the Visitation, returned from exile in Belgium and was living near Paris in a condition bordering on misery.<sup>94</sup> Arrested with her companions, she was deprived of an ardently desired martyrdom by the downfall of Robespierre in July, 1794.

The Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary was also affected. Madame des Bassablons was arrested at Point-Pinel in April 1794 and guillotined in Paris on June 20, 1794 after having been the consolation and the comfort of her companions in misfortune.

Father Cormeau, arrested in August 1793, was beheaded in June, 1794.

It is painful to imagine the repercussions of such events on the first members of the two Societies. Indeed, there existed a call to heroism but also it was an environment of troubles, of informing, of continual uncertainties and of incessant alarms,

One of Father de Clorivière's letters of this period addressed only to "Adelaide" was devoted in its entirety to exaltation of the path of suffering:<sup>95</sup>

One loves well and solidly only when one has suffered much for God. Can we buy so great a good with too much suffering? I do not want to wish you more of it than you have already but I wish for you and for all our friends a great joy in your sufferings. And I beg God not to take sufferings from you

---

<sup>93</sup> The collection of letters indicate certain dates but these are only conjectures.

<sup>94</sup> Mother de Cicé helped her on several occasions. Father de Clorivière thanked Mother de Cicé for what she has done for his sister. Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 76.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-76.

but to take from you all languor, laxity and weakness which could diminish your merit in suffering.

Broadening the perspectives of suffering, Father continued:

Those evils from which we can, from which we must ask deliverance are the general evils of the Church. But there is not a better means of obtaining relief from these evils than suffering joyfully our own personal troubles.

The last paragraph of the same letter showed that some Daughters of the Heart of Mary had been able to meet with their Mother:

I congratulate you on the time you have spent with your friends and I also congratulate them. It would have given me much satisfaction to have seen you all together. God did not permit it. He has His designs which we must adore.

It appeared that Father de Clorivière was not yet able to move to rue Cassette without danger. His future was uncertain:

It is not yet time for anything definite. Time will clear up everything.

Then there followed these lines evocative of what might be called a daily news item which had become quite common during the Reign of Terror:

I learned from the newspapers that one of the men I most esteemed for his virtue, Father d'Herville...has just been guillotined. I did not hesitate to honor him as a martyr.

Two very much briefer letters in January showed Father de Clorivière still uncertain about a place to live. The end of the second of these letters was moving in its brevity:

The beginnings of our little S. (Society) are quite turbulent. May this only increase our hopes. Let us think of this in a very special way as the Feast of the Purification approaches. It is the day of our birth. May our love for our august Mother redouble. Hold the little retreat as customary. Make the renewal. A thousand good wishes to your respected companion. Pray for me.

Nothing had to diminish the fidelity of the members of a Society formed to safeguard religious life despite all obstacles.

Other undated letters written in May without mention of the year, obviously also belong to 1794.<sup>96</sup> One of them referred to "our friend from Plaintel" (Father Cormeau) who was

---

<sup>96</sup> ibid., pp. 78-80.

executed in June 1794. The letter of May 10, 1794 with its admirable serenity was a true call to heroic trust in Providence:

My dear daughter, your solitude is great, your position is perilous. I do not see anything which can reassure me and reassure yourself save a moral certitude that you are in the order of God, that you have in no way acted against the rules of prudence, or rather that you have only yielded to necessity which (when it is entirely independent of our will and proceeds from causes outside of our power) is the infallible mark that the choice we are making is in God's order and conforms to His holy will. After that what remains for us to do? Nothing save to rest lovingly and without anxiety in the bosom of Divine Providence and to await peacefully from His hands all the events that He may wish to permit and the disposition that He may be pleased to make of us.

This repose will not be without sorrow. It is the repose of a soul on the cross. And he who says "cross" speaks of an accumulation of sufferings, of pains interior and exterior, of troubles and involuntary perturbations which rise up in our soul in spite of us and cause in it by turns the most vivid impressions. None of this need disturb our peace. Let us accept the sorrow and the pain whatever their nature may be. It is at all times a great advantage to suffer but at the present we ought to look upon suffering as a thing indispensably necessary for the faithful soul...

While the Church and the State are in the utmost desolation and while there is no one in whatever condition he may be who has not much to suffer, should we alone seek to be exempt from it? Should we wish to enjoy interior consolations which would absorb in us the feeling of pain? Ought we not on the contrary to place our consolation in not having any?

Being in the order of His providence, we are assured that He will give us abundantly all the graces of which we will have need, that nothing will happen to us that He has not ordained from all eternity, nothing which will not serve for His glory and for the greatest good of our soul. Let us then rise generously above all these impressions which render our resignation less perfect. Let us strongly suppress all the complaints of nature. They could only fall upon God Himself.

The second part of the letter made it clear how much Father de Clorivière wished to be able to give support to Mother de Ciccé by visiting her. But prudence did not permit a meeting:

I very sincerely share all your troubles and I am ready to do all I can to relieve them. If the matter depended on me, I should already be with you or rather I should go without deliberating further. But you know that my presence under the circumstances in which we are is not an indifferent thing. It can put many persons in danger and I do not believe it would be

acting in conformity with the will of God if I should expose them against their wish.<sup>97</sup> Our manner of acting ought to imitate that of Providence which does all that it does with wisdom and sweetness. It seems to me that the minds are rather badly disposed.

One after the other, three notes from Father de Clorivière reached Mother de Cicé.

The first note indicated that by the feast of St. John he would be leaving the place where he had been living. He suggested new arrangements for his moving to rue Cassette with Laurence, his faithful servant. But certain difficulties were arising to hinder the execution of his plan.

Next there came a long letter from Father de Clorivière to Mother de Cicé,<sup>98</sup> only one copy of which is retained in the Archives of the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. Its severity of tone is a bit surprising. Let us at this point summarize its contents:

Why was Mother de Cicé returning to the subject of Laurence's residence, since Father de Clorivière had written that she would be lodging in a room in another apartment? He owed much in justice to Laurence. "God has willed to make use of her to save me from many dangers." The arrangements he once thought possible for Rue Cassette were no longer so. He had thought of them for only one purpose, to be closer to Mother de Cicé's residence. He had explained the reasons preventing these arrangements. Why then was she still insisting on this subject?

Moreover, it was not advisable to add that the envisioned plan might place Mother de Cicé in a difficult position with regard to Father de Clorivière. He believed he gleaned in one or another of her letters the idea that she regarded his return to rue Cassette as a concession on her part, also that she wanted to impose her conditions on his return. Was it not a question of Father de Clorivière not as himself but rather as a representative of the Lord?

I hope that Divine Providence will deign to satisfy the ardent desire of my heart and reunite us. I hope too, that it will never suffer the sacred bonds that united us in the sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary ever to be broken either through your fault or mine.

What then had really happened? Carefully guarding ourselves from imagining what we do not know, it is nevertheless possible to suggest some explanations in the light of what we already do know:

Mother de Cicé knew the difficulties and tensions inherent in the conditions of life of the different residents of rue Cassette. Certain arrangements suggested by Father de Clorivière were not feasible in the practical order. To these very real difficulties there had to be added the fears which Mother de Cicé had difficulty in conquering. She feared that despite herself

---

<sup>97</sup> Father de Clorivière is referring here to the other tenants of the building on Rue Cassette.

<sup>98</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), pp. 81-83.

she would find herself in opposition to her director especially on the subject of Laurence. She therefore judged it to be her duty to tell him, even to insist on the conditions she considered necessary for his coming. At least, that is what Father de Clorivière's reply has allowed us to understand.

Reflection on this incident points up the rectitude of intention of the director who had to speak "with the frankness of a father," to show what possibly was excessive – and therefore less supernatural – in his correspondent's reactions. Besides he believed her "well disposed to understand" him. In fact, rare indeed are the persons humble enough to accept rather severe counsels in silence and to profit from them especially in the circumstances described.

In his May 23, 1794 letter Father de Clorivière noted with satisfaction the "better dispositions" which permitted Mother de Cicé to come closer to his views. For himself, he did have to reflect on the cogency of certain of Mother de Cicé's suggestions, for he offered a new plan which would enable the two co-founders at last to be under the same roof sometime later. Laurence, his servant, would rent under her own name. And in another part of the house well known to Father de Clorivière "right at the top" in two rooms adjoining "an admirable hiding place" there were already several things of his.

Next he described the services which the faithful Laurence could render. The letter terminated with an urgent call that they allow themselves to be guided only by supernatural views.

Let us do all that we can for the greater glory of God. And may all our desires, all our plans, be entirely subordinated to His divine will. Our fate is in His hands. Let us do what prudence requires for our preservation but let our cares be without anxiety. Arouse within yourself the liveliest confidence. May this confidence raise you above every kind of depression. Depression is very harmful to you. Pray for me. I never cease to do so for you, my dear daughter. May the Lord be with you.

The May 25 (1794) letter evoked in characteristic manner the dangerous environment in which the founders lived. Father de Clorivière first announced Laurence's arrival at rue Cassette. He also explained that he could not go there in person even for the briefest visit because of the difficulty he would have in returning to the lodging where he had to remain a few more days. He specified:

With so little furniture I could easily move out in case of an emergency....We are in God's hands and we abandon ourselves entirely to His divine will.

He gave this final word of advice to Mother de Cicé:

Do not think of putting your foot inside this place. It would not be at all safe for you to do so. The portress still speaks of you sometimes and says she would recognize you easily. She does not however, know your name....

Several letters, none of them bearing the year, are found in the first volume of Father de Clorivière's letters inserted after the letter of May 25, 1794. They dealt with the suffering and the abandonment to Divine Providence necessary in those times of insecurity and anguish. They might properly be said to have been written at the end of 1793 or the beginning of 1794. One of them expressly mentioned Father Cormeau as still being alive.<sup>99</sup>

The longer of the two letters<sup>100</sup> made no reference to external events that would permit dating it more precisely. In it, Father de Clorivière replied to her description of her especially afflicting health. Violently tempted by the situation, she feared she might exteriorly show something that would scandalize those about her:

Do not be disturbed my dear daughter, by these violent transports that you sometimes undergo. This violence which is not in your character makes you see well enough the evil principle from which these transports proceed and how severe are the assaults to which it subjects you in these moments of temptation. It is very difficult, not to say impossible, for human weakness to be so much the master of its movements that no agitation appears in the exterior to show what is going on within. But do not think that you are much at fault because during these moments you have allowed some sign of impatience, some inconsiderate word to escape you that your heart will almost immediately contradict and for which you will be deeply humiliated.

Further in the same letter he wrote:

Enter into the designs of God to the best of your ability. Although your present temptations, at least the most violent of them, are not of an entirely ordinary kind and although God may permit them by a pure act of His will without the soul having given reason for them in any way, it however rarely happens that the devil attacks a soul on any particular subject unless that soul has in the depths of itself (sometimes unknown to it) some vicious root which gives rise to the temptation. God has made this known to you on this occasion. That is why you must apply yourself with all your power to root out of your heart anything still there which is contrary to the perfection of charity and of humility.

The perfection of charity and humility indeed was the path which the Lord was tracing out for Mother de Ciché and through her, for all her daughters. "Learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart." (Mt. 11:29)

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>99</sup> ibid. p. 86.

<sup>100</sup> ibid. pp. 87-88.

## IN THE SHADOW AND THE SILENCE OF RUE CASSETTE

At the end of May or sometime during June, 1794. Father de Clorivière went back to live at rue Cassette. At least that is the date we can conjecture with much probability. He occupied the two rooms rented in Laurence's name. The famous hiding place was close by, ready to receive the proscribed priest in case of warning.

We have sufficient knowledge of the atmosphere of the house to deduce that even on the inside it was necessary to be circumspect in speech as well as in coming and going.

Mother de Cicé occupied another apartment which she shared with Mademoiselle Deshayes, mistress of novices. With much prudence and discretion the founders were able to meet to discuss Society matters. The Society was subsisting amid the tempests and it would soon acquire new recruits.

We cannot doubt that, except in unusual cases, the Eucharistic Celebration was held each day. The sacred Species were preserved either in the hiding place or in a special room as circumstances permitted. Mother de Cicé and Father de Clorivière were able in silence to have the comfort of long periods of adoration. Father de Clorivière occasionally went out at peril to his life whenever his priestly ministry called him to a dying person or to faithful ones in distress.

Mother de Cicé did not abandon her beloved poor. They came to visit her or she herself went out to them. Many of them came forth at the time of her trial, witnesses of a charity which nothing could impede.

As it was possible (it was rare in the first year and became progressively better later), religious contacts were pursued either by individual visits or by meetings of very few members at a time.

Besides, Father de Clorivière used these years of confinement to the good. He wrote various commentaries on Sacred Scripture as well as an important part of the Commentary on the Apocalypse. In Chapter VIII of the "Moral and Political Section" of that work, the account was given of the origins of the Society and the Society was presented as one of the means of preserving and renewing Christianity in the time to follow the ravishes inflicted by the French Revolution. The pages concerning the Society were written between July 2 and September 10, 1794.

This account reproduced in the Constitutive Documents of the Societies<sup>101</sup> is well known. After having described the inspiration of July 19, 1790, the first meetings with the ecclesiastical authorities and the beginnings of the Societies, particularly the Society of the Heart of Jesus, Father de Clorivière continued:<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> Constitutive Documents, p. 15.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

The Society of the Heart of Mary had almost the same development. The one chosen to be Superior in agreement with the Bishop who had first approved the Society<sup>103</sup> ...organized in his diocese (Saint Malo) several groups of Daughters called at first Daughters of Mary and then Daughters of the Heart of Mary.

The same person (Mother de Cicé) then came to Paris in obedience to preside over the establishment of the Daughters of Mary. After her arrival ecclesiastics of the other Society gave conferences to form the Daughters in the duties and practices of the religious life compatible with the nature of their own Society. It was during these early conferences that they adopted the name Daughters of the Heart of Mary. These conferences were continued as long as it was possible to have them.

In addition to the Superior General there were present also a local Superior and a Novice Mistress whose responsibility was the formation of new subjects.<sup>104</sup>

The Society was beginning to grow in Paris as well as in the provinces when the members were obliged to disperse. Nevertheless not all of them separated themselves from the Society. Without mentioning what happened in the provinces, it must be stated that there always remained in Paris a small number who always remained together, attached to the Society of the Heart of Mary while humbly awaiting whatever it would please the Lord to decide about the outcome for this little Society.

This passage, precious because it provided enlightenment on what the founder's correspondence revealed, also witnessed to the attachment of the earliest Daughters of the Heart of Mary to their budding Society where they had perceived their own vocation.

Before concluding this brief mention of the Commentary on the Apocalypse, two other passages might be noted. They also were written at the height of the Reign of Terror towards the end of 1793 when heads were rolling at the scaffold. Calmly Father de Clorivière exclaimed "we must be ready to make to God the sacrifice of our life however He wills to demand it."

There followed certain considerations which formed a true, small summary (both doctrinal and spiritual) on martyrdom.

Immediately afterwards, certain lines recalled with wisdom that "in these times much prudence and circumspection are needed."

---

<sup>103</sup> Father de Clorivière had therefore submitted his choice to Archbishop Courtois de Pressigny.

<sup>104</sup> It is clear that since its beginnings the Society, modest though it still was, possessed the necessary religious structures.

Here is contained Father de Clorivière's usual attitude apparent in all his correspondence, viz. humbly and simply to be ready for martyrdom if one is judged worthy of it but not imprudently to expose oneself to danger on one's own initiative, for one had to be able to continue to serve the Lord and His Church.

The mass arrests and bloody upheavals of the Reign of Terror had continued until 9 Thermidor, or July 27, 1794. It was at this time that a movement of reaction against the excesses of the Reign of Terror was being planned. In 1795, a new government called the Directoire or Directory came into power. It was replaced in November of 1799 by the Consulate soon to be monopolized by Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon assumed the title of Emperor in 1804. In that decade, internal French politics oscillated between the thrusts of the extreme right led by the royalists and those of the extreme left led by the revolutionaries.<sup>105</sup> Thus periods of relative calm alternated with periods of upheaval, political or religious in origin.

Several coups d'etat marked this era. They were powerless to restore national equilibrium. Increasing anarchy led to the dictatorship of the young General Bonaparte, adulated because of his victories in the Italian and Egyptian campaigns for example.

The repercussions of these events were felt in all of France. Discreet echoes of those happenings were apparent in the correspondence of Mother de Cicé and Father de Clorivière. It was remarkable that each of them succeeded, either by mail or by trusted messengers, in counseling and affirming the men and women in their Societies and in informing the persons who had heard of the Societies and thought they were being called by the Lord.

Most of the letters written by the co-founders between 1796 - 1798 are missing. Nevertheless, the Archives of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary contain seven letters from Mother de Cicé to Mademoiselle Therese Chenu, Superior of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary in Saint-Servan and environs, as well as a letter to Mademoiselle d'Esternoz. As to Father de Clorivière, his extant correspondence of the same period includes two long letters to Mademoiselle Therese Chenu, some eight letters to Mademoiselle d'Esternoz and six letters to Madame de Goesbriand. He too wrote to future members or to priests of the Heart of Jesus among others Father de Lange at Rouen and Father Pochard at Besancon.<sup>106</sup>

But number 11 Rue Cassette was not merely a center of correspondence. Discreetly a member of either Society from the provinces was received there according to the highly restricted possibilities of the place. Thus there was a sojourn by Mademoiselle d'Esternoz at the end of July, 1796 undoubtedly in preparation for her consecration on the Feast of the

---

<sup>105</sup> We have simplified to the extreme the very complex history of these agitated years.

<sup>106</sup> In the framework of this Volume, we cannot dwell on these various correspondents. Yet all these letters constitute a family treasure for the Society. Their value has not been altered by time. Besides evoking the life of the founders, the letters contain the clear and complete conception of the Society's particular form of religious vocation, its spirituality, its practical orientations, and its life lived under the most varied and most difficult conditions.

Assumption soon to come. She remained there a second time for four to five months at most at the end of 1797 and beginning of 1798.

There must be noted at this point the instructions and teachings given by the founder on all possible occasions at Rue Cassette. But in Paris there was a safer more secret place – the attic of the Misses Bertonnet on Ile Saint Louis. They were two sisters (both Daughters of the Heart of Mary), dressmakers whose work rooms camouflaged religious activities as the need arose. It may only be surmised that it was there in 1798 or a bit later that Father de Clorivière gave the Daughters of the Heart of Mary the first Triduum whose teachings have remained so precious.

There also, according to tradition, Father de Clorivière and Mother de Cicé each made a retreat of ten days benefitting from the privacy offered by the residence of the two sisters.

In the long letter of April 30, 1791, Father de Clorivière asked Mother de Cicé to accept the great responsibility of being Superior General. He also specified:

It is at Paris it seems to me, that both Societies should begin. The evil comes from there. The remedy for this evil should also come from there.

Courageously the burgeoning little Society directly placed itself in the center of the tempest. Was it not in the very line of its vocation, i.e., through prayer, sacrifice and the preservation of the religious life, to set up a bulwark against the assaults of evil? It was in the very midst of the persecution during those years of hidden life that the Society was solidly rooting itself in the Church.

\* \* \* \* \*

MEMORANDUM TO THE BISHOPS. FIRST CIRCULAR LETTERS. FIRST ARREST OF MOTHER DE CICÉ.

During 1798 and 1799 the vise began to loosen its grip.

Father de Clorivière was still preoccupied with obtaining the Church's approbation which alone could constitute the Societies as Religious Societies. Unable to reach the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Pius VI, he turned to the Bishops of France. For their consideration he prepared – probably at the end of 1798 – the Memorandum to the Bishops of France,<sup>107</sup> a most important document in the history of the Society.

Many bishops had immigrated to England. Others had gone to Germany. Germany, ravaged by war, was inaccessible. And "it was not without many risks" that Father de Clorivière's

---

<sup>107</sup> Constitutive Documents, p. 125.

emissary was able to get into England where "at that time there resided seventeen French bishops." After a thorough study of the Memorandum, the French bishops in England "unanimously" approved the new form of religious life as detailed in the document.<sup>108</sup>

Shortly thereafter, it became possible to reach the different Reunions with desired security. The founder then sent them in short intervals his first three Circular Letters, a sort of charter of the spirituality of the Societies and of the "Cor Unum" which was, in Christ, to unite the members among themselves.

The first Circular Letter, On the Conformity to the Divine Heart of Jesus Which We Should Strive to Acquire, was dated Paris, February 14, 1799; the second, On Charity Which Must Make Our Hearts One in Christ Jesus, May 1, 1799; the third was on community poverty, On the Type of Community of Goods That Must Exist between the Members of the Two Societies, Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, July 19, 1799, Paris.

At this time the Society was beginning to be established on solid bases. It had received a first approbation from an important group of bishops of France and the founder had endowed it with a cohesive body of spiritual doctrine and with well-established religious Plans.

It can be imagined how much Mother de Cicé must have shared the founder's hopes. But these encouraging beginnings still needed the seal of sacrifice ordinarily marking works willed by God. The seal of sacrifice was not long in coming. On August 23, 1799 Mother de Cicé was arrested and imprisoned.

To understand this first arrest, it is necessary to recall the previously cited vicissitudes of internal French politics.

On July 12, 1799, for fear of upheavals by the extreme right, a law had been promulgated called "the law of hostages," thus designating relatives of the emigrated French people and of the royalists as responsible for the disorders in France. From that date a strict watch was kept over mail from abroad. A letter from one of Mother de Cicé's emigrated brothers was intercepted.

The police conducted an investigation at Rue Cassette. Their official report was of sufficient interest to be quoted here:<sup>109</sup>

(Heading:) Champion de Cicé, sister of the former Bishop of Bordeaux, member of the Constituent Assembly, ex-minister of Capet. This 14 Thermidor, Year VII (August 4, 1799.)

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. pp. 472-473.

<sup>109</sup> Msgr. Baunard, op.cit., p. 220. (Text rectified from official documents in the Archives of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary.)

Having learned that at Rue Cassette no. 11 Faubourg Saint-Germain there was a house where come many women, highly suspected because of the great number of persons who gather there at all hours, I went there on an imaginary pretext. I recognized a servant and therefore pulled aside in order not to be suspected.

I then used a certain person who went there and spoke to Citizen Champion de Cicé, ex-noblewoman, who has been in hiding for some time. She was sending her mail in the presence of one Marduel, former pastor of St. Roch, an unconditional priest. In the short time that I was in the courtyard I observed seven trunks that had just been delivered. I state that with a thorough search we would find hidden in that den her brothers or other similar person or at least incriminating papers. I certainly know that she has always corresponded with enemies of the government but I did not know where she resided....Her room is on the first floor left. It can be reached also from the right by a narrow staircase.

That discouraging note must have gone to the office of the Minister of Police and must have motivated this order:

Paris, 24 Thermidor, Year VII (August 14, 1799.)

From: Minister of the General Police Force  
To: Commissioner of the Executive  
Directory in the Central Paris Office.

The importance of the attached note, Citizen Commissioner, obliges me to recommend its subject to your personal surveillance.

I believe it is not necessary for me to remind you that present circumstances are difficult ones and that zealous civil servants could hardly exert too much activity, circumspection and perseverance in their efforts when it is necessary to surrender to the sword of the law, beings, who live only to tear asunder the heart of our fatherland. Please forward to me constantly the results of your investigation and the measures you suggest in this instance.

It was the vigil of August 15 and the Providence guarding the little religious cell at rue Cassette permitted that the investigation so urgently demanded by the Minister not take place until 3 Fructidor, i.e. August 23.

We can imagine the emotion necessarily undergone by the inhabitants of the house on rue Cassette. Mother de Cicé thought of the risk being run by Father de Clorivière. The Daughters of the Heart of Mary who knew about this search must have experienced an immense anxiety over the fate reserved for their superior. Laurence and Agathe must have

worried over the outcome for those to whom each was so attached, and over the porter and other tenants who, from the beginning, were opposed to the coming of Father de Clorivière.

The following is an excerpt from the police report<sup>110</sup> of the investigation:

On 3 Fructidor (August 23), Year VII of the French Republic...at 6 A.M....as a result of the mandate for search against Citizen Champion, residing at rue Cassette no. 874...we went up to the rooms between the ground floor and the first floor of the said house to the apartment...occupied by Citizen Champion. Apartment entered. We there found the person in question....We made her aware of the object of our visit and exhibited the dated official order. She declared herself ready to comply with it. As a result she opened for us the secretary desks, closets and other furniture closed by key and we removed the papers which seemed to us to be related to certain correspondences. We removed also a quantity of small pieces of cloth on which are imprinted hearts crowned and surmounted by a cross – they are called scapulars.

By virtue of the above-mentioned order, we then went up to and entered all the apartments and rooms of the said house. Our careful visits having been made, we found there no person who was suspect or alien to that house.

We herewith submit the present report....

The hiding place where Father de Clorivière was able to conceal himself was not even suspected although “all the apartments and rooms” had been visited.

Mother de Cicé was arrested and imprisoned in the cells of the Women’s Prison from which she was later removed to face an interrogation. Her responses were recorded in substance by Monsignor Baunard in his engaging biography of Mother de Cicé.<sup>111</sup>

She is 49 years old. She is of noble birth but without a title. She has not been a nun. She acknowledges as her own the box which was closed in her presence at the time of the search as well as the objects enclosed in it which were shown to her. She possesses a triple certificate of residence in the territory of the Republic since the month of May 1792 without interruption. Thus she did not emigrate. She gives the names of her father, mother, brothers and sisters. But when she is asked, "Whom do you see habitually in Paris?" she replies firmly, "People of my acquaintance and I do not consider myself obliged to give an account of them."

---

<sup>110</sup> National Archives, F 7-6272 (Central Bureau of Paris, Bureau of Investigations. Signed – Charles Dauban).

<sup>111</sup> Msgr. Baunard, *op.cit.*, p. 222. (Rectified text as indicated above.)

To the question suggested by the first investigation on 14 Thermidor concerning "the great quantity of suspicious trunks and packages observed in the courtyard of the house," Mother de Cicé was able calmly to reply:

The cause for that is the fact that there lives in the same house as I a wagoner who, on his journeys to various parts of the country, receives bundles and packages to be delivered at different destinations.

She also was obliged to give proof of her various residences in Paris since 1791: rue de Sevres, Hospital of the Incurables, rue des Postes and finally rue Casette.

She was also asked, "Have you ever been previously arrested?" "Never." With that, the interrogation was concluded and signed by L. Melly, the interrogator. His conclusion is of interest to us for several reasons:

In view of the interrogation undergone by Adelaide Marie Champion de Cicé suspected of emigration,

We, administrator of the Central office, considering that she has produced certificates of residence which are in due order; that she is not included on the list of émigrés;...that the correspondence found in her house contains nothing to support the suspicion which she is under; but that the correspondence reveals only fanatical ideas and proves that the said de Cicé concerns herself only with religious practices; that her health is impaired; and finally that there is nothing indicating transactions or correspondence with the enemies of the State, we declare that she will be placed at liberty under the surveillance of the municipal government until the decision by the Minister of General Police to whom all these documents will be transmitted through the citizen-commissioner of the Directory in this administration.

On 16 Fructidor, the executive commissioner of the Directory, Lemaire, transmitted the file on Mother de Cicé to the Minister of the General Police. His accompanying statement declared that her letters "deal only with family matters," but that some nevertheless bore "the stamp of religious prejudices," and that "this women 'appeared' to have a fanatical and slightly deranged mind"..."leading to a very retired life and having almost no communication with the other residents of the same house."<sup>112</sup>

On 22 Fructidor, year VII, the Minister of the General Police ratified..."the liberation of the said citizen" and asked the Administrator to "return to her the letters and documents she may need."<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> Secret Police, n. 42-1324, reg. 5 First Division, First File, 3996.

<sup>113</sup> This first imprisonment of Mother de Cicé therefore lasted about three weeks (and not "15 or 18 months" as Abbe Casgrain wrote in the Annals, Vol. I, p. 222 – clearly an error).

At the head of the report of the arrest of Mother de Cicé on 3 Fructidor (August 23) there appeared a description of her and we thus are -- for this one instance -- grateful to the police of that time:

The below named seemed to us to be 5 feet 2 inches in height with brown hair, eyebrows of the same color, a high forehead, a well-shaped nose, brown eyes, a medium-sized mouth, round chin and an oval face, pale and thin.

The regular features and the delicacy of the frame must have indeed corresponded to the real appearance of our first Mother. But the police could never suspect what strength of personality was hidden beneath this fragile exterior.

This was but her first encounter with them but Mother de Cicé was to remain under police surveillance in her district.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE COURT TRIAL OF "THE INFERNAL MACHINE"**

The year 1799 seemed to bring a relative liberty to France. The grain of wheat buried in the soil had slowly matured during the turmoil. A report made by Father de Clorivière indicated that the Society of the Heart of Mary had 257 members at that time. It would number more than 300 in 1804.<sup>114</sup> In truth this was a small number. But given the circumstances, it would be more correct to state that surprisingly the frail shrub had weathered the storms.

There is hardly any information on the activities of the founders during this period except as contained in the Circular Letters. Perhaps Father de Clorivière was taking advantage of his recaptured liberty of movement to visit groups near Paris. A certain letter written in May but not indicating the year would seem to belong to this period.<sup>115</sup>

Father de Clorivière who was out of Paris, was writing to Mother de Cicé. As indicated by some details of that letter, she was most certainly in the city at the time. Mother de Cicé seemed to be more than ever overwhelmed by the weight of interior sufferings:

Never, my dear daughter, have I desired more ardently and never have I asked Our Lord more heartily that He would give me the grace to bring some words of consolation to your soul. It is true that you have perhaps never had more need to protect yourself from the snares of the spirit of

---

<sup>114</sup> Constitutive Documents, p. 418.

<sup>115</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 89.

malice. That evil spirit seeks to draw some advantage from the position you are in, to cause you to do harm to yourself and also to a large number of souls whom the Lord has put under your direction and to whom He wishes you to be useful.

You are truly in a state of desolation which springs from an excess of fear and sadness....

The entire letter merits reading for in it Father de Clorivière placed Mother de Cicé on guard against the temptations assailing her. He urged her to have an unflinching confidence:

The spirit of evil can do nothing to you when he cannot shake your confidence. I speak of a true, spiritual confidence detached from things of sense....Never is confidence more solid and more meritorious than when it is entirely stripped of the sensible and even has to force back altogether contrary sentiments.

He also gave certain indications about her contacts with the Daughters of the Heart of Mary:

Begin to see your daughters again, sometimes one, sometimes another. You could even discreetly write for the consolation of those who are absent. Everywhere I have been you have been greatly desired and they are praying much for you.

I am sending you my general letter for the occasion of our great project whose weight you have in one part borne alone since the Lord chose you as victim.

The "general letter" referred to above would be the Second Circular Letter if this correspondence correctly dates to 1799. As to the role of "victim"<sup>116</sup> assigned to Mother de Cicé in the designs of the Lord on the completion of this "great matter," who could doubt that the Holy Spirit dictated these lines to Father de Clorivière on the eve of the tragic events which were to follow?

Before discussing the plot of the Infernal Machine in which Mother de Cicé incurred real danger, let us briefly recall the Memorandum to Pope Pius VII. It was written by Father de Clorivière towards the end of the year 1800 after the election and entry to Rome of the new Pope, Pius VII. He was the successor to Pope Pius VI who had died a captive at Valence on August 29, 1799. The Memorandum, together with the principal documents concerning the two Societies,<sup>117</sup> was presented to Pope Pius VII by two priests of the Heart of Jesus, Father Astier and Father Beule. It was hoped that the Holy Father would grant an approbation erecting the foundations of Father de Clorivière as religious Societies. All the members of the two societies were in prayer awaiting Rome's reply on which their future depended when

---

<sup>116</sup> On this subject, refer to the end of Chapter II.

<sup>117</sup> Constitutive Documents, p. 473.

suddenly there erupted the drama of the "Infernal Machine." Without their being aware of it the two founders were gravely implicated in it.

The facts are familiar. On December 24, 1800 as Bonaparte, then First Consul, was going to the Opera, an "Infernal Machine" – a keg of powder mounted on a small cart – exploded several minutes after his carriage entered a narrow Paris street. Deaths and injuries resulted. The First Consul barely escaped death. This attempt on his life aroused considerable feeling throughout France. General Bonaparte had acquired great popularity because of his glorious military victories and because of his recent decree of amnesty for some 50,000 émigrés who were thereby stricken from proscription lists.

The gravity and effects of the ensuing trial are understandable. Suspicions fell first on the extremists of the left, the Jacobins, who saw in Napoleon the enemy of the liberties won through the Revolution. One hundred thirty Jacobins suspected of involvement in the crime were deported to Guyana. But in reality, the plot had been formed by extremists of the right, Royalists, who saw in Napoleon's coming the quenching of the hope for a restored monarchy.

Fouche's secret police soon found their men - Saint-Regent, Joseph Limoelan (nephew of Father de Clorivière and son of his brother who had been guillotined in 1793 for complicity in a royalist plot) and a man named Carbon who was always ready for any kind of undertaking.

Joseph de Limoelan was overwhelmed by the consequences of the plot. Concealing the identity of his accomplices, he begged Father de Clorivière to come quickly to hear the confession of Saint-Regent, who had been severely burnt in the explosion. De Limoelan also asked his uncle to find a few days hospitality for a former émigré whose papers were not yet in order. (This was often the case in that period.) The false émigré was no other than Carbon.

Thus deceived, Father de Clorivière recommended Carbon under his false identity as an ex-émigré to Mother de Cicé who was always ready to help the unfortunate. Unable to find room in her own house for the self-styled émigré she asked one of her friends, Madame de Gouyon, to take him to the house of Madame Duquesne on rue Notre-Dame des Champs. There he would be received and given lodging by the nuns, the Dames de Saint Michel, formerly religious of Our Lady of Refuge. It was there that Carbon was arrested. To save his own life he betrayed the name and address of his benefactresses.

Saint-Regent also was soon arrested. Joseph de Limoelan succeeded in escaping to America.

It is a striking coincidence: on January 19, 1801, the very day when Pius VII verbally gave the first approbation of the Societies to Father de Clorivière's emissaries, Mother de Cicé, accused of complicity in the plot, was arrested together with Madame Duquesne and with Madame de Gouyon and her daughters. Mother de Cicé was imprisoned at Sainte Pelagie Jail. Her apartment at 11 Rue Cassette was searched from top to bottom, and all her papers were brought to the Court Registry.

This dramatic episode emphasized once more the salient traits of Mother de Cicé's personality her radiant charity, her heroic courage, her perfect sincerity united with an astonishing presence of mind throughout the interrogation at the tribunal.

To appreciate the quality of Mother de Cicé's charity during her imprisonment at Sainte Pelagie, it is necessary to picture her very grim environment there; a group of prostitutes, rioters, criminals, etc. But for Mother de Cicé there did not exist what the world calls the outcasts of society. For her, they were only disfigured members of Christ, souls to be saved. Also, she knew instinctively how to reach them. Undoubtedly regarded by these women with distrust and curiosity at first, little by little she won their respect for the radiant goodness and humble dignity emanating from her whole person.<sup>118</sup>

Mother de Cicé took an interest in all of them sharing their stories and teaching them hymns. Soon their obscene songs and conversations ended. What is more, the prisoners agreed among themselves to keep silence during Mother de Cicé's time of prayer and this is more telling than all possible commentaries.

Her departure was mourned by all of them. Later our first Mother returned to them as prison visitor in order to relieve the sorrows she had noted there.

Because of the circumstances, Mother de Cicé's trial was a most grave one. Her life was at stake. Her attorney, Master Bellart, was particularly perturbed by her impenetrable silence when attempts were made to wrest from her the name of the person who had recommended Carbon to her. To give the name of Father de Clorivière would have been to surrender him to death since he was already compromised by being a close relative of Joseph de Limoelan, one of the plotters, and also by being a priest founder of religious societies prohibited by law.

Mother de Cicé therefore maintained an obstinate silence. Her attorney had already explained what the consequences of her silence would be but this had not shaken her firmness. Master Bellart himself related:<sup>119</sup>

In order to get to the bottom of this matter I decided one day to play on the fear of dying which I thought I saw in my client. I begged her earnestly to tell me the secret. She then put to me this question: "Well, what will happen if I continue to keep silence?" "Death, Mademoiselle," I cried. "Death," she repeated with fright....

Her features contracted and she fell in a faint. You can imagine my regret and embarrassment. She was given immediate attention. On regaining consciousness and opening her eyes, she said: "Dear God" – and these were her first words – "Dear God, pardon my weakness. I am afraid of dying. All the same, I will die if needs be but I will not hand over an innocent person to the police!"

Later, after her acquittal, the lawyer wrote to a bishop who had congratulated him on winning the case:<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> cf. Account of her first meeting with Mlle. Chenu.

<sup>119</sup> Msgr. Baunard, *op.cit.*, p. 241.

...Never in my life have there occurred moments of pure joy as followed the triumph of this case. It is true that victory was difficult to attain, especially because of the admirable constancy with which this saintly woman – at the very cost of possible execution which she knew quite well – guarded her generous secret. And what transformed this dangerous discretion into something heroic was the delicate temperament of Mademoiselle de Cicé, a person timid but superior to all purely human considerations.

...I do not think one could see anything more sublime than this struggle between strength of soul and weakness of body in which victory was won by generosity over egotism and self-interest, and the soul over the body.

This appreciation by Master Bellart would have stunned the humble Mother de Cicé. She had but done her duty and she reproached herself for her weakness: "Dear God, pardon my weakness. I am afraid of dying."

The interrogations during the trial revealed her self-effacing heroism, her moving sincerity and her unusual sharpness of mind in escaping the traps set for her by her judges.<sup>121</sup>

The Presiding Judge: Prisoner de Cicé, was it you who obtained a shelter for Carbon in the home of the accused prisoner Duquesne?

Mother de Cicé: Yes, citizen.

The Presiding Judge: Had not Limoelan come to your home to ask you to receive the accused Carbon?

Mother de Cicé: I did not see Citizen Limoelan. It was not on Limoelan's recommendation that I obtained lodging, (for Carbon)

At this point the Presiding Judge asked Carbon to repeat the testimony he had given. Mademoiselle de Cicé retorted with a formal denial:

It was not Limoelan who recommended this unknown person to me. Limoelan did not come to my home.

The Presiding Judge: Do you know Limoelan?

Mother de Cicé: Yes, citizen president. I knew him as I know other people from my province but I never was in touch with him. I am not related to him. I only saw him....

The Presiding Judge: How -- having known about the explosion on 3 Nivose and the resulting searches -- could you have (only four days later when

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., pp. 267-268.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 231 ff.

police pursuits had become so active) received a man such as Carbon without having the least information about him?

Mother de Cicé: I did not have the slightest information on facts concerning him. I simply obeyed an impulse of humanity. It has often happened that I have obliged persons who were unknown to me. The motive of charity led me in this action as it does in many others. I did not have the time to think about the consequences. Since the person who had recommended Carbon to me was perfectly honest, I could not have the slightest doubt of his word....

The Presiding Judge: According to Carbon's statement, Limoelan went to your home?

Mother de Cicé: That is not so and it is absolutely impossible to prove it.

In the face of her silence, the judges tried to take an approach which might elude Mother de Cicé's perspicacity:

The Presiding Judge: Was the person a man or a woman?

Again silence on the part of Mother de Cicé.

The Presiding Judge: We are asking you if it was a man or a woman? The answer is simple and cannot incriminate anyone because it does not specify this person by name.

Mother de Cicé: In that instance I do not see what light such vague information will shed on the case. Moreover, I repeat what I have already said: I shall name nobody.

The Presiding Judge: (then trying intimidation) Prisoner de Cicé, you assume in all your responses a very imprudent dissimulation. Have you given serious thought to the fact that you are here on trial? That there is a duty to answer in a trial of justice? That furthermore it is to your own very grave interest in your present situation, namely of being a person accused of complicity in a criminal matter?

Mother de Cicé was well aware of the gravity of her situation. Yet her silence was invincible.

It is not necessary to give details at this point of the sequence of the interrogation, the appearance in court of the witnesses (that crowd of persons of all political parties for the most part poor persons helped by the accused), nor the skillful and moving defense by Master Bellart. What is certain is that the jury, moved by the attestations of such great charity as well as by Mother de Cicé's humble and noble attitude, gave a verdict unanimously in her favor. Mother de Cicé's trial had struck the popular imagination to the point where her contemporaries spontaneously called it "a process of canonization."

Mother de Cicé's prudence, integrity and heroism revealed, in fact, the intensity of her interior life, source of all her strength. Nothing is more convincing of this than the

supernatural, evangelical spirit of the letters which Father de Clorivière wrote to her during her imprisonment.

To foil the suspicions of the police he wrote to her as if their letters were correspondence between two women friends:<sup>122</sup>

We pray much for you and we do for you what you would wish to do every day to show your love for the Divine Spouse.<sup>123</sup> Give us a share in your sufferings. If your miseries trouble you sometimes, may your soul plunge itself into the salutary waters which Jesus has prepared for you. Let it do this with great confidence. It will come out all beautiful and all pure. It could even come to pass that it would have that purity necessary for admittance into heaven before the All-Holy God.

Mother de Cicé must have found a way to have a letter reach Father de Clorivière. His response manifested the sentiments of our founders in those very sad hours:

You surmise correctly, my good friend, the reasons which hindered me from replying at once but now I can do it. I do not wish to deprive myself of such a sweet satisfaction. My friend's letter has given me much for myself. What she tells me of her dispositions pleases me very much and I can assure her it also pleases the Sovereign Master. I sympathize with what nature suffers and which the delicacy of the body makes more painful, but I see there (and I am persuaded that our friend likewise sees) a trait which causes her to resemble more our Divine Master. She knows perfectly that a moment of suffering produces for eternity an immense weight of glory and happiness. And what greater honor can there be here below for a soul such as hers, lover of Jesus, than to suffer a little for Him Who has suffered so many torments and humiliations for her? For what she experiences of a certain heaviness, let her take no account of it for this serves rather to augment than to diminish the price of sacrifice. Faith, hope and love, this is what God asks of us and nothing of this depends on feeling.

As in his preceding letter, Father de Clorivière assured Mother de Cicé how very present she was in the prayers of all:

Since our separation there is not one moment when I have not been occupied with you before God. All my prayers tend to this end. This same is true of a great number of good souls. Yesterday there was General Communion for you at the Visitation. I attribute to these prayers the warm

---

<sup>122</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 93. Undated letter.

<sup>123</sup> Undoubtedly a reference to Holy Communion.

interest that is being shown in your regard.<sup>124</sup> This makes me hope for your prompt return. I take pleasure in this thought but I dare not yield to the sweetness of this hope. I add, as we ought always to do, "Fiat voluntas tua."

Good-bye my good friend. We have a continual rendezvous in the SS. HH. of Jesus and Mary.

In the above, Father de Clorivière spoke of a general communion at the Visitation Monastery. This was the monastery where his own sister was a religious as was Madame de Montjoie, an intimate friend of Mother de Cicé, Mademoiselle d'Esternoz and Madame de Goesbriand. The Society archives contain several copies of letters from Madame de Montjoie to Madame de Goesbriand. In one of those letters dated February 1, 1801 (and therefore written during the trial) there occurred this paragraph:

...Adelaide is suffering with admirable courage and peace. Her cross would be heavy for a heart less generous. A victim of her own charity, she awaits with tranquility everything it will please God to have happen to her. Let us pray for her, Madame. I see this trial as the triumph of her virtues.

Another of Madame de Montjoie's letters, undated, must have been written shortly after the happy conclusion of the trial, toward the beginning of April, 1801. Written out of prudence in an almost allegorical form it related news of Father de Clorivière and Mother de Cicé who had temporarily left Paris. The letter also mentioned Madame de Gouyon whose release was not to occur until later. The letter concluded with a lovely tribute to the edification given at that time by the members of the Society.

I have delayed my response Madame, to your last two letters in the desire to give you satisfactory news. God undoubtedly has His designs to place obstacles to Josephine's return. That moment seems to have become more and more remote, as has the return of Marie who has left for the country. You know that Marie is the name of our fellow-villager. She feels much better than she would have if she had remained here where unfailingly she would have suffered a relapse. Relapses are worse than illnesses. I repeat to you that she would no longer be alive if she had remained here where the air would be fatal to her. But God miraculously helped her in her cruel malady. I have sent her your letter, also to Josephine, but neither one nor the other is well enough to write. They will however, be very consoled to receive your news. I therefore did not want to deprive them. You know that a certain mother and her two daughters who suffered the same illness as Marie did not fare so well as she. Both mother and daughters have had a relapse and have returned. In all happenings we can only adore the designs

---

<sup>124</sup> This is perhaps a reference to the great number of witnesses crowding the court to make depositions in Mother de Cicé's favor.

of God. Certainly He has great designs on Marie's family. You would not doubt this if I were free to tell you all I know. But some things cannot be written. That family must have a complete confidence that God regards it with favor. Far from allowing itself to be beaten down, it must redouble its fidelity. The heads of this precious family do not forget any of the members.

This episode in the life of the two founders reveals how thoroughly the existence of the two Societies was at the root of all their decisions.

Better than anyone else, Father de Clorivière understood the mortal danger run by Mother de Cicé in having obtained shelter for the man who had been recommended to her. Three years later in the Memorandum to the Sovereign Pontiff Pius VII, (December 4, 1804) he wrote in speaking of the Superior General of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary:<sup>125</sup>

This very worthy servant of Christ, so dear to all persons of genuine piety, who was the head of the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary, who was brought before the law and cast into prison on the charge of a crime against the State, ran an immediate danger to her life. All the evil and worst enemies of our Holy Faith sought only to destroy her and cause her death.

Death indeed was lying in wait for Mother de Cicé, while he who could have saved her by giving himself up was in hiding. It is easy to imagine the anguish and heart-break of this man of honor who, a few years earlier, had braved so many dangers with tranquil courage. But now the future of the two Societies was at stake. God had entrusted them to him and he was responsible for them. He no longer belonged to himself. The service of the Lord and His Church had to come before any other consideration. As regards Mother de Cicé, she was well aware that in protecting the life of Father de Clorivière she was indeed at the same time protecting the life of the two Societies.

The trial highlighted as it were, the principal traits of her personality. Her ardent charity had found a field of action in the course of her imprisonment, while the witnesses summoned by Master Bellart revealed the extent and delicacy of her untiring dedication especially towards the most humble persons.

The unflinching energy with which she withheld from her judges the name of Father de Clorivière, at the very danger of her own life, clearly demonstrated the courage beneath her fragile appearance.

The integrity and the prudence which ruled her conduct in all circumstances was manifested publicly.<sup>126</sup> We can understand the confidence placed in her by Father de Clorivière in so many of his letters, as well as his repeated recourse to her counsels.

---

<sup>125</sup> Constitutive Documents, p. 413.

<sup>126</sup> Appendix, Document IX, handwritten self-defense by Mother de Cicé.

All these qualities, indeed these "virtues", grew in her through the docility to the grace of the Holy Spirit who communicated His strength to her.

How deeply we understand Father de Clorivière's judgment of Mother de Cicé at the hour of his own release in 1809:

What a saintly soul heaven has given you as a Mother. You have all gained from living during these years under her direction rather than mine.

Then he made this reflection reminiscent of the court trial of 1801:

What gratitude do I not owe to her prudent discretion which saved my life at the risk of her own.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### UNDER POLICE SURVEILLANCE

The happy outcome of the trial and the release of Mother de Cicé on April 7, 1801 did not definitely remove the founders from all suspicion. Madame de Montjoie's letter clearly showed this. The chief of police, Fouche, did not easily let go his prey and Father de Clorivière was to experience this more than anyone else. Certain documents contained in the National Archives of France<sup>127</sup> reveal that as of March, 1801 the police were almost certain that it was indeed Father de Clorivière whom "Mademoiselle de Cicé had not wished to name." Under that condition, we can only be astonished in agreement with Mother de Bellevue,<sup>128</sup> that he was able to elude Fouche's agents until May 5, 1804.

Feeling the pressure of police threats, the two founders judged it best to leave Paris for a while. Mother de Cicé went to Rouen where she remained until April, 1802. Father de Clorivière joined her shortly thereafter. However, the sudden defection of Father Astier (one of the two emissaries to Rome) and the trouble which he had stirred up among his former confreres caused Father de Clorivière to return to Paris sooner than planned. Father's sojourn in Paris has provided for us correspondence with Mother de Cicé containing interesting echoes of the life of the founders and the Society in that period.

On May 12, 1801 Father de Clorivière wrote:

I cannot tell you, my very dear daughter, how much joy I had in learning...that you could finally promise yourself some peace if it is ever permitted to enjoy it on this earth....

---

<sup>127</sup> cf. Founded on the Rock.

<sup>128</sup> M. E. de Bellevue, op.cit., p. 197.

Your separation, or rather my separation from you, is one of the sacrifices which is costing me the most. But let us adore in everything the will of God and let us try to enter into His designs. He does not wish that anything human enter into a union which He himself has formed and which has never had any other end save to work for His glory and to grow in His holy love.

Doubtlessly referring to the recommendation he had made on being deceived by his nephew (that Mother de Cicé find shelter for Carbon), he continued:

I can well believe that this union may have been for you the source of many crosses but a cross is the seal of the works of God and it is a great glory, a great happiness for us when the Lord associates us with Himself in carrying it. It is from this point of view that you ought to consider all that you have suffered.

Then, referring to her mission as Superior General of the Society, he added:

It is a means which God has wished to make use of to bestow on you and all those associated with you His most abundant blessings. You will experience someday the truth of what I say to you, and you will bless the Lord a thousand times for having given you a large part in His chalice.

In his letter of September 21, 1801 sent to her at Rouen, Father de Clorivière spoke of the very understandable sorrow of Agathe who was so attached to her mistress:

Poor Agathe is so sorry not to have seen you and so concerned over all your past sufferings that it is painful for her to see me and she avoids me as much as she can. However, once when she did see me, I did all I could to console her. I shall do as much as I can for her of what you ask, and with much pleasure.

Next came Society news:

They desire you very much here, myself especially who suffers most from your absence. You would do much good here but it is not yet time although matters are shaping up toward this.

Father de Clorivière also indicated how the close assistants of Mother de Cicé were striving to make up for her absence, especially Mademoiselle d'Esternoz:

Mlle. d'Est. has been here for several days. She is always as you have known her good, amiable and obedient. She has the deepest attachment to you.

The same letter advised that Father de Clorivière was living in a new house with Father Perrin, a priest of the Heart of Jesus, a zealous and highly esteemed missionary. Father de Clorivière had complete confidence in him. In this building, or possibly next door to it, Madame de Carcado temporarily occupied the apartment destined for Mother de Cicé:

Your apartment is very pretty and very convenient. While you are away, to reduce in part the expense of the rent, we have agreed that Madame de Carcado should occupy it until your return.

Father de Clorivière concluded:

This, it seems to me, is about all regarding the little domestic affairs. What I wish especially both for you and myself is that the Lord give us all the graces that are necessary to govern the little families that He has confided to us. May we make Him glorified and loved by them as much as is possible. May the love of His Holy Mother reign there also in the most perfect manner possible. We ourselves ought to be first penetrated by it and to give the example of all the virtues; to retrace in ourselves her kindness, humility, patience, charity, etc. This obligation is great. It is above our strength but not above the graces which we can draw from the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Is it not to communicate them to us that Our Lord in His great mercy gives us some share in His cross? Let us receive, let us embrace this cross with love. It will bring about great things in us even beyond our hopes.

On November 7, Father de Clorivière wrote:

Although we are doing our best to supply for you, your presence here is very much desired and very necessary. Nothing takes the place for the children of having their Mother at their head. We hope to have this happiness in a very short time.

The next part of the letter indicated that Mother de Cicé was always tempted to give up a task of which she considered herself more than ever incapable:

I have often warned you of this my dear daughter. God desires great things from you but in order to correspond to His designs you must have great confidence. It is necessary that, losing sight of yourself in a way, you should no longer find yourself except in Our Savior; that you should no longer see yourself, but see Him in you; that you look upon yourself as clothed with His power. What an affliction for me, what a wrong to yourself and to all the family, what a lack of submission to the will of the Lord, if for the want of this confidence, you return to the too natural lamentations that you are not made for your work although we have so often assured you to the contrary.<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> About this time, in a letter of Nov. 25, 1801 preserved in the Frappaize Memorandum, there is found this confidence from Fr. de Clorivière to his correspondent: "The Superior of the DHM's is – as I am – being persecuted. Her external situation is very tragic. The Lord is also putting her to the test interiorly, and this is her principal suffering..." Several years later, Fr. de Clorivière would make an identical observation to Mother de Cicé. After speaking to her of her ill health, he added, "You have other sufferings which do not appear on the exterior, but which crucify you much more." (Letter of March 24, 1807.)

Father de Clorivière's letter of December 13, 1801 indicated the fact that there was police surveillance:

It is always with much pleasure that I receive news of you and if I had some fears, it was only because of the address that you had placed thereon. It was opportune because they had begun to be fearful in the Rue de Sevres, but I dread any overtures. We had then some reason for alarm. The number of spies in our street was increased and they have brought me some false letters for you (which made me see very well that they are still seeking you). You know well that no one has received them.

Farther along, he wrote:

Your little note has given much pleasure to her to whom you wrote it. In general, your little family here is very well and longs for your return. Many are fervent. They all often ask for news of you. There are some whom the evil spirit torments as much as he can. They have ceased coming here from Saint Michel.<sup>130</sup> Through prudence I sometimes see Regis (Madame de Montjoie) who thinks continually of you.

Then he gave these counsels which went far beyond their immediate recipient:

For yourself, my dear daughter, preserve a holy joy in the midst of your sufferings ...have much courage and confidence....They complain that you do too much and that you are always wishing to do more. That is poor understanding of things. We often advance more by doing less. In doing much, we please ourselves but God is not more satisfied.

That was a subtle temptation that frequently stalks generous souls.

The February, 1802 letter recalled the extreme prudence demanded by their correspondence:

I am sorry for the fright that we have caused you. The going astray of your letters was the cause of it. I do not know how it happened but I like to persuade myself that it is not in the post that they have gone astray. Do not be anxious over what has happened to the one that we wrote you. Nothing bad can come from it since neither the address nor the signature was put on it and there was nothing suspicious in the notes which were enclosed.

Then there followed encouraging news:

Everything went well on the Feast of the Purification...but we want you here very much and I want you here more than anyone else. Doubtlessly you will know when it will be well to appear again but we must still be patient.

---

<sup>130</sup> Madame Duquesne's home, where Carbon had found refuge.

At the end of the letter Father told her that his work on prayer and meditation was being published. He specified:

The publisher is giving me five hundred copies with a letter for our Societies and something for them in particular that I have inserted in the preface.<sup>131</sup> When the work comes out you will have the first copy.

Father de Clorivière profited by all occasions to sustain and develop the Societies. On March 20, 1802, he wrote:

Yesterday, the feast day of my holy patron, we assembled a few friends and read together a new circular on the care we should have to persevere in our vocation. I believe that you will be satisfied with it. I have written another for their Lordships, the Prelates, which I addressed to our worthy Protector, M. of Saint-Malo (Archbishop Cortois de Pressigny). Add to this a summary which I made of everything pertaining to the two Societies for the Cardinal Legate.<sup>132</sup> From this you will know that I have not wasted my time.

He added:

This is no small work for the good Adelaide de Car.

Madame de Carcado in fact, was in charge of recopying these documents by hand.

In his letter of April, 1802 Father de Clorivière spoke of the Concordat recently concluded between France and the Holy See. At the end of that letter there was the same affirmation concerning an absence that was prolonging itself beyond what had been foreseen:

Otherwise, all goes well with your daughters but it would be still better if you were with them. They very much wish you were here. The moment has not yet come but I believe that it is not far off.

A week later Father de Clorivière forwarded to Mother de Cicé the letter sent to her in Paris by her brother, Archbishop Jerome de Cicé, recently named Archbishop of Aix-en-Provence.

Providentially – in view of the circumstance -- he was inviting her to come spend some time with him. The following lines indicated Father de Clorivière's thinking in the matter:

I send you herewith my dear daughter, a letter from your godfather. It was brought to me in an envelope. In opening it, I thought I was carrying out your intentions and I do not regret it for surely before coming to a determination you would have wished to let me know about it and have my advice. I can now give it to you.

---

<sup>131</sup> This was the first edition of the Paths of Prayer. This edition consisted of a certain number of copies especially reserved to the members of the two Societies, with a special preface.

<sup>132</sup> Constitutive Documents, p. 383; Letter to Archbishop Cortois de Pressigny; p. 363: Letter to Cardinal Caprara.

It appears to be advisable at this time that you accept the proposition which is made to you. I know well that you would not wish it to be a fixed arrangement. This would in no way conform to the designs that the Lord has in your regard and I would not advise it. But it would enter into His designs, it seems to me, that you do for a time what they wish. It would be a pleasant and sure means of sheltering yourself from all sorts of investigations and it would cause jealous enemies to lose sight of you and cease to think of you. On the other hand, it would be like a mission with which you would be entrusted to propagate the good work and I am persuaded that God, Who seems Himself to point it out to you, will give you all the graces and lights which you will need to acquit yourself of it with fruit. You perhaps would have to destroy prejudices and to make known the work of God to the good souls who ask only this in order to embrace it.

He added this discreet touch which evoked the special gifts of Mother de Cicé:

It is a matter of personal contact and familiar conversations, and God gives you the grace for this. You could take with you all the papers that you believe useful and afterwards, when you have cleared the way, we could send you some auxiliary troops.

Yet, while clearly indicating his opinion, Father de Clorivière wished to leave to Mother de Cicé the final decision in the matter:

Think it over before God for I want you to act freely and I do not intend in any way to force your will. But do not take advice from timidity, its voice is not that of God. Begin by placing yourself in a state of holy indifference and in a generous determination to do what you know to be most conformed to the will of God. In order to know His will, implore the assistance of the Blessed Virgin and of Saint Joseph...and be persuaded that God will not permit that you should go astray in acting in this way.

Mother de Cicé's response was clear. The next sections of this work will show the amplitude which this mission in Provence would assume in Father de Clorivière's thinking and the hope which it aroused for the Societies. But in Provence the cross again awaited the two founders under a new form.

\* \* \* \* \*

## SOJOURN IN PROVENCE

While Mother de Cicé was preparing to visit her brother in Paris before accompanying him to Aix, a new circumstance opened possibilities for the two Societies to establish themselves in Provence. A priest of the Heart of Jesus, Father Perrin, was asked to preach in the different

areas composing the then very vast diocese of Aix. Father Perrin asked Father de Clorivière to accompany him as assistant in preaching these Missions as was the custom at that time. From that time on the two Societies still unknown in the Aix region had great hopes.

Before leaving Paris for a period of some several months, Father de Clorivière wrote a Circular Letter to all the members.<sup>133</sup> It was an interesting letter for several reasons.

First of all the founder expressed the hope that this trip to Provence will be an excellent means of establishing and spreading the Societies in a country already particularly devoted to the adorable Heart of Jesus.<sup>134</sup> The enterprise may even help us to obtain from the Holy See the more solemn approbation which we have been promised.<sup>135</sup>

After having asked the members to increase their fervor and their prayers for the success of that mission, Father de Clorivière expressed the hope of finding the members on his return:

increased in numbers and still more in every evangelical and religious virtue, striving to acquire the spirit which should animate every Christian, particularly ourselves who glory in belonging more especially to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary....These two hearts are all love for God and love for the neighbor.... Our hearts must be so formed upon the Sacred Hearts that we are but one heart and one soul in them....That is my solemn wish for you now that I am about to leave you for some time. It will be my wish every instant of my life, for it is the Lord's command.

The postscript of this letter clearly showed that Mother de Cicé was co-foundress and Superior General:

P.S. The Superior General of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Mary, whom Our Lord has given me to help in its establishment, asks me to tell her Sisters and Daughters in Christ that she shares the feelings expressed in this letter. She also exhorts them to perfect charity and though the unmistakable orders of Divine Providence oblige her now to leave, it is with deep regret that she does so. She will always be with them all again filled with new fervor and enriched with every merit and virtue.

Mother de Cicé's stay in Provence lasted fourteen months (July 1802 – October 1803).” Father de Clorivière's was shorter. He arrived in Provence in October, 1802 and he was in Lyons on September 22, 1803 on route to Besancon.

---

<sup>133</sup> Father de Clorivière, Circular Letters, p. 228.

<sup>134</sup> Following Bishop de Belsunce's vow during the cholera epidemic of 1720-1721 in Marseilles.

<sup>135</sup> Father de Clorivière was counting on Archbishop Jerome de Cicé's influence with other Bishops and with the government to dispose Rome in favor of the two Societies. Cf. Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), pp. 112-114.

Without being able to go into details,<sup>136</sup> we must only recall that this trip, which began under such happy auspices, brought only disappointments to the two founders. The reason lay in the continual silences and evasions of Archbishop Jerome de Cicé who finally expressed opposition to the establishment of the two Societies in his diocese. If such an attitude were to be excused because of the political context of the era, it nevertheless revealed a character too sensitive to human prudence in a prelate who otherwise left in his diocese the memory of an ardent apostolic zeal.

The trip to Aix was not at that time a very restful expedition as was shown in Father de Clorivière's letter of July 13, 1802 from Lyons where he and Father Perrin had just arrived:

I have just received your letter written from Avignon on the 7th, it has been on the way for six days. Your letter gave me much pleasure. For I confess to you, my companion and I were not without fear regarding you, in thinking of the lightness of your skiff on a river as swift as the Rhone, especially since they have told of many accidents happening to similar boats. We blessed the Lord with all our hearts on learning that you arrived safe and sound with the one who acted as guide and companion.

After some details about his own trip, Father de Clorivière gave Mother de Cicé some counsels both in the spiritual and the temporal order:

I cannot refrain from telling you to take care of your health. Delicate as it is, it could suffer much from a change of climate and manner of living.

...Let us not lose sight of what we have to do, both of us, for the glory of God. Let us not anticipate God's time. Let us wait patiently for it but let us not allow it to pass when He deigns to present it to us. Let us place all our confidence in Him....Let us fear only to place an obstacle to the accomplishment of His designs by our infidelities.

Do not neglect to write as often and as cordially as you can to the good friends whom you have left. They surely have need of this consolation and they well merit it. I should not wish you to do this however, at the expense of your health. Short letters but letters capable of raising their courage will suffice. Do not forget Madame des Faures,<sup>137</sup> because it is she who in great part will substitute for you with the family and your advice will be useful to her. I know well you must be tired after such a long trip and more yet because of the troublesome visits that you have to make and receive on your arrival. In the midst of all this, keep your soul in peace in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary. That is your center; that is the divine cloister from which you must never depart. Do everything without solicitude and without constraint. Although perhaps more in the world than you would

---

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Founded on the Rock.

<sup>137</sup> Madame de Carcado

wish to be, you are engaged in God's work. You are accomplishing His Holy Will and to accomplish that is everything. This takes the place of all the exercises of piety. May the Holy Spirit, Who is a Spirit of sweetness, direct you in everything.

While still at Lyons on July 20, Father de Clorivière wrote a letter returning to the same subject:

What you tell me of the Archbishop's entrance into Aix and his installation on July 14...is certainly very consoling and I share the joy experienced by you and all the good inhabitants of Aix.

Even in the midst of the turmoil of the world, in the time of the visits which your position requires (but which are none the less troublesome for a soul who wishes to give herself entirely to the things of God) have recourse to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. May these hearts be the center of your repose. There, peacefully seated in spirit with Magdalen at the feet of the One Whom you love, pour out your heart into His and then even though the world speaks to you and you speak to the world (while the world offers itself to you under an attractive appearance in order to insinuate itself into your heart) hear interiorly only the Divine Word. See only Him. Find sweetness and consolation only in Him.

Then came the following lines which once again reveal the anxiety which habitually tormented Mother de Cicé's soul:

What should trouble the peace and tranquility of your soul since you are in the order of God and since He Himself has led you as if by the hand into the places and situation where you are?...I could never endure my dear daughter, to hear you say that you wish to take back your sacrifice ....Can one take back what one has offered to the Lord? Can one be sorry for what one has done to please Him? Such a thing should appear impossible to you.

Father de Clorivière's letter of August 2 already mentioned the growing silences of Archbishop de Cicé despite the fact that he himself had invited the two missionaries:

I believe that it is only a vain fear which is holding back your brother. That is why, after you have well recommended the matter to Our Lord and His holy Mother, you should do whatever prudence suggests to you. But whatever the result, keep your soul in peace.

Another letter (a very long one) dated August 14, once more gave Mother de Cicé the usual directives worthwhile for all situations:

For your interior conduct, practice the rules which I have given you more than once. Do not overlook any of the occasions presented to you by Providence to edify the neighbor and solace his misery. But do not yourself

run after these kinds of works, lest they plunge you with too much dissipation and cause you to exceed your spiritual and bodily strength.

...As to your exterior conduct, here are two pieces of advice that I think good. The first is to avoid dissipation which does not accord with your consecration to the Lord. You ought now to know what you can do on this point and what you cannot do. While you are in the same house you can hardly dispense yourself from being habitually at table with Monsignor for the dinner, but I think it would be very necessary for you to regulate the morning and evening hours. The second piece of advice is the care of your health. You have need that another than you watch over it for as soon as you have been a little careful, you always fear that you are taking too much care of it....It is not necessary for me to give you a third piece of advice: never to lose sight of the work God has entrusted to you.

The next part of that very interesting letter showed the signs which Father de Clorivière was seeking for the establishment of the two Societies in the area of Lyons. He spoke at length also of the problems raised by the hesitations of the Archbishop of Aix. We can imagine the delicacy of Mother de Cicé's situation, caught between her brother who was hesitating and the two missionaries who were awaiting a frank reply.

I come now to what regards our trip to Aix. Father Perrin believed that he had done something pleasing to the Archbishop and useful for his diocese in devoting his labors to him and in giving him the preference over several Prelates who showed the desire to have him for collaborator. Monsignor of Aix had indicated the same desire. Things have changed very much since what he had appeared to desire ardently as very advantageous for his diocese, he grants now only as a favor in response to the pressing solicitations of his sister whom he would not wish to sadden.

On August 18, Father de Clorivière's letter again pointed up new delays and a significant change in the type of apostolate for the missionaries, viz. retreats to religious and to priests instead of the great retreats to the people for which Archbishop de Cicé had originally called on Father Perrin.

Two days later, August 20, Father de Clorivière sent Mother de Cicé the copy of a letter which he had written to another person and which was of interest to the two Societies. This letter showed the struggle led by the prince of this world against consecrated souls. The ultimate end of that struggle has not varied throughout the ages.

You tell me that the heads are at work around the Feast of the Assumption and the devil then does his own work....One might say, to see the conduct of a number of good souls at this time, that they have to examine their vocation and that they do not understand the grace that the Lord has given them nor the engagement that they have taken in consecrating themselves to God in the Society of the Heart of Jesus or that of the Heart of Mary.

On August 22, it was learned that the journey of the missionaries was still deferred. Father de Clorivière and his companion arrived in Marseilles a little before October 27, 1802. They remained there until January, 1803, but in December they had spent a fortnight in Toulon. The October 27, 1802 letter indicated that Mother de Cicé had already successfully worked in behalf of the Society since Father de Clorivière asked her to send:

My very humble respects to all those who ask for news of me, especially to those who aspire to unite themselves to us in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

The letters which followed contained similar thoughts. On November 7, 1802 Father told her:

What you tell me of your little Conference pleases me very much. I also have had some with a few good daughters who seem to me suitable for the thing. One of them has already the approbation of her confessor, an excellent ecclesiastic to whom I intend to speak about our Society.

Another letter also from Marseilles showed Archbishop de Cicé always as having reservations and yet the soil appeared fertile for growth.<sup>138</sup>

We are lodged here now with three excellent ladies, three sisters, who during all the time of the Terror had priests lodging in their house and had worship in their house: the ladies Artaud, Rue du Thionvillois no. 16. I spoke to them of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Mary. They believed they saw the heavens open and they have entered perfectly and with a willing heart into all I desired for their perfection. I have spoken to two other good souls, both widows, who...are in a condition to do good. They have a great desire for the thing. They have even spoken of it to others. It has been necessary to restrain them and I have forbidden them to speak of it any more.

Beginning with February, 1803 correspondence between the two founders ceased, undoubtedly because Father de Clorivière was working discreetly in Aix-en-Provence where he had come at the end of January, while Father Perrin would return to Paris in June, 1803.<sup>139</sup>

However, Father de Clorivière's correspondence with different members of the Societies during this period was informative. On February 25, 1803, his letter to Mademoiselle d'Esternoz contained this statement about Mother de Cicé:

---

<sup>138</sup> From Marseilles, Father de Clorivière wrote on January 15, 1803, to Father Frappaize, to whom he spoke about Mother de Cicé, and referred to "the great number of good friends who are attached to her both in Marseilles and in Aix."

<sup>139</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), pp. 457-463.

I found Adelaide here, who says a thousand tender things to you. She has done much work here for the Societies but her brother's fears hinder us at present from reaping the fruits of it.

On the same day Father de Clorivière wrote to Father Pochard:

Wherever we have been, a goodly number of souls are well disposed for either the one or the other Society but there have been few consecrations because the Prelate has suspended, until a fuller examination can be made, the permissions that he had given us. The time for the examination now seems to us a little long.

On March 30, in another letter to Mademoiselle d'Esternoz, there is found this sentence:

Here we were getting along splendidly when they decided to examine the good work again.

Mother de Cicé, in a reply to Father de Clorivière's letter, wrote:

We hope from God's goodness that the desires He has inspired in a goodly number of souls will not be frustrated. We will advise you...of everything which happens to us.

Father de Clorivière wrote to Father Pochard on May 13, 1803. In that letter he referred to "a very long conference" with the Archbishop on the subject of the Societies which he esteemed and which, out of friendship for his sister and for Father de Clorivière, he was ready to recommend to Portalis, Minister of Worship, and to other personalities. This gesture could only be very supportive in an era which was legally very unfavorable to all religious societies.

We can imagine Mother de Cicé's great relief in having seen this manifest sign of her brother's benevolence. However, his support did not abolish the ruling he had made for his archdiocese of Aix-en-Provence that no religious Societies were to be established. Father de Clorivière realized that it was futile to insist and he left Aix-en-Provence shortly thereafter. On his return trip he visited the members of the Societies in Besancon. From there he wrote to Mother de Cicé on the day after his arrival. The letter related his very satisfactory first contacts with the members there. But one paragraph is interesting:

As for you my dear daughter, be animated with great confidence in God Who rules as it pleases Him all the events of life for the good of those who wish sincerely to belong to Him and live only to love Him and make Him loved by all the world. Be constant and courageous but let this constancy and courage be directed by prudence. Do not be in a hurry. It is better to wait quietly and patiently than to break anything by fighting for it.

Your reasons are good. But it must at least appear that you are evaluating them.

Precisely what did that paragraph mean? It is impossible for us to know. Perhaps Mother de Cicé wanted to depart too soon from a loving brother who wished to keep her with him far from the dangers of Paris? Whatever the reason, it seems that Mother de Cicé must have left Provence for Paris at the beginning of October, 1803.

Before leaving Provence, let us recall the memory left by Mother de Cicé in a congregation which had seen her at work in the region. This is an excerpt from the annals of the Congregation of the Retreat Sisters. This community which was founded in Fontenelles in the Doubs region (east central France, bordering on Switzerland), had a house in Aix-en-Provence.<sup>140</sup>

The Venerable Father...<sup>141</sup> wrote from the parish of the Holy Spirit (House of Purity):

Soon we hope to have our very own church well established for us by Mademoiselle de Cicé. There we will make all our exercises and the Blessed Sacrament will be reserved for us...Archbishop de Cicé was most gracious in granting Father all the necessary powers....First of all it was necessary to see to the most urgent repairs. We were working for the glory of God and Providence would not fail us.

Always fervent and devoted, Mother de Cicé was indeed the blessed instrument for all the good we received. With the assistance of several women she had the casement windows throughout the house properly glazed. Besides, she knew that the Chapel was so dear to the cloistered sisters. Knowing that her brother was not opposed to having it reopened to worship she went throughout the city canvassing good homes. And by the eloquence of her piety and faith -- more than by the influence of her name - - she gathered together the amount necessary to repair the chapel windows, to restore the altar and promptly and suitably to set up the entire chapel again.

There remained only one thing, to furnish the sacristy with vases and sacred ornaments. The noblewoman-mendicant returned, to the city, spoke to the pastors there, and was content to be given a half-worn alb, a slightly used chasuble and any vessel usable for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. This was a not altogether gratifying mission since the churches were barely recovering from the ravages of the French Revolution which had despoiled all the sanctuaries. Nevertheless, the priests who were eager to please the Archbishop even more than to please his sister, contributed materials to furnish the altar and to help re-establish service in the chapel for which Mother de Cicé was making her appeal.

---

<sup>140</sup> Excerpt graciously forwarded to M. Clausier on July 31, 1925, by F. Charneau of the Seminary of Luxeuil (Haute-Saone).

<sup>141</sup> Illegible. Word could be "Receveur-Receptionist" or "Procureur-Procurator."

...Mademoiselle de Cicé, sister of our Most Reverend Archbishop, has been like a mother to us and to many other persons for she is a soul dedicated to all good works.

In these simple lines we see a living portrait of our first Mother. And for all the known testimonies about her, how many others there are which will remain forever un-revealed except to our heavenly Father Who penetrates all secrets.

In that autumn of 1803, the trip from Aix to Paris by carriage was of several days' duration. It gave Mother de Cicé time to think of what she was leaving behind and also what she would find awaiting her in Paris. Her affectionate heart must have suffered for her brother whom she loved and perhaps in a special way for the souls in Provence who had been inspired by the hope of an ardently desired religious life, which hope the founders were not able to fulfill.

Thinking of Paris which she was nearing day by day, Mother de Cicé must have experienced a great joy at the thought of seeing again her tenderly loved sisters. But on the very eve of fully reassuming a position which she always considered to be an onerous trial, what secret anguish she must have experienced. It was an anguish to be overcome only by a total confidence in God. For long months -- in fact since her arrest in 1801, followed by a stay in Rouen -- Mother de Cicé's active substitute had been Madame de Carcado who had assumed responsibility for part of her work notably an abundant correspondence. Among these letters we find these lines sent by Madame de Carcado to an aspirant who already knew Mother de Cicé and was awaiting her return in order to enter the Society.

With all my heart, I desire that you determine to await the return of our Mother who is so good. She has the right to all your confidence and your devotedness. She is so good, so humble, so enlightened, so detached from her own interests, so maternal for her daughters. She loved you so much.

That was a complete portrait sketched in a few words.

\* \* \* \* \*

### RETURN TO PARIS

On October 23, 1803 Father de Clorivière, who was continuing to make visitations of the Reunions of the two Societies, wrote to Mother de Cicé from Orleans:

I received your two letters my dear daughter in our Lord, enclosed in one containing a few consoling words from Father Bourgeois and a letter from Mme. de Carcado which caused me real satisfaction, informing me of all they felt on your arrival.

We do not know where the Daughters of the Heart of Mary had the joy of meeting with Mother de Cicé.<sup>142</sup> On the following November 22, a short letter from Father de Clorivière who was at Tours arrived for her care of Madame de Carcado at Rue Mezieres:<sup>143</sup>

I do not wish to leave Tours my dear daughter, without giving you my news, especially as I feel that you are suffering. If so, arm yourself with courage and confidence. This confidence will never be confounded.

That letter bore good news in its postscript:

I have just seen a young person who might become one of your daughters. She would be the first in this part of France.

A longer letter from Poitiers on November 29, 1803 gave interesting information. Also it bore this address:

Mademoiselle Allouard, at the Convent of the Dames R. of the Congregation, rue Neuve St. Etienne, no. 28, faubourg Saint Marceau—Paris.

Prudence demanded that Mother de Cicé's identity be hidden and that she be addressed as Agathe Allard, her faithful servant, who was to enter the Society in the spring of 1805. The new residence was far enough from rue Cassette and her former neighborhood to prevent Mother de Cicé's running the risk of being recognized too soon.

Next in the letter came the following paragraphs describing the situation of that time and indicating Mother de Cicé's role with her sisters:

I have already written to you from Tours ...but I do not think that I am for that reason dispensed from replying to your long and interesting epistle....

Your position upon your arrival reminds me a little of that of the Blessed Virgin and her holy spouse at Bethlehem. This should be some consolation for you. You are finally settled and your lodging would please me if it does not isolate you too much from your sisters. May love draw you all together.

Further on in the same letter, he wrote:

Let us give ourselves up to the affairs of God, to those whom He has confided to us. He blesses all that you say to your daughters. Arrange so that they can all see you in their turn. But in order that this may be done without inconveniencing yourself or them too much, have regular hours during the day to receive their visits and let Mme. de Carcado assign to each

---

<sup>142</sup> Perhaps at Madame de Carcado's home, according to the "Recollections" of Madame de Saissevall. (Appendix, Document XV)

<sup>143</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 469. This letter is erroneously classified among those addressed to Madame de Carcado.

one the time which would best suit her. Circumspection is necessary I know, but it should be dictated by prudence not by vain fear. The place where you are – somewhat remote – favors communication. May a great confidence raise you above all that would be excessive in your fears.

It seemed that Father de Clorivière wanted to reassure Mother de Cicé who must certainly have feared attracting the attention of the police to herself and compromising the sisters who came to see her.

In a letter from Poitiers on December 21, 1803 Father de Clorivière referred to his plans to visit Brittany. In his characteristic spirit of faith and service, he wrote:

I desire only what can be most according to the will of God, most quick to procure His glory and fulfill the task that He has been pleased to impose on me as well as on you. It is no small privation nevertheless to see myself parted for so long from you and from our two families in Paris. I also feel keenly the delay that this cannot fail to cause to the work which is awaiting me in Paris and that I regard as urgent. It is true that on the way I can acquire some lights which will be useful for this work.

Various comparisons with excerpts from other letters have indicated to us that the urgent work which Father de Clorivière considered so important was the revision of Writings concerning the Two Societies,<sup>144</sup> which he was hoping to compile.

Another letter from Poitiers (January 8, 1804) mentioned Mother de Cicé's precarious state of health. The life of the Reunion seemed to be going along as usual:

However, I am very much concerned about your illness. I pray you my dear daughter, do not add to it the anxieties about which I have so often reassured you. Arm yourself with great confidence in the mercy of God and the merits of Jesus Christ, His Son. I shall be pleased to see you with your daughters. They will be delighted to know that you are in their midst and I hope God will give you consolation the reform.<sup>145</sup>

In that same letter he mentioned the death of his sister, a religious of the Visitation, Paris:

I am sure that the death of my sister, which I have just learned about from the good Mme. de Carcado, will grieve you but you will have said as quickly as I did, "There is one more saint in heaven." I am so filled with this sentiment that, although nature is moved, I cannot truly be too much afflicted by it. She is now enjoying the happiness to which she never ceased

---

<sup>144</sup> Title given by Father de Clorivière to a list he had handwritten. cf. Founded on the Rock, Appendix 5.

<sup>145</sup> These last lines seem to indicate a future change of address for Mother de Cicé. In fact, the following letters contained on several occasions a double correspondence for Mother de Cicé and Madame de Carcado, who at the time were neighbors living on Rue Mezieres.

to aspire. This will not prevent me from praying for her and recommending her to the prayers of others.

On February 13, 1804,<sup>146</sup> in a letter to Mademoiselle d'Esterno, Father de Clorivière wrote of his unexpected return to Paris:

I intended going to Brittany from Tours but letters came from Paris preventing this and hastening my return....

During the little more than fifteen days I have been much occupied as you can well imagine. As soon as I clear these matters I shall devote myself to touching up my writings. I recommend to your prayers and to those of all of our friends this work which is of essential interest to both families.

Two letters from Madame de Carcado to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre in the spring of 1804 indicated that Father de Clorivière was completely immersed in this work which he considered so important:

It is difficult to conceive how very seldom we see him (Father de Clorivière). But it is true. He is unusually busy in editing some holy writings from which we will benefit. And so we must endure the privations which such work involves. (March 28, 1804)

In another letter, Madame de Carcado observed after having spoken of Father's overwork:

It is admirable that in spite of everything God's work goes ahead in all places and in all things. All goes well. Our good Mother's sufferings, her victim-state, the works of our good Father...who is vigorously editing his writings, all these things obtain blessings for us. (April, 1804)

At this point all correspondence was interrupted between Father de Clorivière and Mother de Cicé since they lived so close to each other. Father lived on rue Notre-Dame des Champs in the Brothers' Residence and Mother de Cicé resided with Madame de Carcado nearby on rue Mezieres.

It would have seemed that a calmer period was beginning for the founders since they had been reunited and were ready to devote themselves to the development of the two Societies. But God's ways are not ours. Trial was again knocking at the door and during the long imprisonment of Father de Clorivière, the co-foundress, always in the shadows, would be called upon to give her full measure of service.

---

<sup>146</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 464. Cf. ibid., p. 511, an identical passage in a letter to Madame de Goesbriand, also dated February 13, 1804.

## CHAPTER V

### FATHER DE CLORIVIÈRE'S IMPRISONMENT

### MOTHER DE CICÉ, THE IRREPLACEABLE COLLABORATOR

Following the court trial of the "Infernal Machine" explosion, the police had not relented their pursuit of Father de Clorivière. On March 8, 1801 a letter from Mayor Josselin of Brittany had denounced the priest to Fouché, the Minister of Police, as "the one whom Mademoiselle de Cicé persists in not revealing." Father de Clorivière was therefore, being sought among Mother de Cicé's acquaintances. Thus the police were led to seek information at Aix from a public officer there. This officer, learning that Father de Clorivière had left Provence, used a false letter to obtain his address in Paris at rue Notre-Dame des Champs. At that point the arrest became inevitable. It was made on May 5, 1804 in the early hours of the morning.<sup>147</sup>

That same day, Mother de Cicé also had been arrested at her home on rue de Mezieres. But she was extremely ill at the time.<sup>148</sup> She had, as a matter of fact, written about her health to Amable Chenu only nine days earlier. "My condition is leading me to death's door and even if it continues this way for a while, I cannot go very far." She was bedridden and, at the very moment when the police broke into her apartment, two doctors were at her home attending her. This saved her from being jailed because the two doctors declared she could not be moved. The police were satisfied to seize all her papers and one of the officers remained forty-eight hours in surveillance in her apartment. From then on there would be strict police surveillance of Mother de Cicé. She would have to be extremely careful in all her actions. "She will have to be observed very scrupulously," wrote the State Advocate in charge of security in the French Republic.<sup>149</sup>

Nevertheless, Divine Providence had in this way permitted Mother de Cicé to escape from an imprisonment of unknown length. For her part, by observing a certain prudence, she would be able fully to carry out her role as Superior General during some particularly difficult years.

Because of Napoleon's absolute power as First Consul and later as Emperor of France (he was declared Emperor on June 14, 1804), Father de Clorivière in his prison cell felt obliged at all costs to safeguard the life of his religious families in three areas:

- the civil power, which was issuing decrees banning all religious association;

---

<sup>147</sup> cf. Founded on the Rock for a longer exposition of what directly concerned Father de Clorivière's arrest and the political context of his years of imprisonment.

<sup>148</sup> On her part, several years earlier, Madame de Carcado had written these meaningful lines to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre at the end of April 18, 1804: "Our good Mother General (who does not want to be called saintly) is again suffering greatly....Let us not cease praying. She is an angel whom God loves too much. I am afraid...Oh! May this good Master then spare her to us a while longer!"

<sup>149</sup> Msgr. Baunard, op.cit., pp. 296-297, excerpts of the police record on Mother de Cicé at this time.

- the Bishops of France, who were hesitating secretly to authorize Societies which they would have to ignore officially;
- certain members of the Societies, notably priests of the Heart of Jesus who did not dare to renew their vows for fear of placing themselves in an irregular position with the Bishops.

Besides these major concerns there was the daily preoccupation with the various Reunions, new and old. Because he was in prison Father de Clorivière had to give his directives in writing. Thus there is a substantial body of correspondence of which only a part remains. It is therefore, understandable how important were the functions of his collaborators. To them fell the obligation of carrying out his thinking without deformation of his ideas but at the same time with the adaptations required by the varied, often unforeseen situations.

Because she was very close to the founder's thinking and better informed than anyone else of his intentions, Mother de Cicé was indeed the faithful, lucid collaborator to whom, above all others, Father de Clorivière was able to entrust the most delicate and difficult missions. At the same time, she would have to continue the life of suffering which had been hers for a long time.

The better to penetrate the human and spiritual excellence of Mother de Cicé it is necessary to consider her character from two points of view:

- exterior activities which required all her strength already threatened by failing health;
- interior trials, sufferings and temptations which she continuously had to overcome in order to advance on a deeply crucifying path.

\* \* \* \* \*

The announcement of Father de Clorivière's arrest and imprisonment must have been profoundly felt by Mother de Cicé. More than anyone else she could gauge the consequences of his situation. She did not allow herself to be defeated by this new turn of events. Rather, she faced the situation and immediately began taking necessary measures. This is what Madame de Saisseval reported:<sup>150</sup>

As soon as Mademoiselle de Cicé learned of Father de Clorivière's arrest she called her Council together.... After having urged us to redouble our prayers, prudence and discretion – for she herself remained under police surveillance – she appointed Madame de Carcado to be the sole person

---

<sup>150</sup> This refers to the Mantes Journal.

responsible for contacts with Father de Clorivière during his imprisonment. As regards herself, she would maintain secret what she entrusted to one or the other members and we were not permitted to discuss these things with one another.

This was wise discretion, it safeguarded unity of direction and prevented divergences of interpretation. It was also a measure most particularly necessary for the Society during those difficult hours.

The faithful servant Laurence, often accompanied Madame de Carcado as she brought to Temple Prison what was necessary for the support and nourishment of Father de Clorivière. Madame de Carcado's correspondence indicated that those visits occurred twice a week. With the authorization of the Archbishop of Paris, consecrated hosts were carefully concealed among the provisions so that the prisoner could have the consolation of the Eucharist.

Madame de Saisseval also stated:

The precious basket of provisions first had to pass the inspection of the guards. We imagined Madame de Carcado's anguish while they made their search. Her calmness and courage brought her through all ordeals. We can also imagine Mother de Ciccé's anxiety for each return of her assistant. How all of us shared that worry!

\* \* \* \* \*

Only a month after Father de Clorivière's imprisonment, a grave menace assailed both Societies. On June 8, 1804, Portalis, Minister of Religious Worship, suddenly issued a report. A decree of execution of the details of the report became effective the following June 22.<sup>151</sup> Among several other associations which the report legally pointed out as destined for dissolution was the Society of the Heart of Jesus. Divine Providence acted in the person of Archbishop de Ciccé who intervened in the matter and saw to the fact that the decree of execution no longer specifically named the Society of the Heart of Jesus. The decree condemned all religious associations except those engaged in welfare and charity works.

After a careful study of both the report and the decree of execution, Father de Clorivière conceived a defensive for preserving "the work received from on high." He would not depart from his position throughout the years to follow. He shared it with Mother de Ciccé and indicated to her the line of action to be followed. On this subject he wrote her a letter which did not bear a date but which the context indicated as belonging to July, 1804:

---

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Founded on the Rock, pp. 115, ff.

They did well to send me the decree. We are not named there. We are not even formally designated taking it literally:

1st, because we are not entirely formed into the body of an Association and we are only aiming at that subject to the approval of civil and ecclesiastical authorities;

2nd, because with us the vows are not perpetual;

3rd, because we depend on the Ordinary;

4th, because nothing appears exteriorly.

So we can live tranquilly and keep silent. But as it is for the legislators and not for us to interpret this, we must await with resignation what they ordain regarding us with the intention of submitting ourselves to it humbly and simply. But it is not necessary (it would even be imprudent on our part) to provoke these further orders by a too active zeal, or too hurried proceedings. Consequently nothing will be done about it and nothing is supposed to be done amongst us (except provisionally) that is to say, subject to the approbation of the authorities when they will have been fully informed of everything. If God wishes the thing and it would serve for His glory, the death is only apparent. When the dead will have been three days in the tomb the Lord at the prayer of His Mother will know how to resuscitate it....

But what regards us need not be noised abroad. Little does it matter to us that they should believe us dead and buried. Then they will forget us and God will not be less glorified. Let us remember these words of the Apostle and let us act accordingly: "You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." I very much hope that they will be able to continue the good work for the children.<sup>152</sup>

Among other similar letters this one indicated the importance of the role which fell to Mother de Cécé. In circumstances so delicate and so grave it was necessary for her to correspond minutely with the thought of the founder. In her contacts and relationships with the superiors and members of the various Reunions, with the priests of the Heart of Jesus<sup>153</sup> and with the ecclesiastical authorities, it was her duty to enlighten and reassure minds without sacrificing any of the demands of religious life.

Another letter also undated<sup>154</sup> complemented the one just quoted. It expressed thanksgiving for the providential preservation of the Societies. It also described the deeply supernatural position to be maintained with the civil authority which "has a great need of divine

---

<sup>152</sup> This refers to the work for abandoned children.

<sup>153</sup> As an example, let us recall the letter written by Mother de Cécé to Father Lamy on September 29, 1805. At Father de Clorivière's request, she copied for Father Lamy a part of our founder's reflections on the June 22 Decree.

<sup>154</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), pp. 135-136.

assistance" and therefore, of prayers. The letter rendered homage to Mother de Cicé. It also discreetly gave directives for concealing the religious life of the Society while at the same time faithfully living out that life:

From what I hear I cannot help believing that the Lord and His most holy Mother have preserved us from the great blow with which we were very closely threatened, since they did not mention us in the decree although we had been named in the act which provoked it. There is some indication that the approbations which have been given us<sup>155</sup> have not been without some effect on the minds on which everything depends. God in His mercy wished it thus....

You have thought right. Let us await the hour of God Who rules and governs all things and until He has turned away the storm from over our heads and has commanded the winds and the waves to be calm, let us remain in silence and in peace. Let there be no assemblies, nothing in public and done in common even on the great feast which is approaching. But consciences are free and each one will be able to do in her own heart and in the presence of God only what she believes will be most agreeable to Him and most useful for her own soul.

For yourself, I do not believe it is necessary to recommend you to be very cautious about showing yourself. Take good care of your health, it will not do much harm for people to know how weak it still is.

It was not surprising that the always frail health of Mother de Cicé required attention amid so many strains and pressures. But the truly crucifying trial lay for her in the keen sense of being incapable of fittingly fulfilling her role as Superior General. This sentiment was heightened by the fact that police suspicion of her was prejudicial to the members of the Society. All these things formed a body of fears, discouragement and temptations which Mother de Cicé did not in any way reveal exteriorly. They were confided to Father de Clorivière alone. Father de Clorivière repeatedly counseled confidence and understanding of the paths of the cross chosen for her by God.

Father de Clorivière returned to this subject in most of his letters, sometimes by a simple reference and often at length.

May your weaknesses and discouragements never depress you: they are not voluntary as I have often told you and it would be easy for you to convince yourself of this if you could reflect on your condition.<sup>156</sup>

---

<sup>155</sup> The original states "approbations which we have made." Was this a mere distraction on Father de Clorivière's part? There are other examples of this in his correspondence. Doubtlessly, he intended to say "approbations we have produced."

<sup>156</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 139.

Your painful situation of both body and soul does not surprise me at all. It is a result of the always amiable designs of our divine Master on you and on us. You do not suffer for yourself alone. He wishes that you have this resemblance to Him.<sup>157</sup>

God wishes that you excel in the virtues of obedience and abandonment. You protest that you wish to be a true daughter of obedience. But in this desire that you testify (although with resignation) to be in another position than the one where God has placed you, and in which I have told you more than once He wishes you to remain, in this desire, I say, do you not feel that you are acting in a manner little conformed to the perfection of obedience and of abandonment? If we were in calm, if you were successful, if that would draw praise upon you, perhaps the fear of applause could suggest to you a similar desire, then again humility should yield to obedience. But should the pilot abandon the helm to the strength of the tempest? Your feeling of insufficiency is good but your confidence in God ought to take it away....As for your perfection be well persuaded that you can find it only in the accomplishment of this will. Why this continual return on yourself? If God wishes to make use of your weakness, then this weakness will not place an obstacle to His designs and will serve only to make His glory shine forth the more. It is on Him, not on yourself, that you must fix your eyes.<sup>158</sup>

There followed another encouragement from him:<sup>159</sup>

But I do urge you strongly, generally speaking, to have as much communication with your daughters as your health and a wise discretion permit. It is task, but it is God Who has given it to you; it is the Cross which He has imposed upon you; it is very pleasing to Him so embrace it with all your heart and with joy. It will be very useful to others and very meritorious for yourself. Bear their weakness and our divine Master and His holy Mother will bear yours. Encourage them very much to confidence, to exactitude, to union and to fraternal charity.

In October, 1804 a letter from Madame de Carcado to Madame de Clermont-Tonnere indicated that Mother de Cicé benefited from her periods of relatively good health by following Father de Clorivière's counsels and maintaining that "communication" with her daughters:

Dear Adele is quite better and able to accomplish considerable things. The good Father de Clorivière, during his confinement, is a model of resignation just as she was during her illness. Both are privileged saintly souls.

---

<sup>157</sup> ibid.

<sup>158</sup> ibid., p. 146.

<sup>159</sup> ibid., p. 152.

Shortly thereafter, a brief note from Father de Clorivière to Mother de Cicé reported Archbishop Jerome de Cicé's arrival in Paris, no doubt for the ceremony of Napoleon's coronation as emperor on December 2, 1804. Father de Clorivière was pleased at the joy this must have brought to Mother de Cicé.

Father de Clorivière's letter of November 3 again proved his confidence in Mother de Cicé in the delicate situation in which the Societies found themselves. He insisted on the attitude to be taken regarding authorities, notably ecclesiastical authorities:

Let us be content to refer to our attempt as a project, a plan, an experiment. This will suffice for us at present to do the good that we lay claim to, both for ourselves and for others, continuing to do discreetly all that we have done up to this time according to circumstances, unless permissions should be formally taken away from us by the Ordinary.

He then added these lines which show his confidence in the judgment of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary:

This is what I beg you, my dear daughter, to consider well before the Lord. It is useless, doubtless, to divulge it for fear of indiscretions or bad and false interpretations, but discuss it with Mme. de Carcado and some other prudent persons belonging to the Society. If you, or if they thought differently, you would do well to let me know the reasons on which their judgments would be based.

All for the greater glory of God, the greater good of our souls and the service of the Church!

\* \* \* \* \*

#### TRANSMITTAL OF A MEMORANDUM TO THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF, PIUS VII, 1804

From his prison cell, Father de Clorivière attentively followed all political events and their eventual repercussions on the life of the Church. As soon as he learned of Pius VII's visit to Paris for the coronation of Napoleon as emperor, his constant concern for obtaining the Holy See's approbation of the two Societies led him to think about sending a discreet and well-informed intermediary to approach Pope Pius VII. He first confided his thought to Mother de Cicé:<sup>160</sup>

Father Beule's letter has given me pleasure, for some time I have been wishing to have news from him. It will be very good for our common

---

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

interests that he should see the Holy Father and even more so, as he will be able to explain about the Society to someone who has his confidence.

He wrote her another letter on December 7, 1804, this time to thank her for her extraordinary efforts to obtain his release from prison:

I see, my dear daughter in Christ, that you are much occupied with my situation....I am very grateful to you for having mentioned me in your letters of Provence and your letters to the Most Reverend Bishop of Namur.

Further in the same letter, Father de Clorivière spoke of a type of memorandum which Mother de Cicé had outlined to be sent to the Holy Father with Father de Clorivière's authorization. He found it a bit inopportune:

More than this, it is a critical thing to remind the Holy Father of the journey from Rome and the occasion of this journey. Here, the Holy Father can do nothing....If our government is informed of it...they would not fail to constitute it a crime against me.

On the other hand Father de Clorivière continued to hope for a proximate release, a hope he sustained week after week. But he was not fully aware that Fouche never abandoned those he was pursuing, even though they were innocent, until such time as he judged them no longer able to do any harm.

Nevertheless, the idea of sending a memorandum progressed and Father de Clorivière concluded his letter thus:

After having reflected on it and thought the matter over before God, I came to the conclusion that in spite of my isolation I ought to work on a Latin Memoire that could be handed privately to His Holiness who would show it only to his most intimate advisers. In this memoire I would inform him as concisely as possible of what has happened since the deputation, the present condition of the Societies and the way in which I have thought I ought to act. I would beg His Holiness to make known to me his intentions. If prudence suggested to him to keep silence, I would believe it my duty to continue to act as I have done.

There followed these words confiding the execution of the plan to Mother de Cicé:

(You realize that this should be kept very secret) but without saying anything about it, think out means, pray much and have them pray for me.

Mother de Cicé had to "think out means" very quickly for only three days later Father de Clorivière wrote to her on December 10, 1804:

I see with gratitude, my dear daughter, how much you are busying yourself in our affairs. May God be your reward in this world and in the next.

Further in the same letter, he wrote:

I am not too adverse to your suggestion of appealing to Father from Vence<sup>161</sup> concerning the Memorandum.

Next, the letter contained approval of M. de Cicé's reactions:

Father Bernier's reply is not satisfactory. What you have said on the subject to the Bishop of Namur is very good. It is analogous to my manner of speaking.

Then returning to the subject of the Memorandum, Father de Clorivière stated:

My memorandum is on paper. I recall the deputation to Rome, his approbation and permission, the sufferings which came upon us soon after, the present state of the Society and the fervor which reigns in it. What you tell me at the end of your letter has caused me to add something else. It has led me to say something positive and name the dioceses where we have been admitted either by Bishops or the Vicars General. The matter is delicate. It is possible that if the Bishops are questioned they will not even remember having done it. But let us place everything in God's keeping, let us consider only His glory. I finish by a protestation to the Holy Father that he will always find in me the most perfect submission to anything He ordains for me or for our Societies.

The entire tone of that letter showed clearly Father de Clorivière's confidence in Mother de Cicé and his esteem for her opinions.

On Wednesday, December 12, 1804, the Memorandum was completed:

I am sending you my memorandum to the Holy Father, my dear daughter....It seems to me that I have given a just and clear idea of our Societies and of their actual condition and I am begging His Holiness to ordain for them, as well as for me, all that his wisdom judges most suitable. It seemed right that I should say a word about you, without however naming you. I spoke of it as of all the rest. I also spoke of myself a little like you had suggested. I also did justice to the piety, the fervor and the good sentiments of our Societies.... At the heading, I placed a note indicating the reasons why the Memorandum is being presented to him in a secret manner. . . .

Monsignor, the Bishop of Namur, to whom I offer my homage, will render us an important service if he is willing to present it to His Holiness. He can read it beforehand; he will find therein nothing which will compromise anyone.

---

<sup>161</sup> The Most Reverend Pisani de la Gaude, then bishop of Namur, after having been Bishop of Vence dans le Var, Provence. Father de Clorivière had already had recourse to him in order to send to Paris the Circular Letter which had been written in May, 1803 (Cf. Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 467).

The conclusion of this letter, so important for the future, showed the supernatural "indifference" of the founders:

Let us pray much, we are at a critical time, but let us place all our confidence in God. The step was necessary, circumstances called for it. May the will of God be done. He sees the sincerity of our hearts. I hope that He will not permit His work to be destroyed, and that He will incline the mind and the heart of him who holds His place on earth in our favor. Amen. Amen.

Several days later Mother de Cicé was again asked by Father de Clorivière to represent him with the Societies.<sup>162</sup>

I believe it to be very necessary under the circumstances that we pray a great deal and with much fervor. Notify my dear and esteemed associate, Fr. Bourgeois, of this. On your part, find out what you could do for this from now to Christmas or New Year's Day. Everything should be directed towards the good of the two families.

The letter of December 17 indicated that the Memorandum was in good hands for transmittal to Pius VII:

I ask you above all to express my genuine gratitude to the Bishop of Namur. You acted very wisely in committing him not to mention the matter at all to Father Bernier.<sup>163</sup>

The letter also manifested the spirit of faith with which the founder judged all things:

Since my Memorandum has been set going, it comes to my mind that the Sovereign Pontiff, even with the best intentions, would not dare to mention it for fear of appearing to act against the Concordat. Thus, if he says nothing, this might perhaps be the most advantageous for us; besides, it is God's affair and not ours. Let us envisage only this side and we shall have no human anxiety. We will be content with everything. May the Lord always be thus with us! On our part, let us continue to do what would be for the best interests of the work. The success depends on Him alone. Let us abandon it entirely to Him without putting ourselves to too much trouble. Fiat, Fiat!

The December 21 letter indicated that Mother de Cicé kept Father de Clorivière informed of the situation day by day:

---

<sup>162</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 159.

<sup>163</sup> Father Bernier, who at first was favorable to the two Societies, became more and more reticent in their regard.

Your two letters, my dear daughter...have given me the greatest pleasure. My gratitude to the Bishop of Namur is unbounded. I am keenly aware of all the efforts he is making in our behalf.

A brief note dated "Feast of St. Stephen" also manifested the place occupied by Mother de Cicé in the esteem of the founder:

You will not delay, I think, in being presented to the Sovereign Pontiff. I hope very much that he will know you for the one of whom I spoke to him in my memorandum so that he will give you his blessing as Superior General of the Daughters of the Holy Heart of Mary. At least receive it as such in your heart for yourself and your daughters.

The humble Mother de Cicé left no account of this event which must have been one of the most significant in her life. In a letter to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu dated December 26, 1804, she wrote simply:

I have had the happiness of attending the Mass of His Holiness at Saint Sulpice and of receiving his blessing. I asked it not only for myself but for all of you.

Nevertheless, she had been personally presented to the Holy Father who took the occasion to state once more his benevolence towards the Society. This fact was confirmed by the letter from Father de Clorivière to Father Lange on "this holy Easter Day, 1805":

He (the Holy Father) received most favorably the one he knew to be at the head of the Society of the Heart of Mary. He gave her a precious relic.

One of the last letters Father de Clorivière wrote in 1804 proved that the Memorandum had indeed been delivered to Pius VII. The same letter indicated the founder's opinion, in the eyes of faith, of Napoleon as head of the French state:

Your letter of last Monday, my dear daughter, has brought me very good news. I do not know how to express all my gratitude to the worthy and esteemed Bishop of Namur. He has rendered us the most important service.

Let us also pray much and continually for the Sovereign Pontiff, and let us not forget the person of our Emperor since it has pleased God to give him to us for master and our fate is in his hands.

I can hardly believe that the Pope will decide anything in our favor, at least in a public manner, in our present circumstances but it will mean a great deal if he should speak to the Emperor and predispose him in our favor. We shall be able then to hope much. Even if neither the Pope nor the Emperor would consider it opportune to speak plainly, it seems to me that the consequences of the step that we have taken could not fail to let us know their intentions; at least we shall be able to conjecture them by their

attitude towards me. As for the rest, let us put the whole matter into the hands of Divine Providence with full and perfect resignation.

The letter dated "New Year's Day, 1805" appealed to Mother de Cicé to be firm in her path of suffering:

You are truly the Daughter of Mary, Mother of Sorrows. Sustain this great dignity worthily; suffer with your august Mother and, as far as you can, suffer like her with peace, confidence and love. Forget yourself in order to occupy yourself with Jesus and His sufferings. The abandonment and the privations in which you are deprived of all taste and of all light do not render you less agreeable to your divine Master.

Father de Clorivière, in his letter of January 12, 1805, made – in regard to the situation of the Memorandum – an exposition which was as clear as it was penetrating:

Nor must you be too eager in your wishes for the Sovereign Pontiff to speak plainly about the memorandum and in general about all that regards the two families. If he is in favor of us, as we have every right to presume, he can scarcely make it known under the circumstances in which he is at present. He knows that, generally speaking, the Government is not favorable to religious establishments and I doubt whether among the Bishops with the best intentions there would be many who (if he questions them) would speak in our favor.

He would not believe himself able yet with prudence to determine anything favorable in our regard. The best we can hope for would be that he should say, as in passing, a few words which would indicate that he has always the same sentiments of good will in our regard. With that exception, his silence is what would be most favorable to us:

- 1st, because then the approbation which he has given would remain in force;
- 2nd, because this would be a tacit consent to what we say in our memoire, which we know well has come to his knowledge;
- 3rd, because if he were not favorable to us, he would naturally make it known since he would be doing at that moment that which would be in conformity with the present views of the Government;
- 4th, if he expressed himself unfavorably, we would then have the duty of conforming ourselves to his intentions and of abandoning a work which we have believed up to the present to be so agreeable to God, so adapted to procure His glory, the good of His Church and the perfection of a great number of souls.

The ending of the letter again showed Father de Clorivière's reliance on Mother de Cicé's judgment:

If these reflections appear wise to you, it would be well to communicate them to Fathers Bourgeois and Beule and to Mme. de Carcado.

Father de Clorivière's letter of January 16, 1805 expressed his deep joy over the real indication of benevolent approbation which the Holy Father had expressed to Father Beule. It occurred during an audience at which Father Beule made himself known as the emissary of the Societies to Rome four years earlier.<sup>164</sup>

It seems all the more surprising, therefore, to learn in Father de Clorivière's long letter of January 22 that Mother de Cicé did not join in that joy but rather was more than ever submerged in desolation and discouragement. Father de Clorivière recalled her firmly to her perspectives of faith, to obedience and to trust:

For a long time you have not shown such discouragement and dejection....

That which afflicts me most...is that, in spite of all that I have said to you more than once...in the strongest manner...you still return to the subject of abandoning the cross which God Himself has given you by placing you at the head of the little family....

The pretext of living under obedience is an illusion. It is not the obedience that God wishes from you; it would be sweet, easy, ordinary. What God wishes from you is more crucifying, more perfect; it is that which you practice in the place where circumstances, where God, where I myself holding His place in your regard, have placed you, and in which you must constantly sacrifice your tastes, your inclinations, your will, your judgment.

Another paragraph in that letter indicated how much the external trial which she experienced might have become a source of scruples and temptation for Mother de Cicé:

You tell me again that by reason of the nature of the things which have happened to you, God has seemed to wish to exclude you from the government of the Society. You mean the proceedings that were instituted against you, and their consequences.<sup>165</sup> You should reason very differently; these extraordinary events from which we were so far removed, you and I, are marked by the seal of a very special Providence, and you were so assisted therein by It that you should recognize it as a proof of love, and at the same time a means for you to attain to a high sanctity, and for it to attain its ends, but by secret paths. The Societies of the Heart of Jesus and of the Heart of Mary should share in their sorrows and their sufferings; was it not very just that those at the head should be the first to participate therein? It is a privilege attached to the choice that God has deigned in His

---

<sup>164</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), pp. 570-572. Letter to Father Lange in which Father de Clorivière retraces the detailed history of the 1804 Memorandum, the welcome extended to Father Beule, etc.

<sup>165</sup> This obviously refers to the trial concerning the "Infernal Machine."

great mercy to make of them. If it pleases Him to send us other crosses, let us rejoice; He will help us to find there salvation, strength, and perfection.

These lofty, detached thoughts of Father de Clorivière were born of his personal experience. From his earliest days in religious life he had undergone many sufferings. Then he lived through the dissolution of the Society of Jesus. At the time he wrote this letter, he was a prisoner under conditions that were less than enviable. He had hardly any human reasons to hope for the success of what "interested him most in the world."<sup>166</sup> He therefore had the basis for using language familiar to those who knew the total abandonment to Providence which marked his life day by day. For him who had to affirm others, a deep serenity was necessary.

In his admirable circular letter on the "Interior Spirit," written in 1806 while he was a prisoner, Father de Clorivière's description of "this kind of unchangeableness of the interior man" really etched a portrait in which we are able to discern his own personal traits.<sup>167</sup>

It was to such an unchangeable state that he was calling Mother de Cicé and he expressed himself as he did because he knew well the kind of person he was addressing. He knew that Mother de Cicé would be capable of understanding him. But the Lord permitted the attacks of desolations and temptations which seemed to veil from her very eyes her courage and her virtue. These attacks undoubtedly occurred for her purification, but more especially they indicated the crucifying paths which were to be her lot during her life on this earth. Each person must respond to the particular aspect of the total holiness of Christ to which he or she is called. In Mother de Cicé's case, the role of "victim" to which Father de Clorivière referred on several occasions,<sup>168</sup> explained in large measure her almost permanent state of dereliction.

Father de Clorivière's long letter to Mother de Cicé on January 27, 1805 contained some passages which somehow traced the spiritual portrait of our First Mother:

But here are a few Rules which should be carefully observed:

- 1st: Reject immediately, courageously, every sentiment which under a pretext of humility, would tend to diminish the great confidence that you should have in God.
- 2nd: Recognize, with the most profound humility and sentiment of your unworthiness, the graces which the Lord has liberally bestowed on you and never doubt that He has great designs on your soul and that you would be very culpable if you did not correspond therewith with all your powers, through faintheartedness or lack of confidence.

---

<sup>166</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition). Letter of July, 1804, to Madame de Carcado, pp. 470-471.

<sup>167</sup> Eighth Circular Letter.

<sup>168</sup> See end of Chapter II above.

- 3rd: These great designs, this is the work which He has confided to you, this work is not of your choice but of His. He wished, He still wishes, that you should give it your care and the success of this good work depends in part on these cares; and do not doubt that in choosing you, He gave you all that was necessary for that, although it may not be according to the views of the flesh.
- 4th: Be intimately persuaded that His guidance, both in regard to you and to me, is an effect of His paternal goodness and of His wisdom which conducts everything to His ends.
- 5th: Reanimate the confidence of your daughters, be a superior indeed and watch with circumspection.
- 6th: In your exercises of piety be more passive than active. For your perfection, count more on the work of God in you than on your own industry. Here is the only order of the day that is necessary for you. Anything more detailed would be harmful for you.

The following day, Father de Clorivière wrote a short letter recommending her to:

...renew your vows at the Feast of the Purification with a few others only, such as Mme. de Carcado, Mme. Guillemain, etc., who would then do it themselves with others, and thus with the rest; so that, although all could not assemble together, there would however, be in the renewal a sort of mutual and general communication among all. You would do well also on this occasion to say a few edifying words which would then be repeated in each group by the one at the head.

We can imagine the fervor with which those renewals were made in secret, as well as the union of hearts despite the separations imposed by prudence.

The January 29, 1805 letter spoke with gratitude of Pius VII's acceptance of the Memorandum.

Your second letter of yesterday informed me of some very good news. Thank you for it with all my heart. I pray the Lord to bless a thousand times the worthy Bishop of Namur who got it for you. Every day I think much of him before the good God and also of the Sovereign Pontiff, Monsignor the Archbishop of Bordeaux, etc. This news is all the better as I assured the Holy Father in my Memorandum, with the greatest sincerity, that a word from him would decide us and that I would regard it as coming from God Himself.

The Holy Father's favorable response was mentioned again in the next letter dated January 31, 1805:

I believe I have shown you how satisfied I was with all that you mentioned to me in your last letter and how much I bless the Lord for it. One can

make use of this with moderation to raise the hopes of the members of our two Societies, but be well on your guard that nothing leaks out outside.

On February 1, 1805 Father de Clorivière confirmed Mother de Cicé in the sorrowful path the Lord had chosen for her to take.<sup>169</sup>

I say to you with assurance that what you are going through is neither punishment nor chastisement, it is a trial which will turn entirely to your advantage and to that of others, if you do not let yourself become disheartened and discouraged...

Be full of confidence as to the superior's will, it is the only thing which can merit or demerit. The other will founded on feelings is not always in our power and it does not depend on us to rectify the feelings, especially in extraordinary trials such as yours. Why does God permit these trials? Let us respect the secrets of the Lord. Let us not seek to know what He hides from us but let us be sure that all is directed by His love.

In these "extraordinary trials," Mother de Cicé was secretly sustained by graces which were also extraordinary.

Father de Clorivière's letter of February 4, 1805 showed the heroic effort made by the Superior General on February 2, the day of renovations, to overcome her interior desolation.

Believe me when I tell you, my dear daughter, that the violence you are doing to yourself can only render your action more agreeable to God and more meritorious for yourself. What you have felt is only the effect of the trials to which God, according to the impenetrable designs of His Divine Wisdom, has wished to subject you. The spirit of evil whom He permits to use his power against you by exciting in you these feelings of distrust, wanted to upset this feast not only for you, but also for the others. You have done something very agreeable to God by rising above these impressions and by conforming yourself to what we have often repeated to you. Do not cease to do so, you will thus change evil into good and God will give you the grace to win a complete victory. God will deliver you, but in the meantime do not get tired of fighting. Our friend, (Madame de Carcado) who is not aware of what I have written you, told me that everybody had been pleased and deeply affected by what you said to them to reanimate their confidence. I beg the Lord to bless your obedience and your courage. This gives me true consolation.

---

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

Then he added this statement which, in its simplicity, said a great deal about Mother de Cicé's supernatural influence on others.

God showers His graces on all you do for your daughters.

\* \* \* \* \*

### NEW APPROACH TO THE HOLY FATHER

Pius VII's favorable acceptance in 1804 of his second Memorandum assured Father de Clorivière that the Societies were able to continue exercising in the Church the mission received "from on High." That was indeed great security but the political context made the fulfillment of that mission more and more difficult.

The Societies found themselves in a paradoxical situation with the Bishops:

- on the one hand, in approving the Societies in January, 1801 Pius VII placed them under the Bishop's jurisdiction, notably for the emission of annual vows which had to be made or renewed "under the jurisdiction of the Bishops."<sup>170</sup>

-on the other hand, by government decree, no religious society had the right to exist without approval from the civil authority and every religious association had to be denounced to the Minister of Worship.

The Bishops, under pain of placing themselves in flagrant opposition to the Government which had signed the Concordat of 1802, had to ignore the existence of the Societies, while the Societies needed the Bishops' authorization in order to exist and develop.

In this humanly inextricable situation, Father de Clorivière realized that the general authorization given and recently approved by Pius VII did not suffice to safeguard the actual life of his religious families.

He envisioned another approach to the Holy Father. It would be an extremely delicate matter, which, if successful, would be able to save the Societies. Having learned that Pius VII would soon be returning to Rome, Father de Clorivière wrote to Mother de Cicé on February 7, 1805:

I am much interested in the departure of the Holy Father. I have still one thing to ask of him for our two families. Pray to Our Lord and His holy Mother for this intention so that, if it is His good pleasure, they will grant

---

<sup>170</sup> Constitutive Documents, pp. 305, 314, 317.

me the grace of doing it well and successfully in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary.

In his letter of February 11, 1805, Father de Clorivière first commented on the vow just made by Mother de Cicé that the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary be celebrated each year in the Society, for "it is necessary to be extremely circumspect in contracting these kinds of obligations especially by vow."<sup>171</sup> Then he explained the purpose of the approach to the Holy Father. He had asked prayers for it in his previous letter:

I have finished my letter to the Holy Father but I still have to copy it and put it in French for you. The purpose of this letter is to obtain the permission of the Holy Father to act in security of conscience without always having recourse to the Ordinary for new permissions in critical and difficult circumstances. To the letter I shall add an extra sheet of paper on which the Holy Father be asked to make a note of anything he pleases for the peace of our consciences but which we could never show outside. I believe that before taking the letter to the Sovereign Pontiff it would be well to have the advice of the former Bishop of St. Malo and of Monsieur of Namur. We could be guided by their words of advice....

Continue, my dear daughter, to go on as you have done for some time and do your best to rise above your sufferings with the help of the Lord. However, prudence, it seems to me, requires that you do not show yourself too much outside of your own home. From what I have heard, it would seem that they are very much on the quivive at the present time.

The letter of February 15, 1805 showed clearly the role of intermediary entrusted to Mother de Cicé, as well as the lucidity of mind which dictated her conduct. These were gratifying to Father de Clorivière.

Your idea is a good one with regard to Monsignor of St. Malo. I had as an afterthought the same idea as you and it is the first thing that I said to our friend before I had learned of your sentiments.<sup>172</sup>

Further in the same letter, he wrote:

I am very pleased at your interview with the Bishop of Namur, this prepares the matter<sup>173</sup> but you did well not to speak of it before having seen him. If he had not thought it advisable to take the letter, the matter would be decided and we would see in this the will of God which leaves us to our own conscience.

---

<sup>171</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 177.

<sup>172</sup> Mother de Cicé must have informed him of some obstacle in regard to advising Bishop Cortois de Pressigny.

<sup>173</sup> Doubtlessly, Mother de Cicé had not as yet seen the letter destined for Pius VII.

The February 18 letter is especially interesting:

The step you took with regard to the Bishop of Namur gave me great pleasure and I am very thankful for the obliging manner in which he responded to it; it is indeed as you have told him a signal service which he alone could render to us. You show yourself also by this, my dear daughter, a worthy Mother of both Societies and I bless God with all my heart and His most holy Mother for having given us in you such a fine cooperatrix for the honor of their Sacred Hearts.<sup>174</sup>

On February 20, 1805, Father de Clorivière's letter returned to the subject of the celebration of the Feasts of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary:

I have been thinking seriously before God about the vow and as you have necessarily submitted the matter to me, here is what I decide. It is proper without doubt that the Feasts of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary be kept in our Societies;<sup>175</sup> but it is not fitting, I believe, that we engage ourselves by vow to do it. But this is what this vow would bind you to at present and also those who would come after you. You must do your very best to see that the Feast of the Holy Heart of Mary be celebrated in your Society and you yourself should celebrate it as well as you can with the conditions affixed. You will also take, but without vow, the same resolution for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On my side I take the same resolutions for the Society of the Heart of Jesus. May God give us the grace to put them into execution.

In the same letter, Mother de Cicé received the usual encouragement to persevere in the path of abandonment:

Adieu, my dear daughter, keep well and bear your cross courageously. Look upon it as a signal benefit and the source of all good. Let us also open our hearts to a great confidence.

Another letter written the next day would indicate that Mother de Cicé had been entrusted with a matter which was of lesser importance but which nevertheless required great tact:

---

<sup>174</sup> In a long letter to Father Beule (July 19, 1807) Father de Clorivière wished to justify his relationship with the Bishops, and he recalled to Father Beule his successful contact with Pius VII. "I have believed it my duty to address myself to the Holy Father himself...I set forth to him with simplicity what regarded us, our position towards our bishops, that in which they were themselves..."

"He did not answer anything in writing. You know that would have made this a law, and that he could not do otherwise without betraying the secret which he wishes to keep. But one of our former Bishops who still occupies a see and whom the Sovereign Pontiff honored with his intimate confidence has been the intermediary whom Divine Providence furnished me with regard to His Holiness. This worthy Prelate made known to us that the Holy Father ratified what he had done in our favor at Rome, that he was satisfied with our conduct and that we might continue."

<sup>175</sup> Here, Father de Clorivière in the original used the word "chomees," meaning "kept like a Sunday."

I take back what I had told you about the trip to Versailles. Assure my aunt<sup>176</sup> of my sincere and very tender attachment. Ask for nothing for me...You could only intimate to her that my expenses have been greater than I had expected and my accounts are a little confused.

The ending of that letter indicated how closely communication between the founders was maintained:

I have found Caroline's letter and am returning it to you. What you tell me of Mlle. Courtier gives me pleasure. I do not disapprove of what Mlle. Oudart counts on doing. What you have done for Fr. Varin is well done. My grateful homage to the Bishop of Namur.

The letter written on the last day of February, 1805 contained a few very telling lines about the inexhaustible charity of Mother de Cicé, emulated also by Madame de Carcado:

You do the works of mercy and you live on privations...I cannot conceive how you can meet the expense of all the charities you are doing. The good God must come to your help. I also admire all the care that Mme. de Carcado gives to the good work; the Lord is reserving for the two of you, I believe, two very beautiful crowns.

Father de Clorivière's letter of March, 41805 revealed his solicitude for Mother de Cicé:

What you tell me of your health, my dear daughter, is a little disquieting...and still requires that you take much care of yourself.

Further in the same letter, there was an indication of their prevailing unity of views and action:

Certainly, I would not even have given any sign of disapproval of anything that you would have approved. What you have done you have done well and Madame de Saisseval has done well to use your permission.

Study of the correspondence between Father de Clorivière and Mother de Cicé enables us to follow her manner of living day by day. Father's letter of March 7 revealed her as saddened by the attitude of her brother, Archbishop Jerome de Cicé, who had again invited her to Aix but not without "some sort of reproach" undoubtedly related to the past. Father de Clorivière wrote:

But I believe also that the bad grace with which he gave the invitation must have been very painful to you. There is nothing in your reply with which he could be offended. It is a trial added to many others which one must bear patiently. Remember that you are a daughter of the cross;<sup>177</sup> accustom

---

<sup>176</sup> Madame de Nermont.

<sup>177</sup> "Daughter bearing the cross."

yourself with the help of the Lord to bear the heaviest, to embrace with a willing heart the rudest, to find the most bitter sweet, to regard the most abject as infinitely precious.

Father was referring to the cross which Mother de Cicé was to expect in all the vicissitudes of her life.

On the next day, March 8, Father de Clorivière, who had learned of Mother de Cicé's interview with the Bishop of Namur, wrote:

I am very pleased with what you mention to me of our letter. We are under a great obligation to the worthy Prelate who has a right to all our gratitude. But it is also something requiring us to redouble our fervor and our prayers. Tell it from me and from you to all your daughters without telling them why except to those whom you know; tell them also from me and more in detail to Fr. Bourgeois, until I can write to him. It seems to me that the matter is of such importance that we ought to offer everything, our actions, our penances and our communions for this intention.

The letter of March 16, 1805, really showed the hostility facing all religious societies:

The request of the Carmelites has much resemblance to the one which we made lastly. This opposition to the vows shows well that Religion is in a state of oppression and that their desire for it is very weak. Let us pray to Our Lord to enlighten us as to our true interests.

Despite its length, another passage from the same letter showed marvelously the scope of Mother de Cicé's role during Father de Clorivière's imprisonment:<sup>178</sup>

You had a real inspiration to remain for the visit of Father Jauffret; all that you tell me of it and all that he told you seems very good. If, as I read in one of the papers, he remains here as Vicar General of Paris, then above all he should be informed of our affairs and made acquainted with our situation and the authorization that we have from Rome, Paris and some other dioceses, empowering us to act, not yet as a Society formed and acknowledged by the Government, but as one that we are forming to make ourselves useful until a favorable opportunity occurs to ask the Government to approve of us as an association entirely devoted to public service, both spiritual and corporal, without forming a visible and evident body, without common possessions, without living in community, without bringing in any change, either to public order or to private life of families. If this is well presented to him, as I cannot doubt that he desires sincerely what is good,

---

<sup>178</sup> On this same point, cf. also Letter of March 27, 1805: "One thing that would be very useful to us would be to arrange for means of communication with Rome, close to the Holy Father. If, among the prelates you might find one who would appreciate the good work, would be interested in it, and would wish to become its protector, that would indeed be well for us."

we can believe that he will favor us at least in secret, for fear of compromising himself; and this is sufficient for us and is about all we can expect under the circumstances. It is your group, I believe, that it will be necessary to bring forward; they will be more inclined to favor you, and you will be partly covered by the good work for the abandoned children. As for us, we could be represented as a very small residue, as indeed we are, especially in Paris. This is why it seems to me that it is better for you to act than for me. And if you do not do it yourself, since Mme. de Carcado is at the head of the work for the children, you can give her charge of it.

Replying, no doubt, to a question of Mother de Cicé's concerning Lent, Father de Clorivière on March 18 placed in proper perspective the penance she was to observe:<sup>179</sup>

Your great fast, my dear daughter, and the abstinence that the Lord is asking of you is that you receive well from His hand all the sufferings of mind and of body that He sends you and which are very numerous. Keep yourself peaceful and closely united to the Lord in the midst of all the contradictions which come to you, from whom ever they come and let your continual occupation be to conform all your sentiments to those of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary.

Another letter, which though undated probably belongs to the same period of time, entrusted to Mother de Cicé the delicate task of personally undertaking the mission for which the Bishop of Namur had indicated the direction. It involved visiting a prelate in the Holy Father's group, named Mincio. He had already been informed of the matter by the Bishop of Namur. Clearly the letter pointed up the importance of the responsibilities which Mother de Cicé had to assume:

I am sending back to you, my dear daughter, the letter of the Bishop of Namur, which is a new proof of his goodness to us. If he has not done more, it is not for want of good will; he has begun the matter and it is our part now to follow out the path he has traced for us, so that we may have nothing with which to reproach ourselves. Let us expect nothing save what comes from God, but also let us omit nothing on our part in order to merit that He should come to our help. You will go then with Mme. de Carcado to see the Prelate Mincio and you will show him:

- 1st: The importance and usefulness of the thing which has for its object only the glory of God and the preservation of religion.
- 2nd: That the Holy Father himself, after having examined all that concerns us, declared its importance and consequently approved it, but verbally only, in a private audience accorded two deputies on

---

<sup>179</sup> Another letter written in March also stated: "I wish you better health, and I am in no wise upset about your not having assumed mortifications. If you had, greater harm to your health would have resulted."

this subject on January 19, 1801; that the matter has been recalled to his attention since his sojourn in Paris and we have every reason to believe that he persists in the same sentiments favorable to the Societies.

- 3rd: That our vows in the Societies are only annual, as the Sovereign Pontiff prescribed, the Societies having no goods in common, no exterior marks which distinguish them, are, one might say, copied from the present government, as far as religion permits and under the dependence of Bishops. That not being entirely formed, they have not been made known openly to the government, which nevertheless has sufficient knowledge of the Societies and has not done anything directly against them; and that there is no doubt that if the greater number of those who have authority sincerely desired the good of religion, they would protect our efforts.
- 4th: That the request that we make is only for outside and in the civil tribunal. Speak as little as possible of me. If they reproach you with my imprisonment, tell them that I was arrested on suspicions that were quite unfounded and entirely foreign to the Society. It is sufficient for you to think these things over before God; I hope he will inspire you with what you will need to say.<sup>180</sup>

In another letter, after having sympathetically acknowledged a new change in Mother de Dice's health, Father de Clorivière mentioned her fatigue resulting from assisting the poor whom Providence directed to her. He said:

You do this for God and I do not doubt that Our Lord and His holy Mother have likewise made you feel the excess of their tenderness and their love. But I know that this love, tender as it is, is sometimes in this life very crucifying to nature. This is so in your case. You are one of its victims. Its guidance over you has been plainly seen. This quality is beautiful, but what does it not require! What courage! What abandonment! What generosity!

He added this statement which recalled the only model she was to follow:

You perhaps believe yourself very far from having these sentiments. You deceive yourself. These are the sentiments of the Hearts of Jesus and of Mary and these two Hearts are yours. May you not have any other sentiments than theirs.

---

<sup>180</sup> It does not seem that the Prelate Mincio was able to favor usefully the designs of Father de Clorivière, who wrote shortly thereafter (April 1, 1805) to Mother de Cicé: "I believe it is rather late to follow up our affair. But if the Prelate Mincio appeared likely to favor a correspondence so that we might believe that he would consent to render us some service...we might perhaps make this proposition to him or at least sound him out on it." There is no indication permitting us to know if this project was able to be brought to a successful ending.

And indeed, above all others, Mother de Cicé lived this conformity to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary so often counseled by Father de Clorivière.

His letter of April 11, 1805, contained a striking portrait of our first Mother as she must have been seen by her contemporaries:

You are always occupied with some good work, either spiritual or corporal; and for this you hardly ever consult your lack of health. I do not blame you for this; on the contrary I praise you because you are following the spirit of God in it. You have the grace for this and the Lord makes it seem enough by the blessings which He ordinarily sends down on all your undertakings of this type. It is a solace that He grants you, it is a little diversion from the sufferings of mind and body which He sends you. Nor do I see how, without special help on His part, you yourself would be able for all that you are doing, with so little health and temporal means. Let us bless the Lord for it.

And his letter of April 26, 1805 attested to "the perfect resignation" of Mother de Cicé again recently afflicted by illness:

Your health, my dear daughter, seems to be returning slowly. In this I adore the will of God who continues to test you by illness...but I bless the perfect resignation He gives you for everything which concerns you personally...You must have that perfect resignation also for what concerns me.<sup>181</sup>

On June 18, always "under the weight of the cross," Mother de Cicé was encouraged by Father de Clorivière to persevere in confidence. In these letters to Mother de Cicé, every Daughter of the Heart of Mary is able to receive Father de Clorivière's counsels on the end of suffering:

I learned my dear daughter that your indisposition continues and that you now have fever; what must we do save to accept everything with entire and peaceful resignation? No doubt God, Who has placed you in this condition, wishes that you glorify Him by your sufferings by uniting them to those of Jesus. Have the most perfect confidence in Him and believe firmly that nothing will happen to you which is not an effect of His goodness and His love.

On the feast of the Sacred Heart, June 21, 1805, Father Clorivière wrote to her:

We can only, my dear daughter, especially on this great day, recall those beautiful words of St. Paul, the subject of my first general instruction. "Let us have no other sentiments than those of the Heart of Jesus." "Sentite in Vobis." "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Let us

---

<sup>181</sup> Let us not forget the numerous steps taken directly or indirectly by Mother de Cicé and by Father de Clorivière's friends to hasten his release. The history of such attempts would go beyond the framework of this present study.

penetrate into this divine Heart, let us lose ourselves there happily, let us draw from it always all the virtues and let us seek in it the divine Model Who will teach us to practice them in the most perfect manner. May this be our principal occupation. You have need of this, my dear daughter, your heart having been for so long a time in the wine-press of the cross, and it is to this that every true Daughter of the Heart of Mary ought to tend. Their heart should be like that of their august Mother, transpierced with a sword of grief; this sword should be their crown. And God Who has chosen you to be their mother wishes also that in this you should serve as their example. This is why He has given you such a large share in His Son's cross; may the wood of the cross serve as fuel for the fire of your love. You will find in the Heart of Jesus everything which can serve to lighten the burden of the cross and make it dear to you. It is rich and full of love, it will supply abundantly for everything that you lack.

On Friday, June 21, 1805, he wrote to her:

My dear daughter, you are always suffering and in great prostration; God wishes it and we ought to wish only what He wishes, but He finds it good that one asks for better health from Him for persons who are dear to us and who will use it for His glory. I ask it of Him then for you with all my heart; but at the same time I beg Him so to animate you with His strength and His Spirit that you will find your strength in your weakness and your peace and consolations in your sufferings, that being united to those of Jesus, they all become of an inestimable price in the eyes of God.<sup>182</sup>

On August 11, 1805, Father de Clorivière once more counseled precautions which had to be taken for the renovations of August 15:

As it would not yet be prudent to assemble in certain numbers, it will be well to do as you have done the preceding times. You will receive the vows of those who are at the head and they in turn will receive the vows of the consecration of the others in order that all may come from a common center and that thus the unity of the Society may be preserved as far as circumstances permit.

He then made certain reflections on the joy of belonging to Mary and gave this counsel for the feast:

Let this be the subject of a word of edification which you will say to your daughters.

---

<sup>182</sup> The very next day (Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 218) these lines from his letter witness to Mother de Ciccé's infatigable activity in regard to the needs of her fellowmen: "The care you are taking of the two persons from my country is very meritorious, but I fear that this will harm your health. Nevertheless, these works are characteristic of you. God gives His blessing to this sort of work you are undertaking."

After having received news of the events on the feast, Father de Clorivière wrote to Mother de Ciccé on August 20:

I see that, thanks be to God, everything went well on our great feast day....You acquitted yourself well in what you did and in what you said, and it has not been without fruit.

Next, Father de Clorivière mentioned what Mother de Ciccé had done upon the death of Father Malaret, Vicar General of the diocese of Paris:

The Lord gave you an excellent thought<sup>183</sup> to go see Father Duclos on the subject of the loss we have sustained in Father Malaret's demise....God has blessed your undertaking as we desired and we can never thank Him enough. After God, it is to you that the Societies owe a great debt of gratitude.

I see with much satisfaction that you did not spare pains and cares for the benefit of your children. God, the Lord Jesus, and Mary will bless you for it and I shall rejoice in the Lord for it.<sup>184</sup>

This satisfaction was already in Father de Clorivière's writings.

Other occasions will come in the future to praise the conduct of this "So good fellow worker" that the Lord gave him.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 1805 - A DIFFICULT YEAR

The beginning of this Chapter V pointed up the principal obstacles encountered by the two Societies in this period. From his prison cell, Father de Clorivière had to resolve both external and internal difficulties. The external difficulties created by a delicate situation involving the civil and ecclesiastical authorities brought about other difficulties within the Societies. Certain priests of the Society of the Heart of Jesus began to be concerned about their relationships with the bishops. Some of these priests were hesitating about renewing

---

<sup>183</sup> In two letters of this period Father de Clorivière was grateful for the felicitous initiatives of Mother de Ciccé: "I have seen more than once that the good God suggests excellent ideas to you" (Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 191). Also: "This is why I find your conduct very wise, and you have done what I would have believed should be done" (Ibid., p. 192).

In April, 1808: "God will assist you. He gives grace to all your words" (Ibid., p. 408; cf. also ibid., pp. 412-414).

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., letter of February 18, 1805, p. 179.

their vows and some did not make renewals. All this planted doubts in certain Daughters of the Heart of Mary.<sup>185</sup>

Thereupon Father de Clorivière wrote long letters to several of the members<sup>186</sup> in order to help them to enlighten and affirm the minds and hearts of others. But in certain cases this was not sufficient. The situation at Chartres in which Mother de Cicé was closely involved deserves special attention.

Father Frappaize was the superior of the Societies established in Chartres in 1791. The two Societies are indebted to him for a written account containing very precious historical data. The most important item in the account was a copy of Pope Pius VII's Brief, dated January 1801, to Bishop de Pressigny, the original of which has disappeared.

Father Frappaize was arrested in 1793 and was detained in jail for a year or two. During his imprisonment he contracted a disease of the lungs which for many years undermined the strength of this man, who perhaps had a natural tendency toward anxiety.

Deprived of the comfort of the personal presence of Father de Clorivière and influenced by Father Beule, who thought that the members of the two Societies should make only a consecration in order to avoid conflict with the authorities, Father Frappaize was upset and did not renew his vows in 1805. From that time his silence greatly troubled Father de Clorivière, who felt that discontent was growing. He was also troubled because he considered Father Frappaize a very dear son.

In this situation Mother de Cicé suggested to Father de Clorivière that she go to Chartres to try to help Father Frappaize, who was quite ill, and perhaps also to enlighten and put new life into the flagging courage of the members. At least, that is what can be gleaned from the letters addressed to her at that time. On August 23, 1805, Father de Clorivière wrote to her:

I do not disapprove at all of your going to Chartres but prudence requires that news of your trip not be noised abroad. It will be necessary to recommend secrecy to your friends. Let them think that you are going for a few days to take the country air at Versailles, St. Germain or St. Denys. You will take charge of a letter from me to Father Frappaize.

His letter of August 27 shed some light on the silence of Father Frappaize and revealed Father de Clorivière's reactions:

The letter from Chartres explains to me Father Frappaize's long silence. Has he acted in this by the orders of his ecclesiastical superiors? Or did he believe it a duty to act as he has done? In the first case, his action would

---

<sup>185</sup> In his letter of October 8, 1803 (*Ibid.*, p. 239), Father de Clorivière allowed himself to express this sorrow: "The state of our two little families is very lamentable; but, let us place our confidence in God."

<sup>186</sup> See particularly the letters to Father Lange (*Ibid.*, pp. 570-579; to Father Pochard (*Ibid.*, pp. 807-808); to Father Bacoffe (*Ibid.*, pp. 629-633); to Father Beule (*Ibid.*, pp. 640-645); and to Father Moreau (*Ibid.*, pp. 652-654).

have been necessary; in the second, I would excuse his good intention, but would fear some lack in his obedience; even in this last case, may God pardon him this fault a thousand times, for he should have informed us of all with simplicity. Even if this be so, he is entirely excused in my heart. May the God of mercy give him the hundredfold for all that he has done for His little flock and that of His holy Mother.

Another paragraph in the same letter revealed that at Saint Malo, the Societies were meeting opposition from the clergy who might influence the bishop against them. Therefore, these lines were directed to Mother de Cicé:

Father Lamy's letter is not consoling but we must do what we can to provide some remedy there. You alone can act and God, I hope, will bless what you will do for His love. It is very sad to know that our ecclesiastics of Saint Malo show themselves so contrary to the good work. It is evident that they are taking advantage of the Imperial Decree that one can interpret for or against, according as one is well or badly affected. There is no doubt but that it would be entirely proper to address ourselves to the Bishop of Rennes, but how?

Then Father de Clorivière made this suggestion:

Would it not be better that you write to the bishop yourself?...God will enlighten you on what will be most suitable to write. I could also write to him but I would find the matter more difficult and I fear I would have less success....The pastor should have written to you. It would be a good occasion to recommend the work to him without seeming to know anything about what you have been told....The service you have just rendered to his church ought to make him favorable to you.

It is not known what service Mother de Cicé had rendered to that pastor (no doubt in Saint Malo or its environs), but the letters of Father de Clorivière abounded with such references to her various acts of charity.

Father de Clorivière wrote her on September 3, 1805:

Your two last letters contain very interesting details and we must thank the Lord very much for the blessing that He has given to the steps we have taken. It was a very hazardous and difficult thing since Bishop de Pressigny himself had not dared to speak of it to him, in spite of all his good intentions. It is to you that God has wished us to be under the obligation and He has given you the courage for it. We are not on account of that without fear, but behold the first step is taken.

A bit later in the same letter, three lines reveal quite simply the multiplicity of actions entrusted to Mother de Cicé:

I am delighted that your trip to St. Denys was successful as regard Father de Broise. But I somehow fear that this worthy gentleman is going to cause you more trouble.

The letter ends this way:

May the Lord and his holy Mother bless you a thousand-fold for all you have done for the two little families.

The concern about the situation at Chartres was mentioned again in the September 9 letter:

It is quite extraordinary that nothing was sent concerning Father Frappaize. This at least gives the impression that he is still alive. But it would make one very happy to receive details about his situation.

A paragraph in the letter of September 13, 1805 clearly stated the importance of Mother de Cicé's role in the two Societies during the time of the Founder's imprisonment:

From your letters I can very well see that you do not spare yourself, my dear daughter, and that you are assuming all the concerns of a superior.... It is indeed necessary that you supply in part for what I am not able to do.

This next letter contained an affirmative response concerning Mother de Cicé's trip to Chartres:

I am first of all answering you regarding the request you made for Chartres. Go, my dear daughter, with the blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, under the auspices of our Holy Mother, and in the company and under the protection of your angel guardian and all the holy angels and all our holy patrons.

That solemn appeal for God's protection revealed the delicacy of her mission in all its aspects. Father continued:

May you be the consolation of our holy invalid and of all our children. May the Lord deign, if it is His good pleasure to make use of you to recall him to life. I shall give you a little letter for him; you will read it to him or send it to him according to circumstances. I am leaving the matter to your wisdom.

Further, he wrote:

When I tell you to go to Chartres, I presume at the same time that you will take the greatest precautions. If it were possible, it would be well that you go and return without anyone perceiving it. Tell all your friends not to speak of it, or at least to do so as little as possible. You do very well to take Agathe with you; she is necessary for you, and as you say, it is not inconvenient.

This trip to Chartres must have definitely been quite dangerous, for Mother de Cicé received this very short note the very next day:

Use the greatest precaution and silence concerning the trip. Enroute I believe it would be better for you to use the name of Champion. Bon voyage. Remain as long as needed, but write to us through Madame de Carcado.

Finally, the letter of October 3, 1805, revealed Father de Clorivière's relief at the news of Mother de Cicé's return. It also revealed the difficulty of the mission that had been entrusted to her:

I congratulate you, I congratulate myself and all the family on your happy return and I thank the Lord for it from the depths of my soul. I thank him also very much for all the blessings He has poured down on you during the trip; they have been greater than you seem to think. I judge of this by the details that you give me with so much candor<sup>187</sup> and exactitude.

You have done all that was in your power, and if your proceedings and your words have not had all the success that you would have wished, they have not been useless, if only to enlighten these persons on their state, on that of our Societies, and on what they must do. It may be that the light you have thrown into these hearts will later cause good desires to spring up; and these desires to produce good effects. Let us ask this of the Author of all gifts, through the mediation of Mary, in whom after Jesus we place all our hopes.

You have done as regards Father Frappaize more than I could have expected, considering his weak condition.<sup>188</sup> My letter and what you have said to him have enabled him to feel that his conduct with regard to obedience had not been very perfect. And although his good intention excuses him before God and obtains God's pardon<sup>189</sup> for him, I am happy to convince myself that he humbled himself before God in this regard and that this will not be in vain for him.

The next part of the same letter concluded the explanation of the ambiguous Chartres situation. Father de Clorivière used great delicacy as regards Father Frappaize:

What Mademoiselle Pesch told me of what he had allowed her to do<sup>190</sup> shows clearly the purity of his intention and gives reason to presume that

---

<sup>187</sup> In that era "Candor" meant simply "direct sincerity."

<sup>188</sup> Father Frappaize died on September 28, 1805, shortly after Mother de Cicé's visit.

<sup>189</sup> These words were omitted by Father de Clorivière.

<sup>190</sup> That is, "to renew her vows."

he did himself only what he allowed others to do. That if he did nothing more this is because he would have feared to act against the rules of a Christian prudence. It is true that, since in this he could have no certainty, he ought to have had recourse to obedience; but I excuse him again for not having done this, because he would have seen great difficulty in doing it, which he would not have been able to surmount without great imprudence. In cases of this kind, it is easy to fall into involuntary illusions, not culpable before God, where if there was any fault the goodness of the Lord will have pardoned him for it.

After having excused Father Frappaize, who was a gravely ill person and whose uprightness of conscience he knew well, Father de Clorivière continued:

The two others, Fathers Beule and Pellerin, are less excusable. They still feel bound by their consecration and their protestation to live under obedience as if they were bound; God grant that this protestation be very sincere. But (I say this between us) it is evident that they have drawn back, and that, not having made any vow, even privately and relatively to the Society, they are not capable of any superiority. The reasons that they allege are those of persons who are deceiving themselves; they need our prayers.

Father added without melancholy:

Much constancy and faith are needed in order not to be disturbed by the state to which we are reduced.

Indeed, the two Societies needed constant and faithful souls who clung to their religious life despite all contrary circumstances.

This episode was enlightening: first of all, as regards Mother de Cicé. Not only did she have to set several Daughters of the Heart of Mary back into the truth of their vocation, but also she had to enlighten certain priests of the Society of the Heart of Jesus, beginning with their dying superior. There is no more outstanding example of the Founder's confidence in the perceptiveness, delicacy and religious sense of Mother de Cicé.

The episode also revealed Father de Clorivière's conception of the vows and of the irreplaceable role of obedience in assuring the integrity of the religious life in all circumstances.

Mother de Cicé could well derive consolation about the success of her mission to Chartres. A year later, Father de Clorivière wrote to her:

I have read the letters from Chartres.... You must conclude from these letters that your visit there did much good for your daughters, as I had presumed.

But the keen sense of her weakness returned to overwhelm her once more, for Father de Clorivière's letter of October 12, stated:

Have confidence, my dear daughter; I perceive that God permits the temptation to come back; pay no attention to it except to animate yourself to abandonment, confidence and obedience. Act as you were doing before; the temptation will only serve to augment your merits. I do not praise you for having changed your prayer; St. Ignatius's method of prayer is to follow therein the spirit of God, and not to do what he proposed to those who as yet had only been initiated into this holy exercise. Reasoning cannot be of great use to you there. You desire that Our Lord be entirely Master of your heart, this desire is sincere, it is fulfilled, but you have not the consolation of seeing and feeling that it is there. Be content with this privation and persevere in that same desire; be constant in humbling yourself under the powerful hand of the Lord. He knows better than we what is best for us; when it pleases Him He will roll back the veil which hides Him from your sight, and you will be happy in seeing His guidance of your soul.

On October 25, 1805, Father de Clorivière wrote to Mother de Cicé the good news that he had received a letter

of great importance from the Vicar General of the Society<sup>191</sup> who has replaced the Father General, Fr. Gruber. He approves our good work and exhorts me to continue it as the work of God. He added that I do not cease for that to be a good Jesuit and that he was incorporating me into the Province of Russia. This would not require my leaving France where he knows there is a lack of priests.... This news cannot fail to please you.

Soon new trials, external ones, were to assail Mother de Cicé. Father de Clorivière wrote to her on December 15, 1805:

My daughter, you have need at this moment of all your submission to the will of God; ask it of Him humbly before going further. It is my duty to inflict on your heart a sharp blow by announcing to you the death of two persons who were very dear to you. It has pleased the Lord to call to Himself within a few days of each other your brother and sister who lived together at Haldberstadt.<sup>192</sup> They were fruit ripe for heaven, and which long adversity had well purified. If the blow is hard on nature, faith will give you a glimpse of your motives for consolation....Offer even the suffering you experience for them; and to sanctify it and render it more meritorious, unite it to that of the Heart of Jesus, weighted down with sadness in the

---

<sup>191</sup> Father Lustyg of the Society of Jesus who was in Russia at that time.

<sup>192</sup> Most Reverend Jean-Baptiste de Cicé, former Bishop of Auxerre, who had immigrated to Prussia with his sister, Elizabeth.

Garden of Olives, and that of the Heart of Mary at the foot of the Cross. There is our model and our consolation in our afflictions.

This was a severe blow to Mother de Cicé, who was so close to her brothers and sisters. The long separation brought about by their emigration from France, together with the scarcity of news by letter and the lack of details about the final days of her brother and sister only increased her sorrow.

Two days later, on December 17, 1805, there arrived a new letter from Father de Clorivière, who was concerned to learn how Mother de Cicé was bearing this trial:

I am much concerned about you and your sorrow. I share it very sincerely with you and I should like to sweeten its bitterness for you. I do not doubt your entire submission to the ordinances of Divine Providence on this occasion as on all others, but I fear the great sensitiveness of nature, and that it may have much difficulty in supporting the blow which struck you...I am impatiently awaiting your news, and I shall learn with pleasure that grace has been stronger in you than nature, and that, in spite of your great sensitiveness, you have not succumbed to your grief, but have surmounted it generously for love of Him who made Himself a Man of Sorrows for us. May the Lord sustain you; draw constantly from His Heart all the strength of which you have need.

His letter of February 20 showed that Mother de Cicé had borne the trial courageously:

I am always much concerned about you, my dear daughter, but I have learned with much consolation of the way in which you have received the double blow which the Lord has given you, and of which I had been requested to inform you.

Nevertheless, Mother de Cicé's interior purification continued. It was more difficult to bear than all her external sufferings. That is why Father de Clorivière, in that same letter, offered Mother de Cicé counsels suitable for all souls involved in the same anguish:

You complain of the state of your soul; do not think that your complaints tire me. Your sufferings are real, I have no doubt of that and I feel them with you; but I know at the same time that you have every reason for having the greatest confidence in God, and it is that sentiment which should dominate in your soul; it is in this state of soul that you should remain, by preference. God shows you the depth of corruption, malice, weakness which is inherent in your soul; you see it and you cannot keep yourself from seeing it. You also feel the impression of these things; this view, this impression are a very heavy cross which God has put upon you for ends worthy of His wisdom and His love; but this view, this impression will not render you culpable, your confidence will only be more admirable. Raise yourself above every feeling; appear before God despoiled of yourself and clothed with Jesus Christ, as I have never ceased to exhort you. You will

then have that peace which nothing can take from you and the efforts of the enemy will serve only to strengthen it more and more.

One of Father de Clorivière's last letters of 1805, dated December 27, summarized his usual directives with great doctrinal intensity:

Call to mind, my dear daughter, what I have often told you, that you must not look upon yourself as apart and as though separated from Our Lord. That view doubtless would have something very distressing in it; what could we find in ourselves but inexhaustible depths of misery, blindness, ingratitude and pride? But thanks be to God, you wish to belong entirely to Our Lord, and what afflicts you is not to be sufficiently His. He also wishes, even more than you wish it, to be entirely yours. How would there not be between you and Him the most intimate union? How would you not make one being with Him? He is the Vine, you are one of His branches; it is true that you do not cease to be what you are, you do not lose this depth of misery which belongs to you, but it is as though absorbed in this grandeur, in this immense holiness of the Lord to Whom you are united. It is just that you retain the feeling of your lowliness; but think yet more of the beauties, the virtues, the perfections of Jesus Christ which are yours by the donation that He has made of Himself to you and that He renews at every instant. You are great, rich, powerful with Our Lord; you can, with Him and by Him, render to God a glory worthy of Him. Gloria in Excelsis Deo! Often repeat this canticle of the angels; unite yourself to Jesus and Mary.

Thus was concluded the correspondence of 1805, the year in which Mother de Cicé gave generously of herself to the Societies, while at the same time never abandoning the path of purifying sufferings.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### THE FINAL YEARS OF FATHER DE CLORIVIÈRE'S IMPRISONMENT: 1806 - 1807 - 1808

Father de Clorivière's direction seemed to have borne fruit. The two Societies, particularly the Society of the Heart of Mary, held fast and even developed despite difficulties encountered in certain dioceses.

Four works about the Societies were written during the final years of his imprisonment:

- The Eighth Circular Letter on The Interior Spirit (May, 1806). More than the other circular letters, this one revealed the spirituality of Father de Clorivière.
- The letter written to the Daughters of the Heart of Mary living with the Carmelites. Even though it was written in connection with their specific situation, the letter was of great importance to all Daughters of the Heart of Mary. It showed Father's

discernment and emphasis of what was essential in relation to contingent circumstances.

- The Exposition of Our Undertaking (1808). This was a brief but very precise historical synthesis about the two Societies, their religious character and their development.
- Finally, the Ninth Circular Letter, On the Edification Which We Must Give to Others (September, 1808).

These writings were so important that they should have been treated at this point. However, Father de Clorivière's letters, which continued during these three years, will continue to be used.

These would be the last three years in which the letters addressed to Mother de Cicé revealed the inner life of our first Mother through the spiritual direction given to her. After Father de Clorivière's release in April, 1809, correspondence between the two founders ceased since they were able freely to meet in Paris.

The impression remains that Father de Clorivière seemed to become increasingly aware of the particular manner in which Providence directed Mother de Cicé, demanding of her heroic blind abandonment, courage and trust.

In January and February, 1806, Mother de Cicé experienced a painful crisis as evidenced by the following excerpts from the correspondence of Father de Clorivière. On January 3, 1806, after having mentioned the anniversary of the death of his sister, a religious of the Visitation, he wrote to Mother de Cicé:

You have been, as she, ready to make the sacrifice of your life,<sup>193</sup> a victim of the hatred of the wicked against Jesus Christ and as an act of pure charity. This is a great consolation in the last moments. I believe that my blessed sister is rather in a state to help us than she needs to be helped by our prayers. You have a very good friend in heaven for she loved you very tenderly. If the time for consolations had come for your soul, I am convinced that she would have asked them for you. Let us wait a little, this sadness will be changed into joy; but until that time comes, be on your guard against listening too much to this sadness and allowing yourself to be discouraged by it. God sends you this trial for your good, and if He permits the devil to molest you and lead you to worry, depression, disgust, He gives you interiorly His grace to surmount them and to rise above yourself. Leave sadness to the sensitive part; overcome yourself; may your spirit rejoice in God, may it be glad that God is pleased to see your soul plunged, with that of His Son, in an ocean of bitterness. Do not content yourself with making a few acts of confidence, resignation and abandonment; recall to mind

---

<sup>193</sup> At the time of the trial concerning the Infernal Machine.

everything which can excite a holy joy in you; chase away everything contrary thereto; this is what the Lord asks of your fidelity.

It seemed that a new stage had been entered by Mother de Cicé, for until this time, Father de Clorivière had never asked of her so definitely to seek spiritual joy at the very heart of her interior sufferings. He insisted on this in the letter of January 14, 1805:

Let us take everything as from the hand of a father who strikes you only because he loves you. I recommend to you, my dear daughter, this spiritual joy which is so necessary to have in the trials in which God places us. Nothing helps us more to bear them. Ask it ceaselessly of the Lord. He will not refuse it to you. When you are supplied with this weapon, the devil can do nothing against you.

Again, on January 14, he wrote:

Pay attention, my dear daughter, to the advice I gave you in my recent letters about confidence in God and spiritual joy.

According to his letter of January 21, Mother de Cicé must have been in a state of weak health. On January 25, Father wrote her:

I am very sorry that you remain so weak and that your nights are so bad. In the midst of all that, have peace, resignation and love. That is what the Divine Master expects of you. And no matter how discontent you may be with yourself, I am sure He sees in you all these dispositions which you do not see in yourself. For it often happens that we ourselves do not know our innermost heart and that the Lord conceals therein the gifts He has sent us. It is enough for us that He see them. Our not knowing about them does not make us less pleasing to His eyes and keeps us in humility.

Father de Clorivière's letter of January 31, 1806 contained an urgent appeal to "the spirit of faith":

Good courage, my dear daughter, not a very perceptible courage, which without a miracle of grace would scarcely be compatible with your feeble bodily condition; but a courage of faith, which raises us above all feeling, and which the Lord loves to see in us, even when He seems to leave us to ourselves in a feeling of despondency.

Recommend this spirit of faith to your daughters; it is preferable to all consolation and sensible fervor. These are passing; they last only for a time and then leave the soul in a sort of depression which is characteristic of them. The spirit of faith does not change; it is a firm support. The Lord Himself is then the strength of the soul.

His letter of February 4 revealed that despite her weakness, Mother de Cicé was able to be present in the chapel on February 2 for the renovation of vows. Following a direction of

spirituality dear to him, Father de Clorivière recalled the example of Christ's Mother, whose heart had been pierced by a sword of sorrow:

Don't try at this time to do anything above your strength; be content to do what your weakness permits. God Himself will be satisfied with it; He asks only your heart. Keep yourself in peace; arm yourself with great confidence; abandon the future to the Lord; one day you will clearly see how His treatment of you, rigorous as it seems, is full of love and mercy. This same hand which strikes you so heavily is preparing a rich crown for you in heaven, and even on earth treasures of sanctity, and perhaps also great consolations. You know that the Son's hand had pierced His Mother's heart with a sharp sword and then filled it without measure with all the gifts and sweetness of His divine Spirit. Let us imitate Mary in her affliction; and may we one day have some part in her joy. We can hope this from the infinite goodness of our God.

Proof is contained in Father de Clorivière's letter of February 7 that he had seen in the interior sufferings of Mother de Cicé the manifestation of the mystical paths on which God had led her:

I saw with great pleasure, my dear daughter, that God had granted you a little interval of health last Sunday. This confirms my opinion that He is watching over you in a particular way and that your health and your illnesses are not purely accidentals of nature; they are indeed the effects of nature, but God permits and directs them at His will for reasons which are known only to Him; but all tending to His glory and to the good of your soul, and perhaps also to many others. Receive them in this way, as I am persuaded you do.

After having counseled Mother de Cicé to take the precautions required by her state of health, he again invited her to judge all things in the light of faith:

Thus, when this body of ours suffers remember that the sufferings are those of Jesus Christ, who at this time wishes to suffer in you and wishes you to suffer with Him. Is not this consideration, founded on what faith teaches us of the intimate union of Jesus Christ with the Christian, well suited to sustaining you in suffering and to making you love it, as also to sanctifying and hallowing in some way all the care you take of your body?

This serious health crisis must have caused Mother de Cicé to put her affairs in order by making her will.<sup>194</sup> Father de Clorivière replied on this subject in his letter of February 11, 1806:

---

<sup>194</sup> In fact, Mother de Cicé's will, left with her attorney and opened after her death, was dated September 5, 1816. Cf. Appendix, XXVII.

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the permission you ask to make your will is given to you by the Constitutions of our Societies. If you ask whether you can do it in such a way, this depends on the laws of the country in which one lives, because each one possesses his goods according to the disposition of the laws and can dispose of them only in the way that the laws permit; every other permission would be invalid.

Then Father recalled certain matters, which, despite her poor health, Mother de Cicé could not delegate to others.

His letter of February 21 gave news of the situation at Chartres, where Mother de Cicé's visit, while successful concerning Father Frappaize, had not been able to counteract the disastrous influence of Father Beule and Father Pellerin.

I see, by the letter from Chartres, that they have not renewed the vows there, but only the Consecration, with the exception of Victorine whom Fr. Frappaize, and I myself after his death, had previously given permission to renew her vows. This displeases me, but it is not the fault of these good daughters; they lack neither good will nor fervor; I even believe that they will have the same merit before God; but it is the fault of these priests. They will have to answer for it. I pray the Lord to forgive them and to give them more zeal and light for their own sanctification and for the sanctification of others.

In February, Mother de Cicé's health though "still quite precarious"<sup>195</sup> permitted her to resume her usual correspondence, including the letters which Father de Clorivière often asked her to write. He wrote to her on March 11:

I am returning to you, my dear daughter, a reply for Fr. de la Mennais. It would be well for you to speak to him of the advances that we have made towards the Holy Father and of the success they have had through the Bishop of Vence, now Bishop of Namur, in the event that you have not yet done so.

Then Father de Clorivière continued by asking Mother de Cicé to appoint, in agreement with Father Pochard, a replacement for Mademoiselle d'Esternoz, the late Superior of the Besancon Reunion. A victim of her own charity, she had died of a contagious disease contracted while caring for the sick at the hospital. Richly endowed naturally and supernaturally, Mademoiselle d'Esternoz had received part of her formation from Mother de Cicé, with whom she had remained in Paris for several months. Her premature death had been felt very deeply by the two founders, especially because Besancon had become a reunion which gave them the greatest consolation.<sup>196</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), pp. 261-262.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., pp. 264-265.

The letters of Friday of Passion Week, March 28, and of Good Friday, April 4, again recalled the necessity of conforming one's life to the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of His Mother. Mother de Cicé was more especially invited to that conformity:

For a long time now, my dear daughter, our divine Saviour, Spouse of pious souls, has held you nailed on His cross in many different ways. It is thus He treats His cherished spouses; this is the way He treated His holy Mother. Can you consider this without recognizing the value of this favor? This day when we honor the Dolors of the august Virgin, Mother of God, and her Heart, pierced with a sword, should be for many reasons a feast day for you; you have rights over this amiable Heart, in virtue of your being one of her daughters, and even an elder daughter. Ask her, then, with filial confidence that, as she has given you a little share in her sufferings, she will also obtain for you a share in her sentiments of love, peace and the conformity with which she endured all her sorrows.

On Good Friday, Father de Clorivière wrote:

On this great day of our redemption, Jesus on the cross, Mary at the foot of the cross speak powerfully to our hearts. Let us be content to listen to them and to learn from them this great science which it behooves us to know well, the science of the cross.

For a long time now you have had a share in their cross, which, without being comparable to theirs, is however very heavy and very painful, seeing how very weak you are; nevertheless do not grow weary of being attached to it. Remember that when you are in this state you are in a special manner in the company of Jesus and Mary. Turn your gaze away from yourself to fix it on them and their sufferings, in order to unite your sufferings to theirs. May your heart become closer and closer to their sacred Hearts and may it take from them all their sentiments.

There was a repeated invitation in the letter of April 11 to seek out spiritual joy:

Do your best to excite and preserve in yourself spiritual joy. I know that this is more difficult but also more necessary in the state of interior suffering in which you have almost habitually been for some time.

Father de Clorivière's letters in May revealed that Mother de Cicé was still suffering. The letter of May 6 particularly mentioned it:

I sympathize, my dear daughter, in your almost continual indispositions. Let us see in this only the will of the Sovereign Master. My great consolation is that you know how to make use of this painful state for His glory and the greatest good of your soul. I should do as much in my own situation. It has lasted now for two years; I do not complain of it and I desire only to enter perfectly into the views of Our Lord and His holy Mother.

Father de Clorivière's letter of May 20 confirmed the continuing indispositions:

I hear with much sorrow, my dear daughter, that you continue to be quite indisposed.... Much patience is necessary to overcome and control the involuntary increase of ill-humor, and I know the Lord has habitually given you the grace for this. We cannot praise Him too much for it.

This was a precious tribute to a virtue whose influence radiated on all who had contact with Mother de Cicé.

The two founders, each according to temperament and measure of grace, advanced with giant steps along the path of sanctity. The overall reading of their letters strikingly reveals that in addition to her physical and spiritual trials, Mother de Cicé had to bear the daily burdens of Society matters which Father de Clorivière could not assume. For the two founders, the situation of the Societies in Chartres remained a grave concern. The special vigilance used by Father de Clorivière in his correspondence with certain priests of the Heart of Jesus is understandable. His letters of June 6 and July 21, 1806, clearly described the situation concerning the defections which had taken place.

We should not be surprised at what happened at Chartres, my dear daughter, after what you witnessed there, and what you reported to me of the defection of Frs. Frappaize, Beule and Pellerin, to whom I might add Fr. Miette, since his behavior towards Mile. Puesch whom he directed. It is not at all astonishing that these pious daughters have followed, even without perceiving it, their directors' suggestions.

In that same letter there followed some specific statements about the primacy of the vocation which has come from God. Once recognized, that vocation must be followed - and no confessor has the right to turn the soul away from it, especially after vows have been made. In his letter of July 21 Father de Clorivière again insisted on that point. He also advised that in Chartres if there were no priest of the Heart of Jesus able to serve as superior of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, it would be necessary to ask another member of the clergy to assume the function.

As I have said, it would be necessary for this priest<sup>197</sup> to be informed about us and he cannot acquire this information except through you as guided by the Holy Spirit of God.

Mother de Cicé's actual poverty during this period cannot be overlooked. A passage in Father de Clorivière's letter of July 28 showed the situation to which she was from time to time reduced:

---

<sup>197</sup> Father Mistouflet.

You might sell the silver spoons of which you speak. It is too bad that this is necessary. If the small amount of money belonging to me which you are holding could keep you from doing this, it is entirely at your service.

It is impossible to mention the numerous missions which Father de Clorivière entrusted to Mother de Cicé during the year 1806. His correspondence abounds with references to such activities as interviews with civil or ecclesiastical authorities, visits around Paris and its environs, letters to various persons, materials to be printed, etc. It is admirable that a chronically ill woman, often confined to bed, was able to fulfill all those missions.

It is true that such a superabundance of tasks was able temporarily to relieve her internal sufferings. Father de Clorivière mentioned this to her in his letter of September 25, 1806:

I have observed that you were feeling better and that you were suffering less from attacks by the spirit of evil whenever you were occupied more with activities for the good of our Societies and less with matters relating to yourself.

The letters of October 17 and 21 revealed Mother de Cicé's fundamental humility. She must have written to Father de Clorivière about the *coulpe* she desired to make. He replied to her on the 17th:

...since I wrote you very hastily the last time, I did not answer the question you asked me; if, when you made your *coulpe* before your sisters, the Assistant without imposing any penance could not give you some advice. I answer no, it would not be in order; this could be prejudicial to others and weaken in them the idea of superiority. At most this could be allowed when it is made privately.

And in his letter of October 21 he said:

It will be quite sufficient for you to make your *coulpe* once a month. The exterior conduct should not be the same in all situations.

The letters following this date contained many references, generally rather brief, to the path of suffering travelled by Mother de Cicé. Father de Clorivière did not hesitate to repeat to her that she had been chosen as a victim soul by the love of the Sovereign Lord:

You are always tormented by some kind of suffering but do not be astonished at it. Look upon yourself, in union with Jesus Christ, as a victim on whom He discharges the blows of His justice as He pleases. It is a glorious choice for you but painful to nature. Do not believe that there is any cowardice or lack of courage in feeling natural pain; our Lord Himself desired to undergo this and sanctify it. Unite yourself to Him and enter as far as possible into the sentiments of His Divine Heart and that of His holy Mother.

The letter of November 11 contained this word:

It is November 11. On that day in 1791 you first arrived in Paris. It is now 15 years.

On Monday, January 5, 1807, Father's letter once more indicated that Mother de Cicé was experiencing interior and exterior difficulties:

With consolation I have learned, my dear daughter, that your health - though not good - has kept up, permitting you to leave your home. These days.... I pray the Lord to give you the strength of mind and body which you need to work for His honor and glory and to bear the difficult trials which He sends you in so many forms. That is how He treats those who love Him.

The letter of January 16, 1807, confirmed what was already known of the plot of the Infernal Machine. As a matter of fact, Mr. Desmarets,<sup>198</sup> Secretary of Police, had gone to the Temple Prison to interrogate those detained there. From that interview, conducted in a good relationship, Father de Clorivière had hoped for an early release but this hope failed, as had happened so many times previously.

The letter of January 19, 1807, was very long. It differed from many others on the same subject by the number of concrete examples it mentioned in connection with various Reunions. More than fifteen of those cases required the direct intervention of Mother de Cicé, who was indeed over-burdened:<sup>199</sup>

I believe that you are always in a state of trial, God wishes it thus; it is by this road that He desires to lead you to holiness. It is for Him to choose the way by which He wishes us to walk; let us be content to follow it; there can be no better or surer one for us.

Then, without transition, there followed these lines so full of solicitude and, at the same time, so important to the manner of understanding "the honestly necessary;"

You did well to get a suitable shawl.<sup>200</sup> You must be properly and warmly dressed. To do otherwise would be an ill-advised mortification.

---

<sup>198</sup> Not to be confused with Father Desmarets who for some time was a priest of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition, pp. 294 and 308), nor with Father Desmares, also a priest of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, whose name was sometimes spelled Desmarets in the mimeographed copy of Mother de Cicé's letters. The original was written Desmares.

<sup>199</sup> In this letter was found these lines indicating the delicacy with which Father de Clorivière respected Mother de Cicé's authority: "As for Mademoiselle Puesch, I will write of her to Father Beule, and I will tell him, in general, that with regard to your family, he ought to do nothing save with your advice; that I myself would not wish to do anything save in agreement with you."

Many other letters also witness to Father de Clorivière's respect for the authority and judgment of Mother de Cicé, superior general of the Society of the Heart of Mary. Cf. Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), pp. 283-284; 299-300; 320-322; 333-334; 340-341; 341-342; 342-343; 347; 350; 359-360; 361; 379-380; 398-399; 412-414. Also the following letters addressed to others: Therese Chenu, pp. 424-425; Mlle de Goesbriand, pp. 497; 498-499; 504-505; Mme de Clermont, pp. 531-532; Father Fauchoux, p. 636.

<sup>200</sup> In the language of that era, the word "suitable" meant "honestly necessary."

With the approach of February 2, date for renovation of vows, the humble Mother de Cicé carefully and strictly made her review of the rule. On this subject Father de Clorivière wrote to her on February 1, 1807:

I read with attention, my dear daughter, your two long lists of accusations and I protest to you before the Lord, in the capacity of His minister and as being more especially charged by Him to render an account of your soul, that I am persuaded that you speak with sincerity and as you are truly moved. But I tell you at the same time that supposing the truth of all these accusations, they do not contain even matter for an absolution, they would not retard for a single instant your entrance into the abode of the blessed.

You accuse yourself of sensations and impressions which it is not in your power to avoid; that it pleases God for His glory and your greater good to send to try you, and which do not depend on your will. It is not on these things that your humility, that your sorrow should be founded.... God is Master of your will and your intellect. He resides therein, but in a manner unknown to your senses and He influences all your spiritual operations. At the same time, He permits your soul, seat of sentiment and sensible affections, to be as if in possession of the spirit of malice and darkness, who produces in you the hardness of heart and the impressions you feel. God permits this out of His wisdom.

Coming from a director as enlightened and prudent as Father de Clorivière, these statements had a special importance and they indeed indicated that Mother de Cicé had been subject to extraordinary purifications. This impression was confirmed by the fact that these interior trials in no way affected her external activity.

On February 4, Father de Clorivière, who had heard about the renovations of February 2, wrote:

I praise you very much for not having given any knowledge of your interior state to any others than ourselves. I praise you also in the Lord for the fact that, overcoming yourself, you have lent yourself, and even given yourself up to the needs of your friends. In this you have done something very agreeable to God and which will draw down on you many graces. Continue, my dear daughter; be faithful to the Lord. He cuts to the quick, but it is only to make you all pure and beautiful in His eyes.

It seemed that at the beginning of 1807, Mother de Cicé was tried relentlessly by great interior sufferings without any periods of peace previously experienced. While writing to her of many things concerning the Society, Father de Clorivière increased his exhortations of encouragement to her to continue acquiescing to the designs of God. He wrote on February 24, 1807:

Console yourself regarding your condition; I repeat to you, it is of great worth before God. What you tell me of the trouble which increases after Communion is something very painful, but despise it. It does not come from

you at all and does not make you guilty. It even greatly increases the merit and the fruit of your Communions. Go to God by pure faith and accept this state unreservedly, even until death, as long as it is pleasing to God. This is an act of heroism which I propose to you; it will be very useful for you to make it often.

His letter of March 3 stated:

Apply yourself especially and singularly to confidence. It is never more perfect than when one sees in one's self nothing on which to base it and when one sees there, on the contrary, only things to discourage and dishearten. It is then that acts of confidence are more meritorious and more agreeable to God because they are based solely on the merits of Jesus Christ and on the infinite mercy of God. Go to Communion in a spirit of pure faith and without seeking consolation therefrom. The time of our present life is that of suffering; joy is reserved for eternity.

On March 17, he wrote:

I suffer at seeing you in a state in which you are; but this holy time teaches us to esteem suffering and ought to make us love it and bear it with joy. What happiness is comparable to that of a soul which, by suffering, reproduces in herself a living image of Jesus Christ suffering. Those who will have shared His suffering on earth are assured of sharing in the joys and happiness of His glorious life in heaven.

I heard with much satisfaction that you were a little better and that you were able to go out to church; I thank the Lord for this, and I beg Him to grant you a little more strength to procure His glory and the good of the souls He has confided to you. I ask it also for my own consolation and that of many other who, like myself, suffer in seeing you suffer. You have other sufferings which do not appear on the exterior but which crucify you even more; although I am well persuaded that they come especially from a God full of love, Who treats those whom He loves as He treated His well-beloved Son; that you are not less agreeable in His eyes, and that these pains serve to perfect you, and are perhaps for the salvation of many souls. I am not less aware of the state of dejection and weakness into which these sufferings throw you and I continually beseech the Lord to lighten their weight and even take them away entirely. I implore Him through the merits of His Passion and through the sword of grief with which the Heart of His holy Mother was pierced.

Those last thoughts were rather unusual for Father de Clorivière who was more disposed to asking for strength to bear trials instead of asking that such trials be lightened or even taken away. It would seem that Father de Clorivière was almost perturbed. Was it perhaps impossible for him properly to communicate with his spiritual daughter?

He again wrote to her on April 5, 1807:

I think about you a great deal, but it is only the hand that inflicted these wounds on you who can cure them. He will cause them to cease when the full designs of His love in your regard have been fulfilled. Let us await everything from His goodness and let us conform ourselves unreservedly to His good pleasure. He desires only our good.

Towards the end of April and the beginning of May, Father de Clorivière was concerned about the Reunion at Tours and about the assistance to be given to the Carmelite Sisters. In order to be acceptable to the civil authorities, these religious had been obliged to open a school. He thought that two Daughters of the Heart of Mary, to be chosen by Mother de Cicé, should be sent to their assistance:

I think that you could find two of our daughters who would be suitable for this work and who would have enough zeal and charity to give themselves to it. The matter is not pressing.... We shall come back to this matter more than once and we shall be in touch about our reflections on it after having well recommended it to the Lord.

On the same matter, he wrote on May 3:

Mademoiselle Gaillard does not seem to me very well suited for the work they propose; however I shall refer this to you because you have the grace for this and could know the person better, her dispositions, her environment....But I repeat, I wish to refer the matter to you. Consider it before God and with your sisters to see if there might not be someone among them better suited.

Concerning the death of Mademoiselle Deshayes, assistant to Mother de Cicé and one of the first Daughters of the Heart of Mary, Father de Clorivière wrote on May 12:

I thank God very much that He is still keeping the fourth for me, or rather the first of my four first daughters, and I pray Him earnestly to deign to preserve her for me for a long time. I ask it of Him as a great grace for myself and for the Society.

On May 21 he made reference to the well-known letter written at the request of Mademoiselle de Fermont:

I am also sending you the letter that Mademoiselle de Fermont wrote me; read my reply attentively. In consequence of a word from Mademoiselle de Fermont, I made this in the form of a testament; and as I say therein some things which are suitable for everybody in our Societies, it occurs to me that copies might be made and sent to different places in the form of little

circular letters. One copy could be sent to me and another to Father Bourgeois. He could adapt it, with slight changes, to our Society.<sup>201</sup>

As usual, the execution of this wish of Father de Clorivière fell to Mother de Cicé, whose health was continuing to fluctuate. He wrote to her on May 25: "Your state of health and suffering causes me pain."

On June 12, he wrote: "I have been informed, my dear daughter, of your weak condition... and I pray the Lord.... that you may serve Him more with more activity."

That prayer was partially granted for Father de Clorivière wrote on June 23:

I congratulate you on the good success of your trip. It seems that the good Lord presided over it and that He gave you an angel as your guide.

But he added: "I learned with sadness that your health did not sustain itself."

It would appear from the authorization given to her in Father de Clorivière's letter of June 29 that Mother de Cicé had hoped to spend a few days of solitude with the Lord:

I do not see any inconvenience in your going to spend some eight days in the little house close to the Trappists. However, it would be well for you to arrange the time with your assistant.

Father de Clorivière's letter of July 10 began in this way: "In order not to forget, I grant the permissions you asked about the retreat at Samur, the trip to St. Germain, and the statue of St. Joseph." From this passage, as well as from many similar ones, the multiplicity of activities of Mother de Cicé can be seen.

Father wrote to her on July 31: "With great consolation, I read your brief exhortations to your daughters and I found nothing to change in them, nothing which was not quite good."

Not without emotion, Father dated his letter of August 4 in this way: "August 4, feast of St. Dominic, the day we first met." And at the end of that same letter, after having written of many matters and concerns, Father said: "Adieu, my dear daughter. We have covered many points in a small space."

The overall reading of such letters clearly points up the fact that everything in the Society passed through the hands of Mother de Cicé.

Father de Clorivière's letter of August 11 stated:

Let us think only of preparing ourselves for our great feast, but do not think that you have to be in retreat for that.

---

<sup>201</sup> Society of the Heart of Jesus.

Your good preparation is to forget yourself during this time in order to occupy yourself only with the Daughters of Mary who are also yours.

At the request of Mother de Cicé, Father de Clorivière sent her on August 13 the text of his talk which she could transmit to her daughters on the Feast of the Assumption. It was the famous talk entitled, "Behold Your Mother." He wrote: "I hastened to send this to you; I hope you will be pleased and also that God will bless it as it comes from your mouth."

Another letter was written on August 17:

You have done well, my dear daughter, by preferring the care of the souls confided to you to your inclination for a retreat. I was pleased to hear that all was done in good order on the day of the feast. It is also a great consolation to me to know that you enjoy interior peace. Let us bless the Lord for it and profit by taking precautions against the war which can yet come, by arming ourselves with great confidence in God.

Mother de Cicé's inexhaustible charity was recalled in a small part of the letter of September 11:

If Fr. Charles comes here, it will give a new opportunity for good works for you and you will not fail in this; but it is an indigent family that you have adopted and God has blessed the care you have bestowed on it.

Along a similar line of thought, Madame de Carcado had written to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre on September 27, 1807: "My esteemed neighbor<sup>202</sup> is rather well and she abounds in good works."

Father de Clorivière's letter of October 4 once again was full of hope that he would be released:

Today my fate will be decided.... If the Emperor ratifies the matter, I will probably be released on Tuesday.

This hope was shattered like previous expectations of being released. Despite all the resignation of the co-founders, these perpetual series of hopes and denials must have been very trying physically and psychologically.

The premature death of Madame de Bouyer<sup>203</sup> after a long illness added to the sorrows and concerns of the two founders. Father de Clorivière wrote on October 13: "Here is a new sacrifice which God has just asked of us through the death of Madame de Bouyer." He then mentioned her virtue and the very fine prayer she had composed at the end of August.<sup>204</sup>

---

<sup>202</sup> Mother de Cicé and Mme de Carcado at that time lived in neighboring houses.

<sup>203</sup> Madame de Buyer was Mlle d'Esternoz's sister and had succeeded her as superior of the Besancon region.

<sup>204</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 375 footnote.

Father de Clorivière's letter of November 3, 1807 contained a new tribute to Mother de Cicé's limitless charity:

Thank you for your interesting letter and all the details that you give me of your trip to St. Germain, and of other good works. God be blessed that, with so little health, He gives you strength to undertake so many good works of different kinds and to carry them through to the end; so much the more as I can see in the midst of all this activity that you do not lose sight of the chief work of all, the Society of the Daughters of Mary which is especially confided to you.

Several November letters (1807) showed that with varying intensity but almost without respite, interior sufferings and trials continued as a characteristic of Mother de Cicé's entire life throughout all activities in which she was engaged. Only someone who knew her as well as Father de Clorivière understood this. In fact, on November 23 in response to a long letter from her he replied:

I am very glad that you have confided to me a part of your sufferings. For some time the Lord left you sufficiently tranquil so that you could busy yourself with a number of good works which presented a thousand difficulties of another kind and did not leave you a minute to rest. Now the enemy, who was as though bound by the arm of the All-Powerful has permission to return to the charge and to take revenge for the good that you have done to many souls.... Do not give in to the vain fears with which he fills your imagination.

Then, replying to the ever-present anguish of Mother de Cicé that she did not belong at the head of the Society, Father continued with firmness:

But do not ever go back upon the order of God, upon the position in which it has pleased Him to place you: that does not depend on you; there are without doubt a sufficient number of difficulties attached to it; it is the cross that the Lord has placed upon your shoulders. There are some duties which seem to you and which really are above your spiritual and corporal strength; but it is not upon your strength that you count.

Father de Clorivière's letter of November 25 returned to the subject of the path of abandonment and pure faith which Mother de Cicé had to follow heroically:

Your complaints are an effect of the state of trial in which the Lord by designs impenetrable to human reason has kept you for so many years. Adore and kiss the hand which strikes you.

In January 1808, a great trial afflicted the Society - the death of Madame de Carcado. The long letter of January 27 from Father de Clorivière to Mother de Cicé in praise of Madame de Carcado showed the extent of this great loss to the Society. The complete text of that letter, which in effect was an exemplary portrait of one of the first Daughters of the Heart of Mary, is contained in the Appendix (XVIII). Mother de Cicé must have most sorrowfully felt the loss

of Madame de Carcado, her assistant. On the very advice of Father de Clorivière, Mother de Cicé had confided to her many concerns of the Society. Madame de Carcado had been, above all, the faithful, trusted intermediary who, for almost four years, had gone to the prison twice a week maintaining a liaison between the two co-founders. This sorrow also touched Mother de Cicé in the already burdensome exercise of her office. Madame de Saisseval was soon designated to carry on the regular visits to the Temple Prison.<sup>205</sup>

The letter of February 1 showed that Mother de Cicé had the courage to overcome her own suffering in order to come to the assistance of others:

It is wonderful that in the midst of so much grief He has given you the strength to write to your friends and console them. ... I must also thank you for the two letters filled with sentiments of friendship which you wrote to me when you were most afflicted.

In that same letter, there was reference to the ongoing interior sufferings of Mother de Cicé:

I should like...to alleviate your interior pains but when it pleases the Lord to lay His hand heavily on a soul, nothing can hinder this soul from feeling the weight...If you could see things as I do in the light of God, what is most bitter in your sufferings would soon be dispelled.

The letters of February and March, 1808, continued to be supportive of Mother de Cicé's work in the Reunions of the Society throughout times of interior trials. The letters did not, however, contain new elements about the dolorous path of suffering she had to tread in "the most perfect abandonment."<sup>206</sup>

In April, 1808, Father de Clorivière began to be on the alert, for the demolition of Temple Prison was to begin. Certainly this time there would be a transfer of the prisoners. Because of repeated efforts in his behalf, Father de Clorivière, because he was 73, was taken on May 21 to the nursing home<sup>207</sup> directed by Doctor Dubuisson in the area of Paris known as Barriere du Trone. The letters he wrote at this time dealt for the most part with affairs of the Society. They did also contain, of course, references to Mother de Cicé's state of health.

In Father de Clorivière's correspondence with Madame de Goesbriand,<sup>208</sup> there occurred in a letter toward the end of September, 1808 the following passage about Mother de Cicé:

Our fellow-countrywoman and esteemed friend is always weak, but nevertheless for some time now she has enjoyed passable health and does not neglect to make use of it for the glory of God and the good of her

---

<sup>205</sup> Without doubt, Mlle d'Acosta also must have visited Father de Clorivière at the Temple Prison. He mentioned her recent visit in his letter to Mother de Cicé dated simply April, 1808.

<sup>206</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 403; pp. 406-407; 407-408. See also on pp. 402-403 a beautiful passage on the trials of the faith.

<sup>207</sup> Nursing home for mentally ill patients, among whom Father de Clorivière exerted a beneficent influence.

<sup>208</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition, p. 519.)

children. It is astonishing how she undertakes good works, almost all of which succeed in her hands. Besides this, she is overburdened with affairs which are not too easily adjusted, but she submits to the necessity which she looks on as the will of God.

At the nursing home, Father de Clorivière was confined for a whole year under police surveillance. Nevertheless, while visits remained very discreet, they were quite facilitated, especially because the director was so well-disposed towards him. It was finally possible for Mother de Cicé to go to see him for the first time since his arrest in May, 1804. It is supposed that this encounter took place after Father de Clorivière went to the nursing home at the end of May, 1808.

Father de Clorivière's letter to Mother de Cicé on June 29, 1808, indicated his disappointment in her not being able to visit him that day because of her ill health. Because it is such a profoundly human expression, this part of the letter must be quoted:

Your letter afflicts me by informing me of the bad state of your health which would hinder you from coming today. I had everything arranged as best I could; Mr. Dubuisson had also given orders that his chapel be at its best. Mr. Dubuisson had given me a beautiful room the better to receive you and give you lunch. I was also disposed to say a pious word to you before Communion and a little instruction relative to the Society after lunch. It is a privation for me not to have done it.

A letter from Madame de Saisseval to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre two weeks later, July 14, 1808, discreetly mentioned a meeting between the two founders:

I continue writing to you now that I have returned from the visit during which I had the great consolation of seeing our two great saints reunited. They were perfectly content. To allow them to be together, I went to the Picpus Chapel which contains a miraculous statue of Our Lady of Peace. They met for two hours which certainly were well spent.

The letters between Father de Clorivière and Mother de Cicé continued, less frequently of course, until the time of his release. But the correspondence no longer contained anything about the interior life of Mother de Cicé.

One of the last letters, dated March 26, 1809, told of the sorrow caused by the silence of Father Vielle,<sup>209</sup> a priest of the Heart of Jesus, and superior in Brittany. This indicated the moral support which the founder derived from Mother de Cicé. Father de Clorivière was worried lest the priest might not have renewed his vows or might even have left.

...I saw Father Lamy yesterday, and he had received no letter either. The blow is shattering. How many sad thoughts come to my mind! These

---

<sup>209</sup> In fact, this silence was accidental, and Father Vielle remained faithful.

thoughts return unceasingly and they cause me to occupy myself with nothing else. But God gives me the grace to receive everything from His hand and to wish only good to everyone. I have need of consolation and advice and, after God, I can expect it only from you for I do not believe I should open my heart to others on the subject of my grief. You will recommend the matter much to the Lord.

Father de Clorivière's final note was written on Saturday, April 9, 1809. It witnessed once more to the two founders' acquiescence to the will of God:

I sympathize much with your indisposition...God wishes both of us to be on the cross. Let us accept the part He gives us in the same spirit with which His divine Son accepted His own share of the cross. Let us consider it the greatest gift we can receive.

Three days later, on April 11, 1809, Father de Clorivière finally was released after five years of imprisonment. The memoirs of Madame de Saisseval<sup>210</sup> contain the account of his liberation:

Our foundress and Mother would very much have wanted to go personally to open the gates of freedom for him. However, because she herself was under police surveillance, she might have aroused suspicion by her presence. Mademoiselle de Cicé therefore asked Mademoiselle d'Acosta and me to undertake this mission.

After we had fulfilled administrative formalities in the director's office, he himself politely accompanied us to Father's room. Father had just gone to the chapel, where we found him prostrate on the steps of the altar. There his friend, the director, handed him the document of his release. Father de Clorivière arose, went up the two steps and placed the document on the altar, where he let it remain a few moments. Then with calm dignity he came toward the director and us. Most amicably, he took the director's hands. They walked from the chapel together and Father de Clorivière repeated to him most affectionate expressions of thanks, and that fine gentleman could reply only by wiping his tears. We walked behind the two men. We were deeply moved. We praised and blessed God. A bit further on we saw and heard the poor inmates who had run toward Father and blocked his way say: "O good Father, who will listen to us and console us as you did now that you will no longer be here?" Father himself was overcome and he wept too.

Finally, we were outside the prison door. Father took a long, deep breath. Then turning toward the door that had just closed behind him, he made over it a large Sign of the Cross. A carriage awaited us. He motioned us to

---

<sup>210</sup> Contained in the Mantes Journal.

get in ahead of him and to sit in the back. Respect made the two of us hesitate, but his gesture was like a command which we understood as a duty of obedience. We could not refuse.

Our journey lasted about one hour and passed in silence. It seemed to us that Father de Clorivière was completely immersed in God. He spoke to us only twice and each time about Mademoiselle de Cicé. "What a holy soul heaven has given you as your Foundress and your Mother! What a truly religious soul! All of you have benefited during these past years from living under her direction rather than mine - mine, whose rigor she supported with a truly admirable submission. Many another person would have found herself disconcerted by it!"<sup>211</sup> He fell back into his silence. He spoke again only when we arrived at our destination and he said these words as if addressing them to himself: "What gratitude I owe to her for her courageous discretion. She saved my life at the risk of her own!"

To save Father de Clorivière's life was for Mother de Cicé to save also the life of the Society. For Father de Clorivière to have consented to remain hidden in that dramatic occasion was equally and solely to preserve the existence of the Society.

The above reflections of Father de Clorivière on the day of his release help us to penetrate even more deeply the life of the founders. Entrusted with one and the same mission by the Holy Spirit, they dedicated themselves to it totally without allowing anything to make them deviate from it even in the smallest degree. In their eyes it was indeed "the work to which all other undertakings were subordinated."<sup>212</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **MOTHER DE CICÉ IN HER WRITINGS AND HER CORRESPONDENCE**

Documents about the final years of Mother de Cicé are rare. In order to complete the portrait already etched of her in preceding chapters, it might be worthwhile to tap a little-used source, her own writings. These would include works intended for the Society such as commentaries on the Rule, etc. as well as her correspondence with various Daughters of the Heart of Mary.

---

<sup>211</sup> M. de Bellevue, op.cit., pp. 258-259; also Monsignor Baunard, op.cit. pp. 356-359.

<sup>212</sup> A. Reyez, op.cit., p. 425, Letter of April 2, 1810, from Father de Clorivière to his nephew, Joseph de Limoelan, who had sought refuge in America: "I advise you that since almost the beginning of the terrible revolution which has taken from our midst all that is most holy, I have been involved in a work to which all other endeavors have been subordinated. The idea came clearly, distinctly and in detail to me on the feast of St. Vincent de Paul in 1790..."

It is regrettable that the writings of our first Mother are relatively little known. Undoubtedly they reflect so faithfully the thought of Father de Clorivière that it was perhaps considered less useful to recur to them. But the very choices made by Mother de Cicé and her emphasis on certain points bring new light to the thoughts of the founder and confirm the importance of those points in his teaching.

Mother de Cicé's two circular letters<sup>213</sup> are very well known. However, the handwritten originals are not dated. The first would appear to have been written between the end of the French Revolution and the founders' voyage to Aix. It was the only period of time when Father de Clorivière had the time and freedom to attend meetings of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. "He himself presided at the meetings." The first circular letter contained a reference to Father de Clorivière's instruction on the "account of conscience." Since that instruction had not yet been sent to the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, it would seem that the date of the first circular letter could not be a later one.

The second circular letter has been considered as a final witness of Mother de Cicé's intentions before her death. It cannot be affirmed with complete assurance but this letter must have been written after 1810.<sup>214</sup>

The text of these two circular letters is contained in the Appendix. Let us always remember that the first dealt principally with the primacy of charity and the interior virtues as well as with various counsels about the conduct proper to a Daughter of the Heart of Mary. The second letter, briefer than the first, treated such topics as:

"holy works proper to our vocation, works to which many members are already dedicated;"

"the education of youth;"

"the formation 'of virtuous school teachers;'

"care of the sick;" and in general,

"the practice of works of mercy."

"As regards those whom divine Providence keeps in the midst of the world, this is intended so that they may edify the world, succeed in that pursuit and sanctify us."

---

<sup>213</sup> The Society has in its possession the original handwritten texts: The first of her Circular Letters is contained in the Archives of the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary; the second, in the community house at Lyons

<sup>214</sup> Mother de Cicé referred to a long separation from her daughters, but that separation had already taken place between 1801 and 1803. As regards the "uselessness" of the letter, we know what we must think that the word was her own. Besides, Father de Clorivière had written to Mother de Cicé on June 1, 1806: "I am returning your letter to you. The circular letter is most edifying." Was Father de Clorivière speaking of a circular letter of Mother de Cicé's? If so, it could only be the second one, or another which was not yet turned over to us.

There followed counsels for living "in the world without being of the world." Then there was a call to fraternal charity, to the interior virtues and to "filial trust in the most Blessed Virgin," the distinctive mark of the Society.

In addition to the two circular letters, Mother de Cicé wrote commentaries on the Plan for the Society, on the Rules of the Summary<sup>215</sup> and on the Rule of Conduct.

These writings did not contain any "original" thought in the sense which is given to that word today. That was not Mother de Cicé's charism. However, she repeated patiently in a simple and readable style the great directives of Father de Clorivière for all lives which tend seriously to sanctity. Thus are we invited often in pressing manner to fill ourselves deeply with those directives day by day in all the circumstances of lives. So she wrote:

The Rule of the Summary dealing with purity of intention is without doubt, my very dear daughters, one of the most important rules as our Father points out in his excellent explanation. I invite you to penetrate yourselves with this rule more and more.

Without this pure and upright intention we would hardly please God. The best things, tainted by a vicious principle like self-love or human respect, thereby lose the prize they would have in God's eyes if they were made purely for Him and above all with the motive of His love....

This requires, as our Father (de Clorivière) states, that we maintain ourselves at all times in a sweet attentiveness. It will always preserve us free of contention of spirit. But above all, out of love of God, it will make us careful of all that might displease Him and that might be less agreeable to Him. And all this will be made clear to us by His Holy Spirit provided we are always ready to listen to the law which He dictates interiorly to the heart of faithful souls.

Such interior attentiveness, maintained through the Holy Spirit, must necessarily become visible exteriorly sooner or later. This was the thought of Mother de Cicé in the following comment on the Rule of Conduct:

Let us penetrate the thought, my very dear Sisters, that a Daughter of the Heart of Mary must everywhere be the sweet odor of Jesus Christ. By her presence she must recall souls to God. This is indeed what will happen if she is truly interior in spirit and intimately united to our Lord. It will be sufficient to look at her to feel drawn to piety. Her recollection, her humble and charitable manner of dealing with her neighbor will inspire respect and love for virtue and will inspire also the desire to practice virtue. Her

---

<sup>215</sup> On October 24, 1806, Father de Clorivière wrote to Mother de Cicé: "My dear daughter, I read with satisfaction your reflections on the Summary. They are good and they are practical. I am convinced they are productive of good and that God has blessed them."

faithfulness in not allowing to pass any occasion for rendering service to her neighbor will preach charity more eloquently than all the discourses she could possibly make on this subject, which discourses it will not always be appropriate to make. For there are circumstances when one must be silent and content to give one's neighbor the help of one's good example. This must not be for the sake of drawing praise to oneself. It must rather be done with a great purity of intention which gives us a holy ambition inspired by charity to share with our neighbor our joy of belonging to the Lord. Each one must do this according to the state in which divine Providence has placed her and according to her measure of grace.

Mother de Cicé's reflections on certain feast days and on various other subjects were for the most part simple paraphrases of texts of Father de Clorivière. Often she wrote by hand copies of some of his instructions such as "Ecce Mater Tua," etc.

\* \* \* \* \*

After Father de Clorivière's release from prison, correspondence between him and Mother de Cicé ceased thus ending a precious source of information on our first Mother.

However, the Archives of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary contains a certain number of letters which Mother de Cicé wrote to different Daughters of the Heart of Mary between 1809 and 1818. These will be employed in the present study of Mother de Cicé in that period. Such letters will permit a glance at Mother de Cicé herself, her activities, her health and her counsels.

She wrote<sup>216</sup> to the sisters Chenu, to Madame Rosalie de Goesbriand, to Mademoiselle d'Esternoz, to Mademoiselle de Gouyon, to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre, to Mademoiselle Bourguignon, to Mademoiselle Puesch and others.

It is interesting to note the serenity in the correspondence of Mother de Cicé despite the interior sufferings which afflicted her unceasingly. She made no mention of those sufferings. If she did often speak about her health, it was generally to ask pardon for delays in her letters.<sup>217</sup>

Mademoiselle Therese Chenu who was the first superior of Saint-Malo often received letters from Mother de Cicé. On August 4, 1796, Mother de Cicé wrote her this counsel:

---

<sup>216</sup> Some 150 letters; the original of 128 of them are contained in the Archives of the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary.

<sup>217</sup> In the several excerpts which are to follow, chronological order cannot be strictly followed. Otherwise it would be necessary to refer continually to the different persons addressed, and this would be detrimental to the clarity of the text.

Strive not to pursue natural activity in the best things<sup>218</sup> but to act only through God's inspiration. I myself have great need of putting this lesson into practice.

Mother de Cicé's letter to Therese Chenu on December 28, 1796, stated:

You must never arouse yourself more strongly to confidence in and hope of the eternal happiness to which you are destined as when you feel most strongly the fear to the contrary. You are indeed right not to be discouraged and to consider your suffering as a grace which keeps you humble and makes you practice acts of pure love. It is a grace which is the antidote to the disposition which you fear you are sometimes in, that is, of feeling too vividly the joy of doing something for God (of not feeling it in a manner sufficiently pure and sufficiently free from self-love.)

Without being too meticulous, as you say so well, you must frequently purify your intention but do not worry about feelings of self-satisfaction; these must be retracted when you become aware of them, but you must not be distressed at having felt them; it is a subject of continual humiliation which is very good for the soul; it is likewise a source of humiliation to be in the position you occupy, in which one finds oneself so backward in the practice of the lessons and advice which one is giving to others; it is also by the grace of God a spur to progress. Ask God for me that it may be more useful to me than it has been up to the present and I will do likewise for you.

Further in the same letter Mother de Cicé wrote:

We urge our sisters to study the Rule of Conduct well and to model their life on it closely; if they are faithful to it, they will attain great perfection even without doing anything extraordinary.

The letter written to Therese Chenu on March 5, 1797 contained the following counsels which revealed Mother de Cicé's personal experiences.

I do indeed share your feelings; they appear to us as proofs of the very merciful plans which the Lord has for you, as much for the good of your own soul as for that of all who are entrusted to you. What does a man know who has not been tempted? When you see your Sisters in such difficulties, you will be more fitted to strengthen them, to restore their lost courage, to urge them on to virtue which is never practised with such purity or profit to ourselves as in times of trial. You must teach them to rise above themselves by trust in God, to expect everything from his goodness in spite of the extremities to which we sometimes find ourselves reduced, to follow as

---

<sup>218</sup> This referred to works of charity.

faithfully as they can their religious exercises despite the distaste they feel in doing them; to convince themselves that these have all the more merit when they are more difficult; that feelings do not depend on us and that the Lord keeps a special account for us of the acts done without relish or feelings of fervour.

The Lord sees this readiness of our heart and he will give you the grace you ask of him which is to accomplish in all things his holy will.

Pay regard not to the substance of the things you do but to the motive which causes you to do them and this must be the motive of love. The services you are rendering to your sisters are very pleasing to our Lord and his holy Mother; do not omit them whatever repugnance you may feel. Nothing is so great and glorious before God and salutary for ourselves as to endure something for the name of Jesus and the salvation of souls. Do not worry if you have not yet achieved that equanimity of soul which you want and which is so desirable; humble yourself for humility makes amends for everything; and ask for it unceasingly through the holy heart of Mary for both yourself and me. Whatever the cause of the sadness which you sometimes feel, resignation to God's good pleasure will help you to bear it gently and peacefully. Ask for this grace for me also as I do for you.

What you and your sisters lack, you say, is the courage to overcome yourself when the need arises. I feel the weight of my own weakness more than anyone and I consider as the greatest of graces the ability to follow faithfully the inspirations of the Lord by rising above oneself without regard for what pleases or displeases us but solely for what is pleasing to God. This is the teaching of my Father which I am very far from following unfortunately. Be more faithful to it and instill it into your sisters. Self-renunciation is the practice of true and solid virtue.

To Mademoiselle d'Esternoz, Mother de Cicé wrote on October 18, 1797:

You describe marvelously the situation of your heart. I sense that it finds no rest. Divine Providence has so disposed things that we can find rest only in the firm and constant resolution to do God's will at every moment by submitting to what He permits to happen to us; by doing to the best of our ability whatever seems to us to be in conformity to His holy will; by asking Him for light and grace, by trying in that way to live the present in love and service of our Divine Master who allies Himself perfectly with the fulfillment of our duties.

On July 26, 1799, once again to Mademoiselle d'Esternoz, Mother de Cicé wrote some reflections on her continuing poor health:

The return of mild weather had restored a bit of health to me but I am nevertheless completely worn out when I awaken. Now I find myself much more ill since I had fever all night long. I think this is due to my habitual

state of indisposition. This increase of pain does not allow me the freedom to chat with you as I would wish.

Finally, the following is an excerpt from an undated letter, still to Mademoiselle d' Esternoz:

The Master whom you wish to serve and love to your last breath will not let himself be outdone in liberality by his creature for whom he wills to be himself the reward. In spite of the darkness which surrounds us in this miserable life, let us try and take heart from that magnificent promise, the full scope of which we shall never be able to comprehend here below. Let us put our trust in the word of the Almighty and let us strive to love him with our whole heart and his love will teach us more about it than all the rest, especially in this time of trial for which we are constantly advised to prepare ourselves in the spiritual life. Let us try and see by the light of faith's torch not only what we shall see clearly at the hour of death but also what we shall feel when we are stripped of all honor, of all pleasure, of all wealth and of all talent, in a word, of everything. This thought, if we reflect on it often, will convince us of the nothingness of all the things which occupy us during life and teach us not to become attached to anything, reminding us that none of these things are worthy of it and that we, more than anyone, in view of the perfection to which we are called, must use the things of the world as though not using them.

Mother de Cicé referred to her almost chronic state of ill-health in a letter dated January 7, 1799 to Madame de Goesbriand:

I wish that your health improves if it be for the greater glory of God. My health has been quite poor for such a long time. Ask the good Lord that I may make good use of this almost continuous state of sickness. It is a grace from God that must not be misunderstood and that through His goodness does not exclude us from the grace of belonging to Him more closely as spouses of Jesus Christ and as daughters of His most holy Mother.

On August 3, 1799, again writing to Madame de Goesbriand, Mother de Cicé once more referred to the notion of "victimhood", which must have been quite familiar to her:

It is not without a very special divine disposition of Providence toward you, my dear friend, that in your youth you made commitments of devotion to the Lord. From then on He had placed His hand upon you as on a victim soul He was reserving wholly for Himself.

She then referred to her own state of health:

I wish better health for you. Do not become disturbed by the concerns which health imposes, act on it through the merits of obedience. My own health is so poor at this time that I cannot write to you at the length I would wish.

Eight years later, in a letter again to Madame de Goesbriand, there are contained the following counsels, echoes of Father de Clorivière's words of advice but also fruit of Mother de Ciccé's own spiritual experience:

I bid you, my dear friend, to arouse in yourself a perfect confidence. Do not allow yourself to become prey to anxiety. A returning towards God in humility, confidence and love is what He asks of you after your failures. After this humble and loving recognition of your nothingness and misery, return to the calm and peace which God wants from you; and each day, with the help of His grace, diminish the number of your faults. These miseries, which are due to frailty but in which the heart has no part, must not trouble you even if there might have been something voluntary in them. Worry is not the remedy. A humble admission and a firm resolution to be more faithful are what you must resolve.<sup>219</sup>

The Archives of the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary contain only four letters from Mother de Ciccé to Madame de Saisseval. One of them dated December 26, 1805, reflected the suffering of Mother de Ciccé at the death of her brother and sister in exile in Prussia. It also reflected the delicacy of her feelings regarding the sorrows of Madame de Saisseval:

I am getting back, dear friend, to this letter I had begun to you. The sorrow which the good Lord sent me in the sad loss I have just experienced, prevented my continuing to write. I am feeling a deep sorrow in having learned of the death of my brother, the Bishop of Auxerre, and that of my sister eleven days after him. My brother succumbed to influenza. My sister, who had spent the greatest part of her life with him was already ill. Despite her resignation, her own frailty could not endure the sorrow of his loss. She contracted a "bilious fever"<sup>220</sup> and bore severe pains with great patience. She sought and found consolation only in the aids of religion. These were lacking neither to her nor to my brother. That is my great consolation. Indeed, I needed such consolation in learning the sad news. I recommend both of them to your prayers and I urge you, dear friend, in the name of the friendship which unites us, to remember them before the good Lord. Ask Him to send me the resignation and the spirit of sacrifice which I need so much. Nobody knows better than you, sensitive as you are, how much these sufferings of the heart also pain the soul. My nerves have also been affected -- and this inclement weather has irritated them. All these things have much impaired my health.

---

<sup>219</sup> We are not quoting here the letter of January 15, 1801 (replying to Father de Clorivière's) as it was so different in handwriting; it came from Madame de Montjoie and not from Mother de Ciccé.

<sup>220</sup> Mme. De Saisseval would attribute the death of Mother de Ciccé to a same biliary fever. In that era this word had a very different connotation.

Our worthy friend, Adele,<sup>221</sup> took such great care to give me, with all sorts of precautions, the news of these deaths.

Finally, dear friend, what can I tell you except that we are in a valley of tears where we must live until the time when we go to join those who have preceded us to our heavenly Father and our entire concern must be to prepare ourselves for it by fidelity to all our obligations and by union with our divine Savior.

Two years later a letter to Mademoiselle Victoire Puesch on November 4, 1807 revealed that Mother de Cicé had experienced another loss. "My health is not good at this time following the death of a nephew whom I had cared for day and night." These lines also revealed that Mother de Cicé's charity continued to be shown towards everyone.

In this same period there began a close correspondence with Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre. It continued until 1816.

The letter of April 26, 1806 contained a very meaningful reflection on the conduct of a certain Daughter of the Heart of Mary. She had been planning to leave the Society but had remained thanks to the influence of Mother de Cicé:

Above all, my dear friend, make her realize the importance of our holy commitments, as well as everything demanded of her by the practice of the vows. Above all, I fear that as regards obedience, she does not have a just idea of the vow. Also I fear that she does not sufficiently see our Lord in her Superiors who stand in His place. This is the great motive for obedience and we must be attached to it. Inspire in her also a great detachment from all the things of earth. However, she must make this detachment not only in feeling but in act and deed – as we all must do – separating ourselves from every thing that is superfluous. By that I mean all things which she can do without. You must get together with Madame de Lumigny<sup>222</sup> on this and on all other aspects of the situation in order to regulate this Daughter's conduct.

Mother de Cicé's letter to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre of December 21, 1808 contained greetings for the new year:

My dear friend, accept my heartfelt wishes that the coming year will be for you a year of blessings in which you will bear much fruit by devoting yourself more fervently than ever – as it is recommended to us – to the practice of the solid virtues of patience, sweetness, humility and charity towards God and neighbor. That is what I wish for you, my dear friend. I am close to you in union with the Divine Hearts of Jesus and His Holy Mother.

---

<sup>221</sup> Madame de Carcado.

<sup>222</sup> Madame de Lumigny, superior of that Daughter of the Heart of Mary.

Mother de Cicé wrote to her on July 28, 1809 as the Feast of the Assumption was approaching:

I also desire that the coming of our great feast be for you, as for us, the time of a true renewal of spirit; that, more than any other time, we be interiorly united to the Lord; that we make every effort to please Him in all our actions; that we act always with a great purity of intention; that all our esteem be for the things related to the salvation of our souls. We must not be concerned with temporal matters except when God's will obliges us to do so; and this we must do with a great detachment of soul and heart. Each day we must go on in perfecting ourselves in that detachment in order to fulfill our holy commitments, for each day we must go forward if we are not to slip back. Ask these graces for all of us, dear friend, while you ask them for yourself. Most urgently I beg you to ask them especially for me, who need them more than anyone else.

In her letter of September 18, 1810 to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre, Mother de Cicé mentioned the death of the Most Reverend Jerome de Cicé, Archbishop of Aix, on August 22:<sup>223</sup>

I am infinitely grateful....for your concern over the illness of my brother...the good Lord took care of it on the 22nd of last month. Prepared though I was for this loss because of my brother's longstanding ill health, I was affected by this sad event because of the frailty of my own health. As you observed I have all the consolations which can soften similar losses; the perfect resignation and patience which my dear brother showed, much to the admiration of all who witnessed it.

During this same period, Mother de Cicé wrote to Mademoiselle Bourguignon, who lived at the Carmelite Convent in Tours:

September 30  
(no year was indicated)

I ask you, dear friend, to be for my sisters, for those living with you and for those not living in your blessed solitude, the interpreter of my sentiments towards all of them.

That expression "your blessed solitude," described Mother de Cicé's real attraction for a more contemplative life, which nevertheless, was not part of "God's designs" for her.

---

<sup>223</sup> Cf. also a letter sent to Madame de Goesbriand on September 26, 1810, on the same subject.

On August 27 she wrote a letter containing a detail which showed that she seized every occasion, no matter how slight, to render service to others while she worked for the Lord:

I send my respectful regards to Reverend Mother Prioress and to Madame Marie-Therese. Please tell the latter that I hope she received the round box for which she asked me, as well as the remaining money I had been holding for her. I sent her everything for the occasion she had mentioned and she should have received everything without having to pay.

An undated letter of Mother de Cicé made reference to the "admirable attraction for the education of youth."

Her letter of January 23, 1816 made a strong recall of

the most necessary virtues. First of all, humility, which is the foundation of the entire edifice; then obedience, sweetness, charity and bearing with the faults of the neighbor. In a word, all those virtues so necessary to preserve that precious union which must form into one heart and one soul, all persons consecrated to God and living together in order to procure His greater glory and the salvation of the neighbor insofar as God gives them the ability. A great means to attain that goal is that mutual charity which by God's grace dwells in your midst and which must, in a special way, reign amid persons living under the same roof. This must be the condition for God's promise to be accomplished in their regard. Whenever two or three persons (the divine Savior said) will be gathered together in my name there will I also be among them. That is what gives strength and effectiveness to our prayers, to our works. Such charity is so meritorious and so very pleasing to God that we must not be astonished if the devil does everything in his power to disturb this blessed unity.

One August 23 (no year is indicated) Mother de Cicé wrote Mademoiselle Bourguignon a letter which indeed was an exhortation to bear one's crosses with joy. There followed this humble avowal of her own weakness:

For love of our Lord Jesus Christ we must make an effort to carry our crosses, which are most precious fragments of his, not only with patience and in peace but let us ask for something more through the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, namely, to bear with a heavenly joy everything which causes us pain. In this way we shall subjugate nature and make the grace of Jesus Christ triumphant in us. I have great need of this myself, for I often let myself be overwhelmed by the weight of very small crosses, so great is my weakness. I groan when I realise how little this conforms to the promise I have made to follow our Lord and his holy Mother along the roads they have marked out for us and which are the only ones that lead to Life... This is the sure means which is offered to us of fulfilling the loving plans which the Lord has had for us from all eternity.

Writing to Mademoiselle Aruelle on October 7 (no year indicated), Mother de Cicé urged submission to God's will:

We must think only of the present moment and use it to love the good Lord above all other things. As for the future — it does not depend on us. We must surrender it completely to divine Providence. Concerning your own dispositions during this period of trial, be full of respect for the hand which strikes you. Heart and soul, see the permissive will of God and ask for His strength. This requires that you suppress all words of complaint, even all reflection on what is happening. Interests and hearts which are the most abandoned to God are the best conserved, the most protected.

Half of Mother de Cicé's correspondence which has remained was addressed to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu (some forty-four letters) and to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre (forty letters). Her first letters to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu — at least the first remaining in the archives of the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary — are dated 1802. There certainly must have been earlier ones which were not available to Society archives. The following are excerpts from letters to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu:

June 27, 1802

(This advice was truly the fruit of Mother de Cicé's personal experience)

I urge you to entrust yourself more and more to our divine Master's goodness. Do not hesitate by thinking of your own inability and by concerning yourself with thoughts of getting rid of the burden He has sent you. He will bear it with you.

Further in the same letter:

In order to console the afflicted, great patience is needed. We must, I believe, excel above all in assistance to our neighbor...Everything which serves to give a truly holy upbringing to youth is extremely important and it merits many sacrifices. I am delighted with your good work in having the youngsters work as you teach them and I admire what Divine Providence enables you to do for them despite your little means.

July 10, 1805

(Another example of something Mother de Cicé had deeply experienced.)

Often — and this has been the experience of all of us — those who have been most frequently and most deeply tempted are the ones who subsequently make the greatest progress, provided they do not lack courage, fidelity and confidence in God during such trials.

February 24, 1807

(A reference to procedure to be followed in works of charity.)

I nevertheless recommend to you prudence and discretion in order not to deplete the Society's funds. Otherwise the Society would find it impossible to provide for its own needs and to assist any of its members who might be in want.

May 28, 1810

(A reference to her continually precarious state of health increasingly aggravated each winter)

Since I last wrote to you I have been almost continuously ill. Winter alone is, in itself, an illness for me because of the humidity and the cold and also because of the lack of exercise in winter time. I always cough. In mid-Lent I had increased ailments, viz bilious fever and catarrh. I have not completely recovered even though I have felt a bit better in the warmer weather.

(At the end of the same letter)

Remember me to our friends who are near as well as those who are far, when you have the occasion to see them. I would indeed be obliged to you, my dear friend, if you remembered me to my two good friends, Angelique de Couyon and Madame de Couessin, her sister. Please tell them, or have someone advise them, that I have not been able to write to them because I have been ill for such a long time. Though I am a bit better now, I still cannot do what I would like and I am far behind in everything.

July 11, 1810

(An indication of Father de Clorivière's activity)

I adore the designs of God. I submit to the interruptions which He permits in our correspondence, painful though they are. Our revered Father is quite aware of this. Thanks be to God, Father keeps well. He has just returned from a short visit of ten days to a part of our family to which he brought consolation and joy.

December 10, 1812

(Some humble reflections on the consequences of her infirmities.)

You are indeed right to act on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Please, on our behalf, dear friend, do ask for that fidelity to His inspirations and that union with our Divine Savior which I lack and which I very much need in

order to follow the movements of grace. To follow Him with docility, it would be necessary to renounce this natural life. My natural infirmities and above all the infirmities of my soul keep me captive to this all too natural life. Through the very tender and compassionate heart of our good Mother, I plead with you to ask her to obtain for me the grace to rise above myself for the glory of God, the good of my soul and the good of those entrusted to me. As for you, dear friend, continue to concern yourself with your neighbor as you are now doing by God's grace. May your attraction for solitude not cause you to omit, in that area, anything which your strength permits you to do.

#### January 14, 1814

(It seems that Mother de Cicé herself did not remain inactive no matter what her state of health.)

I cannot sufficiently tell you, my dear friend, how sorry I am that I can correspond with you only so rarely. But be sure that, nevertheless, my heart is quite close to yours. Let us frequently meet each other in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. On the one hand, my health; on the other, multiplied duties prevent me from writing but not from uniting myself to you heart and soul.

#### Undated Letter

(It contains this comment found frequently in Mother de Cicé's correspondence.)<sup>224</sup>

My health has for a long time been poor. Winter is truly an illness for me.

July 31 (no year given, but probably 1815) (In passing a mention of activities in which Mother de Cicé must have excelled.)

I have recommended you and all my friends in a special way to the prayers of the pastor of Saint-Malo, an excellent person. I shall do so again, for I have occasion to see him frequently. He lives at the Missions Etrangères. He has seen our (spiritual) father, but since they were not alone, they were unable to speak about the Society. I shall try to see that they be able to do so.

#### At the end of the same letter

(A brief reference to her incessant activities, and the usual note of humility)

---

<sup>224</sup> Cf. the letter of May 28, 1810, to Mlle. A. Chenu, quoted above; also the letter of January 22, 1813, to Madame de Clermont-Tonnere: "This winter seems so bitter to me that I consider it as a true malady for me." This insistence was poignant.

Farewell, dear friend. A multitude of preoccupations and letters to be answered prevents me from writing to you at greater length.

Pray that I may acquire the interior spirit which I lack, which I unceasingly recommend to others and which I need so very much.

March 23, 1812

(Letter of Father de Clorivière to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre, confirming Mother de Ciccé's almost chronic, worsening state of health)

Last evening I received your letter of March 15. Mademoiselle Adelaide gave it to me when I called on her yesterday to have news of her. She has been ill and is still confined to her bed. Last Sunday she was unable to go to Mass. I doubt whether she will be able to do so on Easter Sunday. Her weakness is extreme. Nevertheless, there is nothing to fear if she receives the proper care.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### MOTHER DE CICCÉ'S LAST YEARS

- The audience at Fontainebleau, 1813
- The re-establishment of the Society of Jesus in France, 1814
- New approaches to the Holy Father in Rome
- The two Societies during this period

In July 1809, Pope Pius VII, who had refused to ratify Napoleon's occupation of the Papal States, was removed from the Quirinal Place in Rome by order of the Emperor, and was brought to Savona not far from Genova. He remained there until July 1812, when he was taken to Fontainebleau, near Paris. Napoleon hoped that removing the Holy Father from the immediate circle of his usual advisers would enable him to influence the Pontiff. It was a futile endeavor for Pope Pius VII refused to retract any and all concessions which the Emperor tried to snatch from him by force or by persuasion.

It was during this hectic period that Father de Clorivière had been able to approach Pope Pius VII on March 17, 1813. It occurred at a private audience obtained through the kindness of Cardinal DiPietro, functioning as "Apostolic Delegate" since the Pontiff's captivity. Father de Clorivière had met Cardinal DePietro several times, particularly in 1809-1810, when both of them lived at the Carmelite house where Madame de Soyecourt was superior. In requesting this audience, the founder, who had not met Pope Pius VII, hoped to receive a new confirmation of His Holiness' approbation of the two Societies. That hope was fulfilled. Several reports of Father de Clorivière's visit to Fontainebleau that day have survived.

Several days after the audience on March 22, Father de Clorivière wrote a long letter to Father d'Aubonne.<sup>225</sup> He told Father d'Aubonne that he had recalled to

His Holiness...the approbation he had given at Rome in the first year of his pontificate to our form of life as "pious and useful to the Church."

...It seemed to me that his face lighted up when he heard me speak of this approbation. I told him that we believed we must attribute to that approbation the grace which the Lord has granted us to emerge safe and sound from the storm of the Revolution during which our Societies were born.

The same afternoon Father de Clorivière had a meeting with Cardinal Di Pietro. The Cardinal repeated unequivocally Pope Pius VII's more than benevolent attitude toward the Societies.

Five months later (August 27, 1813) in a letter to Father Pochard, Father de Clorivière recalled the audience and stressed once more the importance of the Holy Father's approbation:<sup>226</sup>

I recalled to him the approbation he had given us...on January 9, 1801. I implored him to impart to us and to our two Societies his apostolic benediction in confirmation of the approbation he had given us. He did so with effusion of heart.

Mother de Cicé also wrote about this same audience in a letter to Madame de Goesbriand on March 25, 1813:

I am going to share with you something that will give you pleasure but which, as you will understand, must be confided to our family with the greatest discretion. Father de Clorivière asks on this occasion that each member of the Society offer a communion and a rosary. Would you please communicate this to Madame de Chifflet and send her the letter I have enclosed for her.

I would like to tell you, my dear friend, that our good Father several days ago had the precious consolation of going to Fontainebleau where he saw the Holy Father and received his blessing not only for himself but for all his daughters. The Holy Father imparted the blessing with great affection and he listened with much goodness to Father's report on his family. This seemed to withdraw the Pope for a moment from the state of sorrow and depression in which he finds himself. Father de Clorivière was presented by

---

<sup>225</sup> Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition), p. 657

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p. 620.

a Cardinal<sup>227</sup> who enjoys the Holy Father's confidence and who has known our Father de Clorivière a long time, loves him and esteems him greatly.

All of us are strongly urged to pray for His Holiness to whom was mentioned the goodness he had shown in Rome to our two emissaries. Father de Clorivière had the sweet consolation of experiencing in person all the goodness which the emissaries had reported as well as the benevolence of our Holy Father. May God preserve him and strengthen him amid all his trials.

Less than a year later, on January 21, 1814, Napoleon who was on the verge of military defeat ordered the return of Pope Pius VII to Savona. On May 24, 1814 after Napoleon's fall, the Holy Father freed at last was able to return to Rome.

On August 7, 1814, the papal bull "Sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum," solemnly re-established the Society of Jesus in France.

Immediately upon the restoration of the monarchy in France, Father de Clorivière had written to Father Brzozowski, general of the Society of Jesus, and placed himself entirely at the Father General's disposition. The reply came quickly. In June 1814, Father de Clorivière was placed in charge of the reestablishment of the Society of Jesus in France. The very next month he received the first novices.

Those events were mentioned in Mother de Cicé's correspondence. She wrote to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu on October 23, 1814:

Our good Father de Clorivière is away giving a retreat to the former Fathers of the Faith who are becoming Jesuits. May God grant that this group be fully restored in France. While waiting, they are receiving more and more formation in the manner of life of the Society of Jesus. Madame de Couessin will tell you everything in detail. As for us, let us pray fervently for the success of everything which our good Father de Clorivière is undertaking for the greater glory of God. Father keeps close to us and does not intend to turn over being our superior to another until he has succeeded in giving the little societies some stability and also the full approbation of the Holy Father.

The three following letters of Mother de Cicé written in 1816 and 1817 witness to Father de Clorivière's efforts to obtain that "full approbation" on the occasion of a journey to Rome by one of the priests of the Heart of Jesus.

April 22, 1816  
(to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu)

---

<sup>227</sup> Cardinal di Pietro.

And now, my dear Amable, Father Bourgeois has written a letter on behalf of Father de Clorivière to Father Gilbert. It indicates his desire to name Father Gilbert to be in charge of the Societies in the diocese of Saint-Malo. I hope that Father de Clorivière will soon have the satisfaction of learning of this success of his request to the Holy Father. While waiting, let us make ourselves worthy of this grace by our faithfulness to our holy commitments and to the duties they involve.

August, 1816

(to Madame de Goesbriand)

Our good father...is well, thank God, but his eyesight is failing. We see him infrequently both because we are far away and because he is always very occupied with God's work to which he has been assigned. Father Desmares, the missionary priest of the Divine Heart of Jesus, to whom he had entrusted a supplication to the Pope, has just returned from Rome. Father de Clorivière and we, too, have cause to be satisfied for the Holy Father received him very favorably. The Pontiff showed great interest in the two families and even expressed the desire that there be someone in Rome responsible for reporting to him from time to time on the interests of the two Societies. Before leaving Rome, Father Desmares asked one of his friends to do this for the Societies.

It seems that the final approbation awaits only the settlement of Church matters here and we hope and he believes that this will be concluded soon.

August 23, 1816

(to Mademoiselle Victoire Puesch)

Our good Father de Clorivière is most grateful for your remembrance and is very much concerned with everything that interests you. Father Bourgeois, of whom I need write nothing to you, had to correspond with Father Guepin to tell him about Father Desmares, just returned from Rome. Father Desmares is very satisfied at the reception he received from the Holy Father who even wished that somebody in Rome be entrusted with the interests of the two Societies to report to him from time to time. Father Desmares arranged this with a friend. It really seems, by the Holy Father's dispositions, that the much desired final approbation will not be delayed after the affairs of the Church here have been settled. We hope this will finally occur.

January 16, 1817

(To Mademoiselle Amable Chenu)

...Father Desmares, missionary priest of the Society of the Divine Heart, with powers from Father de Clorivière, has already affected all sorts of benefits for the two Societies. Since his return from Rome, where he rendered such important service, he has visited many places where the Societies have been established. His presence and his exhortations have had the best results.

In the period 1814-1817, Mother de Cicé's correspondence contained various references to Father de Clorivière's many activities despite his great age and increasing blindness. Even while dedicating the major part of his time to the re-establishment of the Society of Jesus in France, he never ceased interesting himself in the regular growth of the two Societies.

In a letter to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre on June 12, 1815, Mother de Cicé referred to the dangers of invasion threatening France after the fall of Napoleon:

It was out of the question for Josephine<sup>228</sup> and me to leave for the country, even though we had been invited to many places. My own health did not permit it. My relatives and friends outside of Paris believe we are in the greatest danger because of the war threatening us. Paris has been fortified against all foreign invasion.

Despite that climate of insecurity, God's work was continuing.

Mother de Cicé, writing to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre on January 15, 1816, mentioned first of all the mission entrusted to Father de Clorivière:

His children (the Society of Jesus) are very well. Their numbers are increasing.

Then she referred to the two Societies:

I do not know whether you have had this news, which interests us more closely. On the Feast of All Saints, five priests, excellent subjects, made – in Father de Clorivière's hands – their consecration in the Society of the Heart of Jesus: Father Desmares,<sup>229</sup> a missionary of the Mission de France, is one; a rector of the seminary of Versailles; three priests from Father Liautard's institution:<sup>230</sup> Father Auge, Father Fremont and another whom you do not know.<sup>231</sup> The Society of the Heart of Jesus has opened a foundation at Coutantes. So has the Society of the Heart of Mary.

We have very fine news from Tours that everything goes very well there. Father Guepin is in charge...and through his efforts, a community house of the Daughters of Mary has been opened. There are several living at the house and many externs.<sup>232</sup>

---

<sup>228</sup> A week earlier, Father de Clorivière had undergone surgery for a cataract. It was not successful.

<sup>229</sup> He was the one who was going to render "such very important service" to the Societies during his visits to Rome.

<sup>230</sup> Father Liautard had founded a scholastic establishment, which was later to become Stanislas College.

<sup>231</sup> The same particulars in a letter to Mlle. A. Chenu on January 16, 1816.

<sup>232</sup> Recognized as the school maintained by some Daughters of the Heart of Mary in order to protect the Carmelites in the eyes of the law.

At the end of the same letter the following passages gave new evidence of Mother de Cicé's indefatigable charity. It was an appeal to one of the sisters who was relatively favored by good fortune:

Madame de Gerville's little establishment goes well...It houses three of our friends. Honorine had been a school-teacher... I had housed her for some time with some of her little ones. Later I sent them all to Madame de Gerville. Angelique Dedain and her sister had preceded them there. All that activity was an effort. We have troubled friends: our good Mademoiselle Legros, who has cancer, and whom we have been unable to place anywhere. I know that you yourself are not free to do anything, but I mention these things to you so that you will think of us when circumstances permit.

On December 16, 1814, Mother de Cicé's letter had already invited Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre to this spirit of renunciation, that total renunciation which must characterize a soul entirely given to God. Despite its length, the following paragraph must be quoted. It is marked by psychological and supernatural acumen:

I thank our Lord wholeheartedly with you for the graces he is giving you and for your desire to progress more and more in his service by self-renunciation, and for the excellent disposition, which God in his grace has given you, to be content with the help that he gives you. You are quite right in thinking that he himself will make up for all that we lack in this respect and you are right in considering as favors from his hand the painful trials he sends you through people who are dear to you. God wants those who are consecrated to him to be so completely his that their most natural and legitimate inclinations become super-naturalized, and that we love only in him and for him the people whom we love and must love. If he did not come to our aide we should find great difficulty indeed in acquiring this perfection; and he does so by permitting disappointments in our friendships and a manner of behavior on the part of others which makes us realise how little we must count on human friendships and on all the ties which unite us with creatures, so as to impress on us more and more the necessity and the happiness of uniting ourselves more closely with the genuine Friend who does not change and whom we find always the same, full of love for us...

Mother de Cicé wrote a long letter to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu in January 1817. It mentioned Father de Clorivière's amazing activity despite his blindness and advancing age. This letter also contained information about the two Societies complementing other previously quoted letters:

I must, dear friend, at least give you news of our good Father. He left Paris on October 18, traveled many long miles and returned here for Christmas. I must admit that I trembled to see him leaving at his age in this wintry season and almost blind. Obedience to his Father General sustained him. Obedience as usual worked miracles. All of us were surprised on his arrival to hear of his activities. We were even more surprised to hear him

immediately preach several days in a row and give short retreats. Thanks be to God, he returned to us in excellent health. A bit later he was indisposed for several days but he is better. He sends you best wishes and gives his blessing to you and all your daughters. Pray the good Lord to preserve him for His glory and the welfare of His children. Remember him and Father Bourgeois to Father Gilbert. I also hope that Father Gilbert will make the acquaintance of Father Desmares, missionary priest of the Society of the Sacred Heart...He has opened a new foundation of 15-16 Daughters of Mary at Boulogne; at Nogent he has received several excellent priests of the Society of the Heart of Jesus...He is now giving a most successful mission at Rennes together with Father Rolan, superior of the Society of French Missionaries to which he also belongs.

My dear friend, I ask you and all to implore the Lord that Father Desmares' work have lasting effects. I am most interested because I was born in Rennes. These two priests had just completed a mission at Caen. You must surely have heard favorably about it. You need not show this letter to Father Gilbert. Tell him the news, also that we have just heard from a young priest of the Society of the Heart of Jesus who left le Havre and 44 days later safely reached his mission in Martinique. He writes that yellow fever, which strikes most Europeans, never affects the countryside of the Island of Martinique. He is pastor at Grande Anse. His parish consists of five to six thousand souls. Thanks be to God, he reports that his parish is one of the most pious on the island. He writes that he barely has time to breathe. Mornings he is at church. Evenings he is on horseback covering his territory in exercising his ministry. I think that will interest Father Gilbert. We recommend this good Father Apert to Father Gilbert's prayers.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEATH OF MOTHER DE CICÉ

Mother de Cicé wrote to Madame de Clermont-Tonnere on January 15, 1816. Her letter revealed her greatly debilitated state of health:

My health, always quite poor, has even deteriorated since the coming of winter. For long periods of time I have spit up blood as never before and have been unable to go down to the church of the Missions<sup>233</sup> at whose door I live. Happily for me, I have a tribune overlooking the church. That is my great consolation. I have not yet seen you here in my little home. It will be

---

<sup>233</sup> The Church of the Missions Etrangeres on Rue du Bac. Mother de Cicé lived in a part of the building contiguous to the church, (at that time a parish church).

a great joy for me to receive you here whenever you find it possible to come to Paris.

Mother de Cicé was confined by illness to remain for two more years in her "little home." During that time she continued correspondence with her Daughters. She was giving them her final counsels. As she expressed it so well in a note of encouragement to Mademoiselle de Couyon on June 4, 1817:

God delights in sustaining the instruments He uses if they recognize all their weaknesses.<sup>234</sup>

Five months later on June 4, 1817, Mother de Cicé wrote a long detailed letter again to Mademoiselle de Couyon:

Let us now strive, dear friend, to retrace in ourselves virtues which must not only be the object of our admiration but which also are proposed for our imitation. Reanimate your fervor with great confidence in our Lord and under the protection of his holy Mother; have a deep humility, the solid foundation of all the virtues; and have the tender trust which must reign in the heart of a spouse of Jesus Christ and daughter of His holy Mother expecting nothing from herself but awaiting everything from God....

Our good Father has been to see me. He is very well. At my request he sent all of you his blessing. He assured me — and I believe it is so — that He continually remembers all of us before the dear Lord. He has just opened a new house at Q...through the kindness of our dear Father Gilbert. He founded another one at A...Soon we will have another at B...We have just sent books and appropriate instructions through Mlle. deC, a young woman who knows our matter perfectly.

My health continues poor. To give you an idea of it, I tell you that though my little house adjoins the church and I have but one step to reach it (fortunately I have a tribune overlooking the church), I have not been well enough to go to Mass since Ash Wednesday. I have been quite ill for a very long time — more than five months. I have written most of this letter from my bed. I earnestly recommend myself to the prayers of all of you particularly to the prayers of my good A. for it is getting late for me and I have great need of preparing myself carefully for my final voyage. To make it successfully, I rely a great deal on the help of the prayers and good works of my sisters. Please convey to all of them, those in the city and those outside, the expression of my good sentiments.

---

<sup>234</sup> This contains the echo of a thought dear to Father de Clorivière. On January 22, 1805, he wrote to Mother de Cicé: "Let us be very humble. He chooses those who are nothing to make them instruments of His glory." (Letters of Father de Clorivière (English edition). pp. 167-169). This is but one example of many similar thoughts.

On January 16, 1816, the letter to Amable Chenu already showed Mother de Cicé perfectly aware of the gravity of her condition:

I cannot tell you, my dear and esteemed friend, how I regret not having been in touch with you for such a long time. I trust you will forgive me for it because I have been ill. My poor health continues to make it impossible for me to do so much. For such a long time I have had a multitude of letters to answer. I am so very sorry to have put off replying to your own as long as I did. Severe spittings of blood, such as I never before experienced, have lasted a long time. They have left me with a heavy cough accompanied by several other little sufferings which hardly leave me the liberty to write and to fulfill my other obligations. Ask the good Lord that I profit from this situation according to His designs that I may not be so occupied with this miserable body soon to be reduced to dust, that I may not neglect my concern for this immortal soul destined to the joy of seeing and loving its God for all eternity. Ask the Lord, my dear friend, to purify my unfortunate heart which has offended Him so much and which has so often resisted His grace. Ask that all of the few days remaining to me be employed to make reparation to Him for the past, to love Him in the present and abandoning everything to His good pleasure, to place the future under His Providence.

It was a rather long letter despite her fatigue and it was followed by this postscript which merits remembrance:

P.S. I remember that in my very long letter I neglected to reply to a point in your own. Our Father had always been of the opinion that the minutest details in the life of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary such as their dress, etc. should be entirely submitted to their Superior. If the Superior should on occasion find the decision difficult, she would consult someone but the subject has only to obey her Superior. Our Father has repeated his decision in regard to what you asked. His decision is motivated by the fact that the Daughters of the Heart of Mary must be directed by their Mother and not trouble ecclesiastics on minute matters not quite familiar to them or perhaps involving too much time better spent on other things.

Other letters to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu, always rather long ones, give many other details about the Society and some of its members. The letter of October 23, 1817, especially showed an excellent presence of mind in the most diverse and often most involved matters. Mother de Cicé truly seemed endowed with an unflinching clarity and flawless memory.

She quoted this lovely statement of St. Francis de Sales in order to encourage Mademoiselle Chenu who would have wished to give up her position:

You could not, without failure against God's will...allow yourself to become defiant in your miseries. As St. Francis de Sales said: those sufferings are God's throne of mercy.

There followed these lines revealing Mother de Cicé's fundamental humility:

I strongly recommend myself to your prayers. I do have extreme need of them, dear friend, in order to enter into all the designs of God on my soul and on my body. My soul is quite weighed down by the burden of baseness and by bodily sufferings which though not very sharp are habitual. Unfortunately I do not sufficiently habituate myself to suffer, even though I know that suffering is one of God's mercies to me. My state of health hardly permits me to write. Please convey to all our friends my request for prayers to which I recommend myself as I do to your own.

The letter written a month later (November 29, 1817) contained this distressed comment:

I cannot tell you, dear friend, to what point of utter powerlessness I am reduced by pain and extreme weakness...I need your prayers.

That Mother de Cicé lucidly understood the gravity of her condition is quite clear in letters exchanged among certain Daughters of the Heart of Mary. Early in 1817, two letters from Mademoiselle d'Acosta to Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre almost foretell the approach of her last moments:

The first of those letters (January 29, 1817) showed Mother de Cicé still fulfilling multiple duties despite a more and more failing health:

A word now about our good Adelaide whom I saw yesterday. She asked me to write to you....She wished very much to write herself but her health is frightful. She is suffering a great deal and you know that at this time she has many things to do, people to see and duties to fulfill. She omits nothing. In everything she works for God looking forward to God. I believe that on high her place is well prepared for her.

Another letter (April 16, 1817) described Mother de Cicé as being in such a "state of exhaustion" causing the greatest concerns to those about her:

I told you in my last letter that our saintly Friend was experiencing great suffering. She has suffered much more since that time and has caused worry. Even though she is a trifle better, I am still not at peace about her condition. It is one of exhaustion and utter weariness. She coughs and must spit frequently. She is so weak that she cannot attend Mass every Sunday even though her room has access to a tribune of the church. Let us pray much for her recovery. It would be a great tragedy if we were to lose her. I hope the good weather will restore her health.

Excerpts from correspondence with Mademoiselle Victoire Puesch are significant, since she was the recipient of the latest letters of Mother de Cicé to be preserved in the Archives of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. Mother de Cicé's rather long letter of January 24, 1816 to Mademoiselle Puesch began with the usual reflections but gave some interesting indications:

My health and a multitude of letters about communal matters to which I am bound to reply whenever my health will grant a respite, have caused this delay in my writing to you. I am not free of my usual infirmities.

Our good Father believes that...in the light of the comfortable circumstances of your only heiress you may respond to the desire God has given you to contribute your means to procuring His glory by supporting and sharing Father Guepin's sacrifices to pay for the house purchased for your Reunion.

Mother de Cicé wrote to Mademoiselle Puesch also on August 23, 1816. In the opening paragraph our foundress, then in the evening of her life, expressed once more her thinking on the spirit which must animate "a true Daughter of the Heart of Mary":

I have received your letters, my dear friend. I am most grateful for your remembrance and your friendship. I share in everything which the good Lord is sending to you for your consolation and to your good Father<sup>235</sup> for your growth. I am not surprised that in some respects He makes you acquire those consolations by means of many difficulties. However, with His grace and with the good will He has given you, you will triumph in everything.

The hope which God gives you of overcoming your difficulties in the midst of the vexations by which he is testing you is a very good augury, and the peace in which he maintains you since he entrusted to you the care of his flock is another proof of it. It is a proof too of the value he sets on the devotion of all who strive and desire to progress daily in the virtues which their holy vocation demands, immersing themselves incessantly in the spirit of a true Daughter of Mary, who must think only of reproducing in herself the interior virtues of her holy Mother and those of her divine Son. To achieve this we must all strive to die to ourselves and live only for him who has loved us so much that he died for us. We must beg this precious grace for one another, for I realize every moment how far I am from practising the advice which I give to others. For the good of my soul, I hope very much to receive the help of your prayers and the prayers of my friends. Please assure them of my deep interest in them and of my feelings towards them.

Exactly a year later (August 23, 1817) Mother de Cicé sent Mademoiselle Victoire Puesch a letter which is particularly precious to our Society. A definite improvement in health (it proved to be quite short-lived) permitted our first Mother to spend August 15 with many Daughters of the Heart of Mary. It would be the last Feast of the Assumption she would celebrate here on earth.

My health...is not at all back to normal but I am a bit less weak. I am able to go to church at times, even able to walk in the garden at the Missions. It

---

<sup>235</sup> Father Guepin.

does me good...My dear friend, we have just been united heart and soul in a very special manner on our great feast. Our meeting here was attended by many and I was happy to be reunited with so many persons dear to me. I felt better all that day even though I was a bit more tired.

Further in that same letter, she gave this news of Father de Clorivière:

Our good Father has asked me to convey to all of you the assurance of all the sentiments he has for you in the Lord. He is quite grateful for all your good wishes. His health is good but he is almost completely blind. This is a real trial for us for we are deprived of communication by letter. It would be a real consolation for you and for our other friends but you are thus deprived of hearing from him. It is also rare for us to hear from him even though we are nearer, for he is almost always occupied in his holy dwelling.<sup>236</sup>

Then she gave some interesting points on a fundamental question in the Society:<sup>237</sup>

Concerning dress, I again consulted our Father. I even admit that having reflected on Father Guepin's reasons, I was led to wishing that he would adopt a uniform dress (only for those living in the house and for the time they remained there). I liked very much the color and fabric samples you sent me... Our Father insists on his advice that each one dress according to her station, but – as you know, modestly and simply. This is easier to observe in your house than anywhere else. As regards the title of sister, its use must be avoided as much as possible before outsiders...

A letter to Mademoiselle Victoire Puesch dated March 12 and bearing no year, (most probably it was 1818), contained this echo of Mother de Ciccé's thinking:

Despite my health, which is more painful and weaker because of the constant bad weather, I do not have the courage to send Father Bourgeois' letter to your priest<sup>238</sup> without sending a word to you. It has been quite painful to me, and still is quite so, not to be able to tell you at length how much I feel that your letter moved, edified and interested me. Man proposes, but God disposes....

With all my soul I thank God for the graces He imparts to you. Through His divine Heart and the Heart of His holy Mother, I ask Him to give you an increasingly greater union with Him and through this close and intimate union

---

<sup>236</sup> The House of the Society of Jesus.

<sup>237</sup> The Daughters of the Heart of Mary working at the school belonging to the Carmelites of Tours had hoped to adopt a uniform dress.

<sup>238</sup> This still refers to Father Guepin.

to provide the means of drawing a greater number of souls to the knowledge and the perfection of the service of the Son and the Mother. I hope and desire, my dear Victoire, if it be the good pleasure of God, that you acquire on earth more and more merits to draw you closer in eternity to the divine Spouse who chose you and to whom you consecrated yourself in good time through His mercy and predilection for you. Pray for this for all of us. I have so much need of this, my dear friend, for I am poor indeed and void of the goods of grace. Also, my physical condition requires that more than anyone else, I keep myself ready at every moment.

The same overtones marked two letters to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu in that same period:

December 22, 1817: My weakness increases each day in proportion to my sufferings.

February 12, 1818: I am in great pain and too weak to write, my dear Amable. Mademoiselle d' Acosta, who does this for me at times, is ill now. I nevertheless do not want your letter to remain unanswered.... Our Father is well and sends his blessing to all of you. I strongly recommend myself to the prayers of all of you. I have great need of them in my present state.

There followed this wish, proof of her apostolic preoccupations:

God preserve you, my dear and respectful friend, to continue to serve as an instrument of the Lord for the good He wishes to do for souls through you.

Her thought: the torch must pass from hands to hands without being extinguished.

Madame de Saisseval in her Memoirs related that some time before the final phase of her illness, Mother de Cicé wished to hold one more meeting. Because her room was too small to receive the large number of sisters gathered together to receive her final benediction, she had herself brought to the home of a Daughter of the Heart of Mary, Mademoiselle Blanquet. No detail of this final meeting has been preserved.

The moment approached when Mother de Cicé was going to contemplate face to face Him whom she had so often adored in the tabernacle.

Jesus, whom I look at shrouded here below,  
I beseech thee send me what I long for so,  
Some day to gaze on thee face to face in light  
And be blest forever with thy glory's sight. Amen.<sup>239</sup>

---

<sup>239</sup> A stanza of the hymn, "Adoro Te Devote." English version of Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J. Cf. M.E.F. de Bellevue, op.cit., p. 381.

But she had to endure still greater suffering. Was it to be the final purification of her soul, her final participation in the communion of saints? That is God's secret.

First there was suffering due to her illness. Abbe Carron<sup>240</sup> described her sufferings and related the supernatural joy with which Mother de Cicé accepted them as the will of God. She loved to repeat, "My sufferings are my joy and my delight." She never allowed herself to complain.

Then there were the sacrifices due to separations imposed by her condition, particularly the impossibility of communicating with Father de Clorivière, now blind and too deaf to understand her failing voice. It was Father Desjardins, pastor at the Church of the Missions Etrangères, who heard her last confession and administered the sacraments to her.

Nevertheless, there was one consolation, the greatest which Mother de Cicé could desire; to live her last hours on earth before the Blessed Sacrament. Every day she would be carried to the tribune which was outside her room and which was part of the church. She had spent the entire night there and there she expired in the early hours of April 26, 1818.

Shortly before April 15, 1788 she had written to Father de Clorivière: "No one can imagine the extreme need I have to spend the most time possible in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament."

Thirty years later the Lord seemed definitively to have ratified the supernatural attraction that had marked her entire lifetime.

\* \* \* \* \*

Several excerpts from the correspondence of persons who had known Mother de Cicé well, particularly in her final moments, provide supplementary touches to the portrait of her whom we would always wish to know better.

Madame de Saisseval wrote two letters on April 27, 1818, the day after Mother de Cicé's death. One was written to Father Lefevre, parish priest of Saint-Aubin near Elbeuf:

With deep affliction, Father, I have the honor to communicate to you our loss of our esteemed Mother de Cicé yesterday morning at four o'clock. For fifteen months her health had been deteriorating so that she no longer had the strength to withstand the biliary fever through which God called her to Himself. She succumbed to the disease ten days before the doctor had expected. She received all the sacraments and had the joy of receiving the

---

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Appendix, Document XVI, for the data gathered by Abbe Carron on Mother de Cicé's last moments.

good Lord once more. This soul, who had always served Him so well, received from His infinite goodness a grace which you will surely appreciate. Living as she did in the courtyard of the Missions Etrangères, she had a tribune looking out on the altar. She had herself brought there for solemn Mass and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. She remained there throughout the last night of her life and there she breathed her last. I firmly believe that God has accepted in expiation her long sufferings united to so much resignation and to so many great works.

The second letter of Madame de Saisseval was sent to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu in Brittany:

I am experiencing an affliction difficult to express, Mademoiselle, in having the responsibility of advising you of our cruel loss. You were aware of the sad state of health of our beloved and esteemed Mother, Mademoiselle de Cicé. She was not able to resist a biliary fever which began on April 16 and to which she succumbed yesterday at four o'clock in the morning. She was fully conscious, and profited by that to offer up her most painful sufferings with a truly angelic resignation. Having the advantage of a tribune looking out at the altar, she had herself brought there during her illness and there she united her own prayers with those of the Church. There she had the happiness of breathing her last. Before the moment of danger, she had received the last sacraments and then received Communion.... Our worthy Mother, Mademoiselle de Cicé, gave me her blessing for all our Friends.

Several weeks later, Mademoiselle Amable Chenu received from Father de Clorivière a letter which he had asked Father Druillet to write for him. It was dated June 5, 1818:

Father de Clorivière's advanced age and his almost total blindness do not permit him to reply personally to your letter of May 26. He asks me to do so in his name....

Your justifiable sorrow over the death of Mother de Cicé has revived that which Father de Clorivière himself felt. It is indeed great, but his unwavering submission to our Lord's will has been still greater. It was right that this holy lady, after a life filled with good and holy works, should go to receive the reward of her labors. Many tears have honored her memory but those tears hold nothing but sweetness and consolation. The eminent piety of her who is their cause, arouses no other feeling than that of the immense gap she leaves.

Finally, there were these reflections by Mademoiselle d' Acosta, who for many long years had been Mother de Cicé's faithful assistant. Because she herself was quite ill in April 1818, she had the sorrow of not being close to Mother de Cicé in her last moments. On June 2, 1818, she wrote to one of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, whose name has not been left to us, these lines which related to the future:

She (Mother de Cicé) is being venerated in Paris, even by persons who did not have the same contacts and relationships with her as we did. Everyone is eager to have something which belonged to her to keep as relic...

Our courage must not falter because of our very sorrowful loss. Let us more and more take courage, recalling the examples of virtues which she left us, and let us truly have faith that although the foundation stone of the building seems to have been taken away from us, the building cannot crumble because God will sustain His work.

## DOCUMENT I

### RESOLUTIONS - (about 1765)<sup>241</sup>

For a long time I have been unfaithful in all the promises I made to my God. From now on, I wish to observe very strictly everything I must do to avoid offending Him and instead to please Him. Henceforth I shall love Him as much as it is in me, and avoid sin and its occasions as much as human frailty permits. I wish also to avoid pride above all my other vicious inclinations, for it is the one to which I tend the most. It is the cause of almost all my bad actions, and I wish to do everything in my power to immolate it to the vengeance of my God. I wish also to thank all the persons who will be kind enough to correct my faults and I will be obliged to them. Thus I will have the intention to mortify my pride, which I will make every effort to destroy, together with the taste for the world. I beg my God to root it completely out of my heart. I also wish not to be ready at all times to make excuses for myself when I am told I have done something which is not good, and I will not try to justify myself by turning away from the truth.

My first thought each morning will be of God. As soon as I awaken, I will get up without hesitating. I will go to Mass; I will say my morning prayers before or after Mass; I will make my mental prayer, which will last one quarter of an hour. I will return for lunch. Afterwards I shall go to my room to read the History of Rome or some other book of educational value to me. Then I will write a letter or some other matter in order not to lose the habit of writing. I will do the different things Mother wishes me to do for my education. I will apply myself to all of them, especially to those I like the least. Also I do not wish to have any ill-temper, and in the time when I would most wish to let myself become melancholy, I will rejoice and offer to God the little sacrifice of my own will.

During the day I will make one quarter of an hour of meditation, and often throughout the day I will elevate my heart to God, thus keeping myself in His holy presence from time to time. Each day I will make small mortifications in honor of the Five Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I will also apply myself to being a little more diligent since I am sometimes lax and lazy. I will also reflect on certain things which Mother asks me to do and which I very easily forget. I will make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament every evening when possible. I will not fail to say my night prayers before going to bed, and I will keep silence on retiring and also on arising. Before falling asleep, I shall reflect on the idea of death. I will not take pleasure in dressing, nor will I cause those around me to lose time. I also never want to give brusque answers, and I will always answer with sweetness. I will also apply myself to the few household chores which Mother wishes me to do. I will make every effort to follow this with the grace of my God. With His grace I can do all things, and without it I can do nothing. I will never cease asking Him for it. I wish henceforth to live and die in these resolutions.

---

<sup>241</sup> A. Rayez, op.cit., p. 43. The title of this document is the one Mother de Ciché gave to it.

## DOCUMENT II

### NOTES ON THE DIRECTION OF FATHER BOURSOL (1774)<sup>242</sup>

(This statement had been written without a date and without a heading)

On Easter Monday, April 4, 1774, I lost, O my God, the one who brought me back to You, the one who never ceased inspiring me to love You and serve You. He breathed his last, saying, "Indeed, my brothers, we will see God in heaven face to face, not hidden behind any veils, through His grace, through His grace...."

O death worthy of being envied by all of the Lord's ministers and even by all Christians, who must wish to die while performing some act of our holy religion. How much regret I experienced at that moment, O my God, that I had not benefited from all the words of truth spoken by Your servant, Father Boursol. I wish as much as possible to recall his principles.

In Your presence, O my God, under Your protection and that of Your tender Mother, who is also my Mother, I undertake this summary of the conduct towards me of the Saint to whom You entrusted my soul. Direct my pen, O my God, and please recall to me everything in Your message which You inspired him to impart to me.

He always told me that this God of goodness and mercy willed to lead me to Himself by love; that this delightful path would ease my road to heaven; that it would remove all obstacles and direct me to everything which my God is asking of me. I was urged to be unceasingly on guard over myself with a sweet attentiveness so that I would never think, say or do anything displeasing to my God. I was assured that, if I were faithful to that practice, I would begin my heaven even in this very world. For I would here below be occupied — as are the Saints in heaven — only with doing the will of God. Also I was often urged no longer to resist God, no more to contend with God for what He had so long been asking of me. Alas! How many times, Lord, I renewed the resolution of being faithful to You and of never deliberately offending my Divine Spouse! — Name full of delights! O my God, it is necessary that You be mercy itself and goodness itself to will once more that I utter that very sweet Name, after I rendered myself unworthy of it so many times. You do even more, Lord, by placing that Name within my heart and permitting me to experience all its sweetness. Will You, then, never tire, O my God, of heaping Your most precious favors and graces on this wretch who has betrayed You so many times? Father Boursol told me in Your behalf, when I returned to You, that the most atrocious and unpardonable crimes of the greatest scoundrels had not hurt the Heart of my God as had mine — this in consideration of God's love, His ardent love for me? How many times he told me that God loved me as much, when I had the infinite misfortune of abandoning Him, as He had loved me before that time! Indeed, Lord, all my ingratitude, all my crimes, did not succeed in estranging You from me. I was assured by You

---

<sup>242</sup> In this document, as in all the others, the passages underlined were underlined also in the originals.

that Your designs have not changed; and indeed You let me experience this in the depths of my heart.

It is necessary, O my God, that You Yourself impress these truths in a soul before it becomes truly convinced of them. The saintly Father Boursol, who was speaking to me on Your behalf, told me two weeks before his death that my God desired me entirely for Himself. These were his very words: "Oh! how He wants you perfectly for Himself! And what an outstanding place He has prepared for you in heaven!"

Your servant, now enjoying the infinite happiness of possessing You, told me also that God Himself was undertaking my sanctification, that His Spirit and His Divine Heart would lead me completely. On your behalf, he assured me, O my God, that at the proper time You would let me know what You are asking of me, provided I were faithful in listening to Your voice deep within my heart. O Lord, my God, You whose mercy and love surpass all that men can think of You, do not go back on the word You spoke through him who held your place. If I were ever so ungrateful, so treacherous, so base as to abandon You, any tortures You would impose on me, even those of hell, would be too ineffective, too weak to punish me.

Far from You, O my God, I am lost. And would I not be quite miserable? Is there a greater misfortune, is there any other misfortune, than being deprived of Your divine presence? Grant me the grace, O my God, never for a single moment in this world to lose sight of You up to that very moment when I shall come to live in Your home. Come, O Lord, and make Your abode in my soul. How many times have I not been told, O my God, that Your loving designs on my heart were to abide therein all the days of my life! I will make a home for You in time, O Lord, and You will make a home for me in eternity. Therein, the difference between Your gifts and the gifts of men. But what am I saying, O my God? What could You possibly give me in heaven which would surpass the inestimable gift of Yourself here on earth?

How often, Lord, have I not been told on Your behalf not to yield to the anxiety and disorder which would separate me from You?

I have been assured that it was easier for me than for anyone else never to offend You. I was taught to return to my God by going back into my heart at the very moment when I felt I was straying. Besides, I was told that God is always ready to receive me, at every hour, at every moment. I was likewise assured that my return would delight His Sacred Heart and, rather than separate me from Him, it would unite me to Him more than ever. I was so often told that feeling did not rest with me and that it was sufficient to turn my will towards Him despite all feeling to the contrary.

It was suggested to me not to keep away from Holy Communion because of involuntary feelings. I was assured of the love of my Jesus, Who henceforth wishes to be my all. I was also assured that Our Lord Jesus Christ wished to come into my heart in order there to recover from insults He always received. I was told, too, that He preferred me to millions of other creatures who were not loved by Him so especially as I, even though they had not offended Him as much as I. I was told that He was not wronging them by treating them according to the rigor of His justice, whereas in my regard He makes me experience that He listens only to His mercy.

I was also told in Your behalf, O my God, that I was destined to be a mother of the poor, a spouse of Jesus Christ, and a seraph in this world and in the next. What a happy destiny! Grant, O Lord, that I fulfill it. Father Boursol told me that everywhere I must be an angel of peace; that with deepest tenderness I must love those who had caused me some suffering; that in them I must see only the lovable Person of Jesus Christ; and that this view would render my conduct not only easy but also sweet.

Engrave on my heart, O my Divine Jesus, these precepts You dictated to him who announced Your will for me. Do not let me stray. You have taken my guide. Give me another who will be a guide according to Your Heart, and, therefore, worthy of replacing him. O my God, lead me Yourself to the director who must conduct me perfectly to You. I place my soul into Your hands. Do with me what You will. O my God, may I say with him whom You have taken from this world so he might be closer to You: "Be I in affliction or in joy, He is the Lord of all. Dominus est! May His lovable will be accomplished in me."

I want to recall the last words of this guide You had given me. On Monday of Holy Week he told me: "Oh! How much you would have progressed if you had only wanted to! The devil led you astray, and you listened to him. But, finally, thanks to God's mercy, you are on the right path. Follow it constantly until death."

### DOCUMENT III

#### RETREAT - End of September, beginning of October, 1776<sup>243</sup>

On October 1, 1776, at the Retreat House in Rennes, I made a private three-day retreat. After Holy Communion this morning my God overwhelmed me with graces. He inspired me with a more ardent desire of serving and loving Him; also with a more piercing sorrow for having offended Him. I, therefore, made the resolution never to fail to raise my heart on arising, at the half-hour's mental prayer in the morning and in the evening, and in the period of reading. I resolved also to practice very carefully the presence of God at Holy Mass and to continue receiving daily Communion as long as it was not forbidden to me.

I promised my God that I would obey my mother as a religious obeys her superior, and would submit myself to her in all things except as Christian prudence dictates to the contrary. With my God's all-powerful grace, in which alone I wish henceforth to place all my trust, I wish to be unalterably gentle. I hope He will give me the grace never for a single moment interiorly or exteriorly to be out of temper with persons who may have hurt me. I wish to heap on such persons friendship and kindnesses, and in their regard never to follow reasons which human prudence would dictate to me for acting otherwise.

I also wish, with the grace of my God, to banish every thought which may not only separate me from Him but also turn me away from Him. I will, above all, be strictly careful to disregard what people will say about my conduct. I will place myself above human respect. O my God, let my heart know only the fear of displeasing You and the desire of loving You. In order to destroy my vanity, I wish, while dressing, to reflect a few moments on what my body will become after death. With all my heart I renew — and I would wish to do this with the ardor of a seraph — the consecration which I have made of my entire being to my Divine Spouse. I am ready to carry out His will as He manifests it. I thank Him a thousand times for having chosen me as His bride, despite my ingratitude. O my God, I do not have expressions for the horror I have for my abominable infidelities. I cannot find words for the tremendous gratitude inspired by the favors with which You overwhelm me, for the precious gift of my vocation which You deigned to grant me today.

I falter in writing those last lines — not because I am resisting Your will but out of fear that I may not know Your will as it truly is. For I want only what You want, my Divine Jesus. Give me as much mistrust of myself as trust in You. I implore You to make whatever You will of me, Your poor Marie-Adelaide, who belongs entirely to Jesus, her Spouse.

---

<sup>243</sup> This text, without date or title, was written immediately following the preceding one, and, as a matter of fact, on the same sheet of paper.

## DOCUMENT IV

### RETREAT

(on the Feast of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin,  
August, 1783)<sup>244</sup>

I resolve to ask God incessantly for the grace to preserve and increase in me each day the horror of sin He has inspired in me. I want to avoid sin with the greatest care. More than all the evils of this world I would fear all voluntary sin, and I resolve to expose myself to all misfortunes rather than ever to commit one single sin deliberately.

I resolve to be as faithful as possible to the rule of life I have proposed for myself: the half-hour's meditation in the morning, the same in the evening, daily Mass (prayer, Rosary, reading in common), visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the evening, the faithful practice of the frequent exercise of the presence of God.

I wish to receive all happenings — large or small, happy or unhappy — as coming from the Hand of God the first moment I reflect on things which happen. I wish to recognize the Divine Will and to rejoice in its being accomplished in all things. If my weakness does not permit me always to see God's Will in afflictions, I wish at least to submit myself entirely, asking God for a more perfect disposition, if that is what He expects of me.

I wish to arouse myself more and more to mistrust of myself and to trust in God despite my enormous infidelities. The goodness He permits me to experience inspires me with the resolution to cast myself into His arms, without ever forgetting, however, the abyss of misery from which He has so many times deigned to rescue me. I want always to remember with the greatest and most perfect gratitude the generous pardon which I hope He has deigned to grant me despite my most criminal lapses, the blackest ingratitude, finally despite everything that might have removed Him from me forever. May this salutary life awaken in this unhappy heart the gratitude and love with which it must be penetrated for so good a Master in Whose service I want henceforth to live and die. To this end I consecrate to Him all the movements of this unfaithful heart, all the thoughts of my mind, all the acts of my will. I make the resolution to refer everything to God and ask Him for the grace of His purifying my intentions in all things. I also hope He will grant me the grace always to have my eyes open to flee what displeases Him and to practice what pleases Him with all the fidelity which He expects of me and of which I hope He will render me capable. I also resolve to practice the

---

<sup>244</sup> This title was given by Mother de Cicé.

hate and disdain I must so justly have for myself, who have rendered myself guilty of so many acts of ingratitude towards a God Who is so good. If people could only know the point to which I am unfaithful to Him, I would be in their eyes, as I am in my own, a monster deserving all misfortunes and undeserving of all graces.

I want to be unalterably sweet-tempered and extremely kind to my neighbor; to esteem my neighbor as much as I disdain myself. I will try never to act out of temper or inclination. I will not bear for a single instant the slightest resentment against anyone. On the contrary, I will make it my duty to fly towards occasions of pleasing persons who have caused me sorrow. I will be delighted to find these precious occasions for pleasing the Lord and I will see to it, with the help of His grace, that such occasions do not escape me.

I also wish not to complain about anything and I wish to envisage in life no other misery except the one I have experienced for offending God. I would value the remainder of my life only with regard to employing it to make reparation for the past by all the means indicated to me by God.

I resolve to cut out all useless expenditures for myself, and in this regard to limit myself to the merely necessary in my condition. I will regard what I possess as belonging to the poor more than to myself. As much as I can, I will not refuse any poor person. I desire to possess nothing in this world in order to attain the possession of Jesus Christ, unless it is something with which I can relieve His suffering members.

I resolve to fast every Friday unless my health prevents it, only if, dear Father, you permit me this little mortification which I would like to accompany with some others, especially in these days, because I have infinite need of patience and I have never made any mortification which was in the least proportionate with my offenses.

I wish to obey my Mother in the smallest things unless there are good reasons not to do them; in that case I will make a respectful explanation to her. I will neglect no occasion to lead her to God. I will do as much when dealing with my neighbor, to whom I will always render all the services which depend on me, while at the same time asking God not to distract me from His presence. And I want to devote myself to arriving at that happiness (which I expect more from the pure mercy of God than from my efforts) of the interior presence of God within me. For that reason I will maintain silence as much as possible in my position.

As much as possible, I want to keep in my heart a real grief for my sins. I also want to recall as often as possible the thought that most remained with me and most consoled me during my retreat — to place myself at the feet of Our Lord Jesus Christ with Saint Mary Magdalene, thus arousing within me the sentiments which filled that blessed penitent, especially at the moment she obtained pardon of her sins from the very word of Jesus, and at the moment when Our Lord was taken down from the cross and placed into the arms of His Mother.

After Our Divine Savior, it is in this good Mother that I wish to place all my confidence and on every occasion to give her marks of my gratitude for graces received through her, particularly my conversion which she assuredly asked of Her Son very often. All my unhappy

experiences, due to my weakness, have for a long time made me feel my extreme need to be led like a child, for by myself I have known until now only how to go astray. I wish to have a complete docility towards you, Father, who for me hold the place of God. I do not wish to do the least thing, even if most uninteresting, without you're making the decision. I ask this great favor of you.

With all my strength, I wish to tend to the faithful practice of this maxim: Everything to please God, nothing to satisfy me.

Unfortunately, I have great reason to fear, because of my sorry experiences, that these resolutions might be the result of a passing fervor, even though they be entirely founded on my knowledge of myself, my enormous infidelities, God's graces, and the infinite gratitude I owe Him. I already feel them weakening a bit. This idea alone would cause me to despair if God did not at the same time inspire in me the confidence that He Himself wishes finally to terminate my acts of ingratitude. From the depth of my heart, I ask this merciful God to grant me all my life long the spirit of repentance and love, since I am still permitted to cherish this God, so good and so lovable, Whom I have so much offended and Whom I should love today a thousand times more than I do, because He still permits it to my heart. But with His grace, I also want to take every occasion to make Him loved by others and in that way to make reparation, as far as I am able, for the misfortune of having so much offended Him.

With regard to what I own, I wish that it were possible for me in my position to dispose of nothing except by obedience, especially as regards me personally, desiring to detach my heart not only from my possessions, but also from all things in order to attach it only to Jesus Christ. Amen.

## DOCUMENT V

### TO THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD PROJECT OF A PIOUS SOCIETY (1785)<sup>245</sup>

The idea is that several persons would join together, and would live in common at either a retreat house or hospital, despite the fact that they would still remain contributors to the community where they have established themselves. These women would make for one year only the simple vows of chastity, poverty, obedience. They could not be admitted to the society unless their income were a minimum of eight hundred francs, since their contribution to the house where they have established themselves would reach four hundred francs in order to maintain a place useful for the glory of God and the good of the neighbor.

For their spiritual exercises, they will follow the schedule of the house where they are staying. It could be like the following, for example, used at the Retreat House in Rennes. They will arise at 5:00 a.m. in the summer, half an hour later in the winter, then go to the chapel to make a meditation of half an hour, and chant in common the four Little Hours of the Office of the Blessed Virgin. They will then say prayers in common and attend Mass; do a half-hour of reading in the course of the morning; and devote half an hour of silence to reflection on the reading.

The Superior, chosen by the Sisters for a determined term of office, will — after the reading — designate those who are to visit the sick either outside or inside and those who are to do other good works. (It would always be desirable to have some poor persons and some sick ones nearby.) The other Sisters would work — in common as much as possible — either for the church or for the poor, in silence intermingled with hymns and aspirations. The examen will be made before dinner in the chapel. Then all will dine together, and one of them will read during the meal. Recreation will follow dinner.

If they wish, at 1:00 o'clock they will say the Rosary either before the Blessed Sacrament or in the community room. After this, they may spend the time until Vespers in recollection in their rooms, while occupying themselves with some manual task or spiritual reading. Going

---

<sup>245</sup> A. Rayex, op.cit., p. 178.

out in the afternoon to visit the sick or to perform other good works may be done before or after Vespers, depending on whether the Superior deems it necessary. The same persons will not go out twice on the one day in order that they may have sufficient time for recollection. On Sundays and feast-days, two might attend the Solemn Mass and two the afternoon Office.

It is hoped that there will be enough members to permit each one to spend an entire week, or at least several days, without going out, thus preserving the spirit of recollection. However, the small number and the needs of the neighbor might determine otherwise.

After Vespers at 3:00 p.m., they may make a half-hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and offer some devotion to the Blessed Virgin: either a second Rosary or the Little Crown of Mary. After this, gathering together in the community room, they could have reading — for example, from the lives of the Saints — until Compline at 5:00 p.m. At the end of this half-hour of prayer, they would have a moment in their own rooms until supper at 6:00 p.m. Recreation would end at 8:00 p.m., followed by Matins and Lauds, and night prayer. Bedtime would be at 9:30 at the latest, insofar as possible.

They will follow the spirit of Saint Francis de Sales and the wise Constitutions of the Visitation insofar as these may fit in with the works of charity undertaken, according to the first plan of the Saint for his Institute, uniting the active life with the interior life of his Daughters.

The simple vow of Poverty will not prevent each one from having the benefit of her personal inheritance, but the simple vow of Obedience will permit her to use the money only with the express permission of the Superior. Each member will turn over her entire income to the Superior, who will use it for the support and the needs of the members of this Society, and devote the remainder to the different needs of the poor. In this way the members' goods will be held in common, as among the first Christians, in order to serve the various needs of their indigent brethren.

Their manner of dress will be simple and uniform. They will not have any worry for their temporal needs. They will take care of each other when they are ill. They will have no anxiety about themselves so that they will be entirely devoted to prayer and good works, and will offer themselves to God, through obedience, to perform all works which Providence will assign to them. Thus, they might be called Daughters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin since, through Mary, they will be offering themselves to Our Lord, in order to fulfill all of His wishes while wanting nothing for themselves except the spiritual and temporal good of the neighbor.

It will be a free state of life, with commitment for only one year. If this is a satisfying form of life, the commitment will be renewed each year through the hands of the Superior on the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

Each day they will faithfully make frequent visits to Our Lord Jesus Christ in His Sacrament of Love, as they go and come throughout the house and even while they are outside making calls on the sick.

They will be occupied in the retreat work or the other good works of their respective houses, either by assisting retreatants or by instructing the poor. At the same time, they will not become too involved in anything in these houses unless given permission to do so.

They will give up all unnecessary visits, even to the home of their parents, unless such visits occur in moments of sorrow or illness or for purposes of charity, and are made with the permission of the Superior to whom a complete report must be given. Also they must avoid receiving visits unless for the same motives. Visitors must never be received in the private rooms but in a parlor or room set aside for speaking with visitors from the outside. At recreation time the Sisters will also avoid speaking among themselves of useless things. Their respective practices of charity might be the subject of their recreation-time conversations.

(A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER DEFINITELY BELONGING TO  
THE "PROJECT OF A PIOUS SOCIETY)

Religious exercises missed at the scheduled time because of employment in charitable works will not have to be made up. As much as possible, only illness will permit the missing of religious exercises held at the house for the day. Nobody will dispense herself from morning and evening exercises. At these times nobody is to be outside the house for charitable works except in extraordinary cases.

Generally, it will be possible to pay someone to handle each one's business matters so that the things of the world become less distracting.

## DOCUMENT VI

### LETTER FROM MOTHER DE CICÉ TO FATHER DE CLORIVIÈRE (Mid-October, 1787)

With deep gratitude I have received, Father, the letter which you have been good enough to write me. I ask God with all my heart to grant me the grace to benefit from everything you tell me.

Before receiving your letter, I had mentioned to my confessor that you had told me to ask his permission for daily Communion. I also told him that I was experiencing distress because, though you insisted on that point from the beginning, I thought that on knowing me better you might have changed your mind. You might no longer have deemed that I should ask for this grace, which I had planned to ask of you since the end of my retreat. My confessor had taken the position, before awaiting your reply, that my Communions not be interrupted since the good God has permitted me this privilege through the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Since it is to you that I owe this happiness, which I would never have dared to request without you, Father, I hope that you will fervently plead with Our Lord to grant me the grace never to receive Him without profit and also to have my life henceforth correspond to so great a grace.

As regards the course you feel inclined to advise me to pursue after having referred it to the Lord, I have experienced a great joy in the hope you give me of seeing God's plans accomplished in me. So very often I find a sea of difficulties in the execution of this project. But if it comes from God, I feel that I must not fear that any obstacle will thwart His will. More than anything else, it is myself that I fear.

I have spoken to my confessor about what you indicated concerning my project. At first he told me that I would attain that goal only to withdraw from it; that my plan was unstable; that after my having tried such things — at Le Colombier and the Incurables — this

undertaking would bear the imprint of fickleness; that he had rather thought that I must not abandon my plan of associating myself with several women to live as a group of resident boarders in the Retreat House at Rennes and together to undertake works of charity. I told him that I would do nothing without his counsel. I told him also that your advice had been to refer to him what you were proposing and that you even were recommending to me not to insist in the event that his opinion differed from yours. I asked him to permit me to show him your letter. Several days later he told me he did not forbid me to think of this project, even though he saw serious difficulties as regards the house in which it would be carried out and as regards myself. His first thought was that all new forms are not favorably viewed in a community of nuns, and that a good number of religious would not approve of the project. To this I responded that it involved only living in common as the communities do, but always in dependence, not concerning ourselves in anything at the house where we lived unless requested to do so as aides during the time not devoted to good works undertaken only through obedience.

As for me — and this is what strikes him most — he thinks it impossible for me not to find many obstacles in the good I would wish to do. He believes that my views will not be accepted, and that I will not be happy at all. I believe also that in this he finds difficulties arising from my character. These difficulties also disturb me. Above all, I fear my unevenness of temperament for living a community life and my extreme sensitiveness and touchiness when I find myself in these annoying dispositions. At such times I avoid people as much as possible in order not to display ill-temper, and I tend to remain very much in solitude. All this derives from the fact that I really do not know how to conquer myself. However, may I hope to reform at my age so that these defects will not pose a great difficulty? I know that by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ all things are possible to man, and from my Divine Savior I hope for all things. My anxiety in this area is Father de la Croix's statement to me that the type of life to which God destined us was usually linked closely with our character and our inclinations. The only thing that would make him see the semblance of possibility in this project is your feeling about it. Also he suggested that I need but write to you about the project to see if you had new thoughts about it.

I did not write to you sooner because I thought my letter would arrive before your return from your proposed trip to the Saint Malo Seminary early in October. Also I wished to report to you quite clearly the thoughts of Father de la Croix. He advised me strongly to keep myself disposed to do the will of God as it will be made known to me, and to say often to Our Lord: "Speak, Your servant listens"; or with another prophet: "Here am I, Lord; what do You desire of me? Here am I, ready to go wherever You will." I often repeat these words interiorly. Father de la Croix also told me that I might be leaving a good which is certain for another which is uncertain. He mentioned that God sometimes wanted of us consent for things whose actual carrying out He does not want, as was the case in saints of both the Old and New Testaments. But he exhorted me always to maintain the disposition of obeying the wishes of the Lord, whatever they might be. I fear that the defects which I recognize in myself and of which I have spoken to you, as well as those which I do not see but which you indeed observe, may constitute an obstacle; such as the unevenness of my character, my haste, my preoccupation first of all with what pleases me, and my ease in feeling aversion for the things that I had wished for the most. My experience in these things while I was at Le Colombier gives me cause for fear. I realize that this course of action is very different,

because liberty is fundamentally conserved, although the sacrifice of it is renewed each year. There is no cloister and thus the exercise of all sorts of works of mercy is preserved.

I must also tell you, Father, that I have sometimes had the thought, especially at the end of the retreat at the Convent of the Daughters of the Cross, that God did not want me with that community because I felt such haste to leave them that it seemed the very earth was burning my feet. But truly, the moment I followed your advice to speak to the Superior during the course of the retreat, I became calmer. It is true that my departure was then decided, but I think I would have remained more willingly a few days after that. I was never able to understand this extreme impatience to go that day to the place where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed all day long.

The reasons which came to my mind also are the regret which I felt in not experiencing the consolation I had expected after having made the sacrifice which the Lord demanded of me. I was anxious that, not having felt contrition, I might seem unfeeling to you. I was tormented by having all these dispositions and feeling the uncertainty of my lot. I was perplexed at not knowing how to resolve my problem, for I believed I was failing God's grace, and I did not feel I had the strength to do what His grace inspired in me. I also believed that you would be leaving on the last day of the retreat, and I was not tranquil enough to be able to hope to receive Communion without prior absolution.

My whole desire now is that God's will be pointed out to me explicitly, and I hope that my entire concern will be to follow His holy will. You have pointed out to me that Father de la Croix's decision is the sign by which I must recognize God's will. I obeyed you. I have not insisted on my own point of view. However, I asked Father de la Croix to explain all this to me, and he urged me to continue to ask about these matters. Father de la Croix is recommending the matter to God, and, while not forbidding me from giving it my attention, he makes no definite pronouncement on it. I think Father de la Croix will do this only after having received your reaction to his thought that I must not give up my plan to associate myself to some of the persons in this house.

I raised an objection to Father de la Croix. My first plan was based on the condition of this house, deprived of subjects and about to admit resident boarders. Since it is a retreat house, the choice of prospective residents would be interesting. Also I pointed this out: it seemed that the designs of Providence were that the house not receive such residents, as none had presented themselves in the three years since the first decision to admit them. In the event that any had been received, it is certain that residents such as I would have hoped for would have been very suited to help the Sisters at the Retreat House and to make up for their lack of staff. The Sisters did receive four subjects to replace the four who had left. An outside person, whom I did not know but who had been directed to me, had been thinking about this house and seemed to have the same point of view as my own. But she did not come. It thus seems that the present designs of Providence are not to lead boarding residents to this house. When I came as one, the Sisters seemed to hope that my example would be followed. But when they began receiving subjects, they seemed to have given up entirely the idea of boarding residents.

As for me, my plan caused regret that no boarding residents had come, residents of the caliber I had been wishing for. For I do not wish any ordinary type of resident; on the contrary, there are some whom I fear having. Moreover, I indicated to Father de la Croix that my wish for the members' practice of obedience and poverty was not feasible in this house. (I do not wish to diminish anything in my plan for assistance to the poor, and I would wish to be as stripped of everything for myself as if I had solemnly given up all things.) This house is but an association, without the vow of obedience. It would be unfeasible for the residents to be practicing among themselves what the Religious here do not practice, whether they decided to submit themselves entirely to the Superior of the house or whether they selected a Superior from their own group. This would presuppose two Societies in one and, above all, two Superiors. As you thought, this is not viable. Also from this point of view, it makes me absolutely despair of the plan which I presented to you at Saint Charles and in which you saw no semblance of success.

Before going to the Daughters of the Cross, I had thought of finding a dependable house, and I often asked the good Lord to make me know a person suited to be head of this good work, provided it were to succeed for His glory. I will admit to you, Father, that almost as soon as I became acquainted with you, I hoped that the Lord would grant me this grace. And the more I go along, the more I desire to place myself entirely in your hands to do whatever will be more pleasing to Our Lord. If He were to inspire you to permit me to make the vow of obeying you, I feel my difficulties would vanish. I would direct all my efforts toward the obedience I would be rendering to Our Lord Jesus Christ through you. Your reply to me on this point at the Convent of the Daughters of the Cross prevented me from again mentioning it in my last letter, and I even feared I had deceived myself. But more and more I think of this and I hope that, unless it were contrary to God's will, this would be for me the only means of following God's will, entirely and faithfully — for I have every reason to fear my own inconstancy. But on this point, as on all others, I submit to everything which you will judge to be for the greater glory of God.

I also reminded Father de la Croix of something which makes me think that the good Lord does not will that the project be carried out here. The desire to fulfill what I thought might be part of God's designs for me led me to ask Father de la Croix's permission to rent some rooms near the Retreat House at Rennes. My plan was to house there several poor, ailing and abandoned women without any resources, such as those in the country places or those suffering from depression, women not admitted to hospitals and, therefore, among the most unfortunate. I thought of having five beds in honor of the Five Wounds of Our Lord. I told Father de la Croix, who promised to help me make the arrangements, that I hoped when I would have some poor persons that the good Lord would send me someone to help care for them. This would initiate my project. Despite my desire and the efforts I made, this plan did not succeed for lack of suitable quarters.

Before receiving your letter and not flattering myself that I would see the realization of my project so soon, I always had the thought of using the pretext of the thermal baths of Dinan to go first to that city and from there to the Convent of the Cross in order not to reveal anything about my project. What you tell me about not slowing up what I have to do if my trip materializes makes me think that finding a pretext in order not to reveal anything about my project might perhaps be going beyond human prudence. Leaving at this particular

season might be announcing my plans publicly. I would have to advise my relatives before leaving, and without doubt they would oppose it. If it were at all feasible, I really believe it would be less suspicious and less surprising if I rather went to the Convent of the Daughters of the Cross next year.

Until then, I might take advantage of the interval for putting all matters in order so that I would not be obliged to return, if Divine Providence destined me to remain there permanently. I could remain at the Convent as long as you deemed it convenient without anyone except the Superior knowing of my project.

I will try not to leave behind matters to be put in order by persons with whom I am involved. I will endeavor to have matters not concluded by me handled by some of my acquaintances. Before receiving your letter, I would use the pretext of the thermal baths if you thought I should return to the Convent of the Daughters of the Cross to think over my project. At the same time, I thought of going to Dinan since I do have — and would continue to have — the greatest need of your advice before undertaking anything. I do not wish, nor am I able, to decide anything except on your advice. My interior motives and reason itself coincide perfectly on this point. It seems to me that the good Lord, Who would permit and would will this undertaking, could not fail to will also the means for making it succeed. I avow to you, dear Father that I would feel no encouragement without the support given to me by Our Lord Himself.

## DOCUMENT VII

### VOW OF OBEDIENCE TO FATHER DE CLORIVIÈRE

Lord God, almighty and eternal, I, Adelaide-Marie Champion de Cisé, prostrate in Your presence, most unworthy yet trusting in Your goodness and mercy, vow to Your Divine Majesty in the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the heavenly court, obedience to Father de Clorivière under the authority of all lawful superiors, begging Your infinite goodness through the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ that You will be pleased to receive this holocaust in an odor of sweetness, and as You have been pleased to give me the grace to desire it and offer it to You, grant me the further grace of continuing to carry it out through the rest of my life. Amen.

June 6, 1791

## DOCUMENT VIII

### RESOLUTION TO KEEP HER VOWS FAITHFULLY<sup>246</sup>

Praised be Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother.

I propose, with God's grace, to do everything that depends on me to fulfill my vows with as much fidelity as I have infractions of which to accuse myself; I have necessarily little time remaining in which to make reparation because of my age; the graces God has bestowed on me have been great and repeated during the entire course of my life, and my resistances almost continual.

With regard to my vow of poverty, I wish to begin to detach myself wholeheartedly from everything I possess or may possess. I wish to renounce all things exteriorly and interiorly as much as obedience will allow. I will oppose the greatest detachment to that attachment to goods of the earth which has been the source of so many of my faults. I will not be satisfied merely not to love these things and not to acquire them without permission, but will indeed be persuaded that they belong to the Lord. I will consider that others, who have not abused those things, deserve them better than I do, and I will very joyfully use these things or see them used for the service of others, if it pleases God.

If God wants me for my greater good to live in absolute dependence on others for the necessities of life, and if I were unable to recover any of my possessions, far from being distressed by this I should make every effort to be glad of it. I should take this opportunity to reduce myself on every occasion to the condition of the poor. On every occasion when these

---

<sup>246</sup> Written without date or title. Cf. A. Rayez, op.cit., p. 171.

things to which I have been slavishly attached come back to my mind, I will diligently scorn them. I will remember that all unworthy and despicable as they are, my attachment to them has been the source of very many small injustices against my neighbor. They have caused me to fail in rendering my neighbor his due in exact justice and more often in rendering him what just compassion for his needs should have committed me to give him in aid.

In my life, even after my religious commitments, there was a considerable time in which my heart was completely closed to the needs of my neighbor. My financial situation served as a pretext for not at all understanding abandonment to Providence, even though I was often reminded of it by Him Who is capable of judging all things. Despite counsels and protests, I often became very sad over my position. I used the excuse of embarrassment wherever I was, spending nothing in order to provide for common expenses. This made me frightfully stingy. Yet I never lacked anything. Still this fear tormented me unceasingly. It was due, it seems to me, to two things: I feared I would lack not the necessary but things which I thought I could not do without; also, my pride made me fear dependence on others. These attitudes made me bitter and avid in pursuit of the least little profit, either in the sale of my effects or in the manner of pursuing certain work to which I gave time contrary to my obligations in obedience. My Superior had complained that these represented time taken from my duties. In addition, there were things I used without overemphasis on quality, for I was obliged to use what were my belongings and my sister's. I realize and I believe that my reflections and thoughts here have had helpful fruits in this regard. As regards those belongings, I even believe that I should not have permitted myself to have such a great quantity of them (they were articles I did not have to buy). I also believe that it would have been better for me to have gotten rid of them even at a loss. They were things of insufficient religious simplicity, things I had renounced, things for which the taste returned as I used them.

I resolve, in order to work out a reform of life in the practical sphere, to use for some of my Sisters, who might need them and who would not be harmed in any way by using them, certain odds and ends to which I was attached. If my Superiors approve and if the state of affairs allows my returning to my black outfit, I will dispose myself, with God's grace, to do so, without acceding to my distaste, which is already making itself a bit felt in advance. I will, instead, make an effort to rejoice in spirit for this occasion to humble my self-love and to practice poverty and simplicity.

In my Communion today, I tried to give my heart to God more perfectly than ever. I have desired (and this is the thought which came to me) that my heart be clothed and adorned with the perfection of the three vows of religion; that this offering of my heart detach me completely from all things of earth; that Jesus Christ be my only treasure; that in opposition to my attraction towards creatures, which has been the source of so many and such great faults, I may no longer love anything except in God, but that I may love my neighbor far more, as I always have been drawn to do, in order to procure above all his spiritual welfare.

As for my vow of obedience, may I find in myself no longer any will of my own, and if I do, may I make it die at once in order to expiate my resistance to God's wishes and to those who hold God's place for me.

DOCUMENT IX

RETREAT OF PENTECOST, 1792<sup>247</sup>

May Jesus and Mary reign!

With God's grace, I resolve to have more respect, both interior and exterior, when I am in church; to be faithful to my exercises of piety without seeking consolation in them. I will receive consolation humbly whenever it will please the Lord to send it, but I will not become discouraged when I will be deprived of it. I will try to follow directions given to me as regards mental prayer.

In all matters I will obey promptly and exactly, always seeing Our Lord in the person He has deigned to send me in His place. When I will not know positively what I must do, I will strive to enter into the sentiments of my Superior and, consequently, to act in a manner conformable to the intentions of my Superior. I will frequently reflect that I do not belong to myself, but that I belong to Our Lord; to Whom, after having considered other options, I have given myself without reservations.

Despite all my present failings and my sinful life in the past, I will no longer dwell on sentiments of defiance because I have been told not to do so.

I will adhere faithfully to the exercise of the presence of God and to constant prayer when I write, read, etc., striving always to remember God. I will acquire the habit, which

---

<sup>247</sup> This handwritten document does not seem to have been published in the mimeographed edition of the Writings.

unfortunately I do not have, of offering each action to Him. As I go and come to my home or as I walk on the streets, I will offer all my steps to Our Lord in the hope that they will bring me closer to Him and His holy Mother.

I will work at being gentler and more even-tempered with all my companions. I shall profit from every occasion to bring them to God. I shall stifle the sentiment of envy arising within me whenever I witness their good example, which I will try to imitate.

I will be more faithful to the interior mortification of my passions and of my senses.

I will strive to maintain peace of heart in all contradictory circumstances. On the very first reflection of such contradictions, I will repeat from the depths of my heart what I was taught to say if possible, viz., Fiat; Accomplish Your will in me, Lord Jesus, for the glory of Your holy name.

I will be more attentive and reverential in receiving the Sacraments.

I will act so as not to lose one moment of time nor utter so many useless words.

(The original manuscript ends at this point, but there is a large blank space at the bottom of the page.)

#### DOCUMENT X

### HANDWRITTEN STATEMENT OF MOTHER DE CICÉ, IN HER OWN DEFENSE AT THE TRIAL OF THE "INFERNAL MACHINE" PLOT, 1801.<sup>248</sup>

Desiring to make known my conduct in this situation, I submit the following.

I have absolutely no reproaches to make against myself that I entered into any plot, or that I had any knowledge of any plot. I may have done an imprudent thing in finding shelter, as I was asked to do, for a man unknown to me. To that, I reply that I hardly had time to think about it. The occasion arose at the very moment when Madame de Gouyon and her daughters were leaving my home. So I had the thought of asking her to take him along and to find out for me if Madame Duquesne would be kind enough to receive for two or three days a man whose papers were not in order. He lived quite tranquilly in Paris but feared that the increasingly frequent examinations of documents being made at the time might cause his own papers to be checked. He was seeking lodgings only for a very brief time since he had to go to his family in the country.

---

<sup>248</sup> We do not know whether this text was submitted to the judges or read in the course of the trial.

I did not inform myself of the name or home residence of this man. I thought only of the position he was in as I have just represented it. Only after his arrest did I learn his name and everything said about him. Nothing had been told me previously. It was only that a certain person — as I said, it was not M. de Limoelan — asked me to find lodgings for him.

I insist that such person made this request out of charity, for the person was as far from doing and suspecting evil as I am. I have refused to name that person and intend not to do so because that person's innocence would not spare suspicion any more than my innocence is sparing me. This person is not guilty. I am sure of it. It is an injustice to have the person suspected of guilt. The natural law imposes on me that I not do to others what I would not wish done to me. Religion consecrates that principle. It is not a crime that my silence hides from justice but rather the innocence of another person. That person had no more knowledge than I of the horrible plot, and therefore could shed no light on it. I am certain of that person's unawareness of the plot, and I have no doubt of it. But supposing the impossible, viz. that natural sympathy for an unfortunate one had misled the person, had deceived the person to suspect the man on trial, the person never would have been able to compromise me or others in this way. Such is not the conduct of an honest human being, and that person is indeed honest. The man on trial was as unknown to that person as he was to me — even as far as his name was concerned. I represent that the suggestion made to the man on trial occurred only because the request was made to me at the moment when Madame de Gouyon was leaving my home. Without any other possibility and without this particular circumstance, the matter would have rested there and the request would have been refused. It is a proof of the simplicity with which I acted, without time to think, following the first idea which presented itself. The whole matter involving no deliberation took less than five minutes.

I also wish to attest that this person whom I am asked to name experienced the same horror and indignation as I on learning of the frightful plot after it occurred. On that occasion, as in several others, I praised divine Providence for sparing the First Consul. The same Providence, which watches over us, protected the First Consul from the dangers threatening his life undoubtedly in order to make him more than ever the protector of this divine faith, so dear to my heart. It is the sole faith capable of bringing us happiness, the faith of Jesus Christ. It teaches me to love my neighbors, to do for them whatever good depends on me, to wish greater good for them, not to do or wish harm to anyone under any pretext. That faith teaches me also that as long as my conscience is clear, I must rely on its witness in my behalf while I await the manifestation of my innocence; I must rely on the goodness of God Who protects me; I must rely on the justice of my cause.

To return to the facts of the case: as Madame de Gouyon was leaving my room, I was told that this man was downstairs awaiting my reply. I went downstairs with Madame Gouyon and asked her to allow him to follow her. From the doorway of the house, I told this man, whom I did not see because it was dark and rainy, to accompany her to her lodging. I went back upstairs to my apartment. The next day, I went to visit Madame Duquesne. From her I learned what had transpired: that charity on the one hand and trust in me on the other had resulted in a bed being prepared for the man. They did not wish to turn him away at that late hour and in such miserable weather, especially since I had been assured and since I myself had said, he was a very honest man. I then saw him for the first time, since the night before in the bad weather I had not been able to distinguish him. He repeated to me the same

things I had been told about him, especially that he would immediately be leaving for the country. Those were my only contacts with him. My ever increasing sorrow that my recommendation caused suffering to the most respectable persons, has made me very careful not to name anybody lest others also experience grief. During interrogations, I was reproached for this; hence, the motive for my silence. In everything that has been able or that would be able to be discovered about my conduct, nothing culpable or suspicious would ever be found. Only the most innocent things have been found in my home. Nevertheless, two locked drawers of my desk were forced open to reveal what I considered most personal — letters from my brothers. Without a doubt, if anything suspicious had existed, it would have been found.

I point out further that it is necessary only to check on my conduct since the arrest of this man to realize that I have no knowledge whatever of this frightful happening. If I had had such knowledge, how could I have remained so tranquilly in my home? On Sunday morning, learning of Madame Duquesne's arrest, my first act was to appear at once, without having been summoned, so certain was I of my innocence, of her innocence and of the innocence of all the other persons who helped in my request to obtain lodging for the man. If I did not speak then, I did on the following Tuesday when I was arrested, render homage to the truth. May the truth make itself heard in its fullness in the hearts of those now listening to me. I hope in God, the protector of innocence. He will not permit that an imprudence which charity pardons, be transformed into a crime which charity abhors.

(What follows, coming after a large white space,  
appeared on another sheet of paper.)

Citizens-Judges, could you suspect me and above all accuse me of complicity if an act of compassion natural to my womanhood led me to give shelter to a culprit in whom I had seen only a pitiable person. If in that supposition, your justice guided by your heart had made you see my innocence, how could you not acknowledge it — especially since the respectable friends I am honored to have, saw, like me, only a man troubled by circumstances? Is there one among you whose heart would not have agreed with ours if you had been in our place?

DOCUMENT XI

DRAFT LETTER TO FATHER DE CLORIVIÈRE TO REQUEST  
APPROBATION OF THE SOCIETY (1813?)

(written without heading or date)

My honored Father,

In the name of my Sisters as well as in my own name, I write to entreat you kindly to convey to the Supreme Pontiff our respect for, and profound devotion to his person.

Deign to direct to him our wishes that the little Society of the Heart of Mary have the happiness of his approval. Thus, under his authority, it will form a new Religious Society, dedicated by virtue of its total dedication to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, to the salvation and perfection of souls through all possible means. Our vocation will not exclude any of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy which we may practice.

In the presence of God, we attest that this form of life has been beneficial to our souls. We are supported in this by our beginnings and our earliest efforts under your felicitous leadership, most honored Father, amid the tragic events in our stricken country since February 2, 1791, date of our first consecration. This is truer now than ever before. I am

deeply convinced that this is God's work, inspired by Him alone in the person He sent me as director along the path of truth. And it is to that person that I owe, after God, the inestimable joy of knowing the road I must take in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His holy Mother, to whose Sacred Hearts I must unswervingly attach myself.

Humbly prostrate at the feet of the Vicar of Christ together with you, my most honored Father, and with all my Sisters, we ask his approbation for the greater glory of God and for the salvation and perfection of our souls. In order for us to attach ourselves in a more solid, more useful, more sanctifying manner to the kind of religious and apostolic life whose inspiration God sent you, I profess with all my soul the most perfect obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff. In the name of the Lord, I implore his apostolic blessing for all my sisters and for myself and I ask that he join to the grace of his approbation, confirmation of our being under your direction, our most honored Father and Superior.

## DOCUMENT XII

### FIRST CIRCULAR LETTER

(written without heading or date)

Praised be Our Lord Jesus Christ and His most Holy Mother!

The distance between us, my very dear Sisters, obliged me to write to you to make up for such separation. With increasing consolation I always learn that you more and more desire to make yourselves pleasing to Our Lord and to prepare for Him hearts where He may make His abode. I join you in asking for this grace through His Sacred Heart and through the heart of His Mother; and I dare to hope that in His infinite goodness, He will deign to grant a prayer so conformed to His good pleasure and made in great fervor and simplicity.

You have desired that I describe for you the manner in which our meetings are conducted. They are held quite regularly on Sundays and holy-days. You know what the rule says about this. Our Father would wish that we conform to this as much as possible. But since we have not yet been organized enough for those matters, he himself presides at our meetings. This is, more or less, our procedure:

After invocation of the Holy Spirit and the Hail, Mary, my Father explains the points of our Rule, one by one. In these talks, he inserts the things which may most arouse attention and engrave in hearts and minds the truths with which he wishes to imbue us. Toward this end,

he gives several examples which strike us and inspire us to the practice of virtue. He inspires in all of us the confidence to make objections which arise about the subject under discussion, and he replies with a goodness and solidity which leave nothing to be desired. The conference ends with prayer, just as it had opened with prayer. We say at this point the prayers of the Society. At the first opportunity, I will forward them to you.

The prayers we say before and after meals are, in a shortened form, the same as customarily said in the communities. We must not fail before meals to be imbued with this maxim: Whether we eat or we drink or whatever we do, let it be done for the greater glory of God and in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. That is why, when you gather for meals together, it would be well to remember that maxim immediately after the grace before meals. It is good to remember, as you do desire it, my dear Sisters, that we all have but one heart and one soul with which to praise God and His holy Mother.

We recommend you most earnestly to strive to maintain the closest and most affectionate union with each other; this can be hoped for only in so far as each of us is ready to make every kind of sacrifice for the sake of charity. If we are faithful to this, Our Lord will, according to His promise, be in the midst of us; he will be at the heart of all our dealings with each other, and we shall act only under the impulse of His grace, provided that we take care often to withdraw quietly into ourselves and listen in silence to that interior voice by which He is pleased to speak to those who have no other desire than to do His will. He will tell us always to see Himself in our neighbor, especially in each of our Sisters. In this light, from which we must never turn our eyes, a sweet and tender charity will enter into all our dealings with each other.

This charity which we owe to one another must not diminish the general charity which we owe to our neighbor and which must be pure and disinterested. It must also be prudent and discreet according to the age and sex of those we are serving. The spirit of the Society of the Heart of Mary must not be self-centered. Our charity must extend to all mankind. And, after the example of the maternal Heart of Mary, our hearts must contain the whole universe. It is by such charity, more than by any other means, that we can hope to attain the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Our charity for our neighbor must be pure and disinterested. We must above all consider the greater glory of God and the good of our brothers (two objectives which are always connected) without examining what might come to mind about the particular good of the Society. We must not have any illusions on that point: the Society must not recognize any good for itself except the accomplishment of the designs of God.

We cannot recommend to you too strongly, my dear friends, that virtue of discretion which requires that each one act only on the advice of her superiors and that each one submit her views and attractions in all matters, holy as these might be. That is the infallible means for not going astray. We earnestly wish to make all feel the importance of living by those principles. Above all, we insist that no one ever speak of the Society without having obtained the permission of the superiors and having made known to them persons considered suitable. Even less will anyone make known the books of the Society. I believe it quite proper that this be reserved to the Superior. It is also her responsibility to have the sisters promise not to speak of Society matters or members. I will send you the formula for this promise. It would be well that all Society members make this promise in the presence of the Lord. Because it is

a promise made to God, it is to be made on one's knees after the consecration, i.e. after the Te Deum said as thanksgiving. However, one is obliged to keep the secret independently of that promise. This obligation is grave because it involves important matter. But the promise made serves to engrave more deeply on our minds the remembrance of the matter.

You are quite right in thinking that the first Daughters of Mary ought to be models of all the virtues, because those who come afterwards must find in us examples of what they themselves must become in order to correspond with their holy vocation. Let us all join together then, my dear companions, to obtain from Our Lord, through the mediation of His blessed Mother, a powerful grace which will make us triumph over ourselves completely and give up all our own miserable little interests so as to have no others than those of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Our divine Master, and those of our august Queen, the most blessed Virgin. The best means for attaining such great happiness is, for each of us, fidelity to our holy vocation which requires us to live in the practice of the evangelical counsels — a practice in which we are guided by the Rule of Conduct which we may rightly believe to have been dictated by the Holy Spirit for each one of us.

That is why we must not look for our perfection in external things or in extraordinary graces which do not depend on us, but in the exact fulfillment of our duties (in which we must take great care to be well instructed) and above all in the perfection of charity towards God and our neighbor. If this charity is truly great, its effects will likewise be great.

Let us work with indefatigable care and let us pursue without respite the great enterprise we have undertaken of striving for perfection and of leading as many souls to it as we can, with the help of divine grace, even though at times we see no fruit from our work. Let us, therefore, apply ourselves to acquiring the solid virtues of humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness of insults and tolerance. If we practice these virtues faithfully, they will bring our hearts truly into conformity with that of Our divine Master and our holy Mother.

Let us also be on our guard against upsetting family or social obligations. A Superior of the Society must be most careful to distinguish between what is within her competence in the government of a subject, and what is not; she must always bear in mind that when any of them may and should remain in her own position in life, the Superior cannot prescribe anything contrary to the duties of that position. The obligations which one contracts in the Society must not only sanctify the duties imposed on each member by her own individual position in life, but they must also facilitate their observance and help to ease whatever hardship there may be in them by the great motives which must animate those who have had the happiness of giving themselves wholly to God, either by the first act of consecration in the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, or even more closely by the consummation of the sacrifice in religion.

Let us often recall, my very dear Sisters, what we must never forget, that we are in the world but not of it, and that we are there only to procure the glory of Jesus Christ to Whom alone we belong. But at the same time let us avoid any external singularity not dictated by virtue or modesty. The name of Daughters of the Heart of Mary which we have the happiness to bear must remind us that we are to endeavor above all things to mold our interior life on the model which is given to us. Let us often meditate on whether our spiritual life bears any

resemblance to that Temple of the Holy Spirit, the heart of the most pure Mary, to the imitation of whose virtues we must devote ourselves unceasingly.

Our dedicated service of Mary must be limitless. After her divine Son, it is she who must have primacy in all aspects of our life. We could hardly love or respect her too much. One of the principal objects of our Society is to make reparation to Mary for the homage taken from her by the suppression of religious orders and for the many insults she has received in these hapless times. Our confidence in her must be such that we expect everything from her protection since she is, for all mankind and in a special way for us, the channel of graces of which Jesus Christ is the source.

I implore you, my very dear Sisters, in the name of Our Divine Master, to unite yourself to Mary most intimately, to have for her the tenderest and submissive sentiments of a child towards the dearest and worthiest Mother, to utter her name only with respect and love. If you acquire this habit you will be feared by hell and will be able to undertake all things against hell in the name of Jesus and His most holy Mother.

While thus cultivating the interior virtues, we must not neglect general edification. By the grace of God let us place ourselves above all human respect; let us spread everywhere the sweet odor of Jesus Christ; let us never blush for Him before men, so that He will recognize us one day before the heavenly Father. Belonging so closely to Him, we should be great cowards if we were afraid of being recognized as servants of Jesus Christ; and if, as we may expect, we should have something to suffer for the divine name of Jesus, utterly unworthy as we are of such a favor, we must then open our hearts, like the Apostles, to the sweetest sentiments of joy.

But zeal must be directed by a heavenly prudence which helps us to keep a just mean between excesses which would cause us to act imprudently and do harm to God's work, and their opposite, which would make us omit what is to the greater glory of God and the salvation of our neighbor. An ardent desire for our own perfection and for that of the souls entrusted to us will always, under the direction of obedience, make us avoid these extremes.

The rendering of the account of conscience is a very important practice. Our Father set it for a day convenient to everyone because it might at first frighten persons not understanding it properly. Let them not be frightened by something which will only enlighten them about their duties, arouse them to the practice of all the virtues, console them, sustain them in their sufferings and teach them to derive from such sufferings all the fruits intended by the Lord. I will send you the instruction which our Father has written about the account of conscience. I do not wish to add anything to it, as his instruction includes everything. I wish that the practice of this account of conscience will be as common among us as it will be profitable to us. God grant us the grace to benefit much from it.

We had the good fortune of a retreat in preparation for our great feast. My Father preached three times a day for us. We were so numerous that we filled our small quarters. Four of our Sisters had the joy of making their vows. We had three oblations and all renewed their holy commitments. This retreat brought us many consolations. We were very close to you in heart and soul, especially on the day of our Holy Mother's triumph. We prayed to her with all

our heart and we continue to pray to cast a benevolent and tender glance on all her children so that they may be animated and supported in the pursuit of the holy enterprises they have begun under her auspices. My very dear Sisters, may we, with the help of this powerful protectress, become each day more worthy of the happiness of belonging to her in such a special way.

Let us prostrate ourselves at her feet, in order to ask her for this grace, for her blessing, and for the blessing of her divine Son.

My dear Sisters, it is especially from my union of prayers and good works with you that I expect the various graces which I need so much in order to accomplish God's will. For this, I recommend myself particularly to your prayers, and I assure you that no one could be more truly entirely yours in general, nor more truly yours individually than I have the happiness to be in the name and for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother.

#### DOCUMENT XIII

#### SECOND CIRCULAR LETTER

(written without heading or date)

Praised be Our Lord Jesus Christ and His most Holy Mother.

My very dear Sisters,

It gives me great satisfaction to hear from each of you the pleasing news of our union in the Sacred Heart of Our divine Master and heavenly Spouse and in that of our august Queen, who is also our loving Mother. I thank them a thousand times for choosing you so that we may all work together to sanctify ourselves and fulfill the very special plans which the Lord has had for us from all eternity, and that we may devote ourselves more specifically to His service by working with all our might to win hearts for Him, after giving Him our own completely.

The good works, so in accordance with our religious vocation and to which many of you have already been assigned by divine Providence are eminently suited to help you to reach the goal we have set before ourselves. Those who are engaged in teaching the young have a very special motive for leading a holy life so that their example, which is always powerful, especially on the young, may be in complete accord with the lessons they give. The excellent plan they have of perpetuating their works of zeal by training virtuous school-mistresses, is a

further reason for demanding this care on their part, in order that they themselves and those whom they teach may carry with them everywhere the sweet odor of Jesus Christ.

It is the same for those who are called to nurse the sick. This is an admirable work and gives them unending opportunities to open the way to heaven for souls who had strayed away from it before their coming into the hospital; and to console and support those who need it, and to remind them of the fundamental truths of our holy religion which have been forgotten or repudiated by some and neglected by others; in short to inspire them all and set them on the road of salvation. This work was consecrated by Our divine Savior's own commendations while He lived among us, and it has something especially attractive for one who loves Him when she thinks of His words: "whatever you do to the least of my little ones, you do it unto Me." What reassurance she must find in these works done in His name, with a lively faith, solely for love of Him, and on behalf of everyone without discrimination! What an inspiration for her during life and above all at the hour of death! According to St. Vincent de Paul, that hero of Christian charity, the inestimable gift of peace of soul particularly at the hour of death is the fruit of practicing works of mercy during life.

As regards those of us, my very dear Sisters, whom divine Providence retains in the world, it is in order to edify the world, succeed in the midst of the world, and sanctify ourselves in the world. We must never lose sight of what is specially recommended to us, namely, to be in the world without being of the world; never to conform ourselves to the world about us in anything which can hurt our conscience, and this requires us to raise ourselves by the grace of God above human respect. Have a horror of all the world's maxims condemned by the Holy Gospel.

With regard to your conduct outside — each according to her own position in life — follow the direction of obedience. God will never allow it to lead you astray, for it is the road along which you walk in His footsteps under the guidance of Superiors whom in His goodness He has chosen for the establishment of this holy enterprise.

I cannot tell you how I rejoice in finding myself united to all of you, separated from my friends as I have been for such a long time. The bonds uniting me to you and rendering me, by God's grace, a sharer in your good works console me a bit for my uselessness. I expect even more from our union. I hope that your virtues and the good that you do will draw down on the two Societies greater graces from the Lord, resulting in the success we desire in this land for the greater glory of the Divine Hearts of Jesus and Mary and for the good and the consolation of several saintly souls aspiring to the same goodness as you. In the Lord we exhort all of you — those of you already separated from the world and living in holy refuges, as well as those of you whom Providence still retains in the world — to live together in a union similar to that of the first Christians whose oneness must be a model for our own. Let us recall that they were but one heart and one soul. Let us imitate their charity in rendering to the community all their spiritual and temporal goods, in so far as this is possible following a wise discretion always directed by obedience.

Let us attend particularly to the interior virtues. They must be as it were the soul of all our external acts. The Sacred Hearts, which are the objects of our love, must also be the objects of our imitation in the practice of the virtues. Let us strive to distinguish ourselves in filial

trust and love of the most Blessed Virgin, and let us ask for each other the grace of uniting ourselves closely with her, of procuring God's glory as much as He enables us to do so, making ourselves all together one heart, as it were, and one soul so that this union may be perfected and consummated in heaven to which we aspire. These are the prayers and desires which are, my very dear Sisters, constantly in the mind of your most devoted and affectionate sister and servant.

Signed: Marie Adelaide, who commends herself very especially to your prayers.

DOCUMENT XIV

LETTER FROM FATHER DE CLORIVIÈRE TO MOTHER DE CICÉ  
April 30, 1791

Mademoiselle and very dear Daughter in O.L.:

Pax Christi!

I have just received a letter from Paris which tells me that seven persons, priests and clerks, have entered the Association of the poor Priests of Jesus. But they add that it is not so with that of Mary; those who were already associated were dispersed because the Community of Miramiones, where they had received shelter, has itself been dispersed. They point out, it is true, that there would be many persons suitable and ready to enter into this Society, but it requires a person to lead them, form them, etc., and this person has not been found. I am persuaded that this first item of news will give you pleasure. I am going to tell you of my reflections on the second item.

It is at Paris, it seems to be that both Societies should 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 shall find more means and more resources to do good with, and there we can proceed in a more secret and sure manner, until the time comes to work openly and when the work of God will be strong enough and extensive enough so that we need not fear the light of day.

The time for undertaking something great for the Lord has come. The great evils from which religion is suffering, the even greater ones with which it is menaced, and which follow as a natural consequence from those from which it suffers now, both require and beg for prompt aid. We must with ourselves save as many persons from shipwreck as we can. It is the surest means to assure our own salvation, and we can do nothing more agreeable to Our Divine Master. I tell you that He desires this, that He is awaiting this from our love; that we have reason to think that it is the end for which He has given us so many graces; and if, for the want of courage or confidence, or through fear of work or of dangers, we refuse to second His adorable designs, would this not be in our case a blamable infidelity, which would cool His love for us and would render us incapable of receiving the gifts which His bounty has destined for us? I am convinced of 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, nevertheless I should believe myself to be very unfaithful if I should not do on my side all that depends on me to fulfill the designs which are far above my strength, but which seem to come from Him.

As for you, Mademoiselle and very dear daughter, what do you yourself think — what are your sentiments? Can you think, can you say that God has not given you great graces; that Our Lord has not granted you, from infancy, 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 during these later 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 scope to your desires; or rather re-animate in yourself those which the Divine bounty has so often inspired in you. Desire to do everything; to suffer everything to gain some souls for Jesus Christ. Forget yourself, do not stop to look at your weakness and your miseries; think of Him Whose all-powerful 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 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 in order to procure both the one and the other; that she be detached from the goods of this world, and the vanities of the time; that she love to speak of God to the poor; that without having been a religious, she understand 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

flesh; that she be adaptable; that she know how to accommodate herself to the different souls in order to gain all for Jesus Christ. That she not be fearful of difficulties; that she be resourceful and have some experience in the ordinary things of life. Now, I find all these things in one person whom the Lord sent to me several years ago, and whose perfection I sincerely desire.

I believe then that I must say to this person that she is the instrument of which God wishes to make 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 wanting, 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 into 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 foreseeing too many future difficulties, we do at the present time all that His lights point out to us; then when difficulties present themselves, He arms us and clothes us with His strength in order to surmount them. The person of whom I speak is still too sensitive, she has not enough faith, which makes her fall easily into perplexities, and then the devil seeks to trouble her by means of subtleties which he presents to her mind. This harms her much and hinders her from advancing in the ways of God. But the Lord has given her docility, and this virtue, sustained by the 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 wish to prescribe or command anything. Let this soul sound herself, let her examine her dispositions, after having consulted the Lord. I do not doubt that the Holy Ghost, Who communicates Himself to the humble, will make known to her what He is expecting from her, and what she can do that will be most conformed to 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 that the interpreter of the will of the Lord in her regard can make it known to her in a more certain way.

I write this from the country in order that you may have leisure to reflect upon it, and because it could happen that tomorrow, when I go to La Croix, I should not have enough time to explain myself to you. I must however inform you of my arrangements. Father B. desires that we send him some tools suited to his trade. They need catechisms, Imitations, etc., some holy pictures, especially of St. Peter. He has asked for my English Bible. He desires the "Variations" of Bossuet. He informs me that some of his belongings may be at the home of Mlle, le Breton, seamstress, Place du Vieux Marche; but that all would not be useful. He presents you his very humble respects. He will only be there a short time because they are urging him to return to Paris; he believes that he cannot do it in less than five or six weeks.

I am, my very dear daughter, entirely yours in Our Lord,

(Signature illegible, probably effaced by Mlle. de Cicé.)

DOCUMENT XV

EXCERPTS FROM MERE DE SAISSEVAL'S "MEMOIRS"

(Excerpts concerning Mother de Cicé)

1801

I saw Madame de Carcado several times, and everything she told me about the Society enchanted me. I also saw Mademoiselle de Cicé, who talked with me on general subjects.

1802

Mademoiselle de Cicé was leaving to join her brother, Bishop de Cicé, at Aix..<sup>249</sup> I knew very well who she was, but didn't quite understand it.

### 1803

(Mother de Cicé's return from Aix)

Even though my sojourn had been a brief one, I thought that in Marseille I had seen a woman, quite young at the time, with the same air of goodness as Mademoiselle de Cicé.

I was at Madame de Carcado's when she arrived. I cannot describe the joy of that moment.

...She lived on Rue Sainte Genevieve. I was happy to visit Madame de Carcado often, but she ordered me to go to see Mademoiselle de Cicé at her home. Very soon I experienced great joy in knowing her because of the goodness of the manner in which she received me. I also experienced consolation in opening my heart to her. I found — and Madame de Carcado agreed — that it was to Mademoiselle de Cicé alone that I must address myself, as the means of making most progress, since several memories of the world still mingled at times in the religious conferences I had with Madame de Carcado...Madame de Carcado had told it to me quite briefly: "Think the opposite of what the world thinks. Do the opposite of what the world does." But the mere sight of Mademoiselle de Cicé told my soul much more. My heart was more Madame de Carcado's, but I wished to make every effort to do the best possible to respond to the vocation which the good Lord had sent me and whose worth I fortunately appreciated."

Mademoiselle de Cicé went to live in the same building as Madame de Carcado. After her imprisonment at the Carmes during the Reign of Terror, Madame de Carcado had gone to reside in her Chateau des Forces in 1798 with the nephews she was raising. She received priests of the Heart of Jesus there. Father de Clorivière made known to her the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, and also Mademoiselle de Cicé, who became her mother and her superior.

They did not take meals together. However, they saw each other a great deal, but less perhaps than Madame de Carcado would have wanted. This is because she could not inconvenience those coming from the outside to speak with Mademoiselle de Cicé, and also perhaps because Madame de Carcado's visits were not as necessary as she imagined. Madame de Carcado often told me that this was a trial sent to her by the Lord, for she would have wanted to submit everything to obedience. She related to me a circumstance that had taught her the need to do this. It happened before my return to France, at the time when she had first begun to know the Society. She had left her friends to go live with Mademoiselle de

---

<sup>249</sup> Mother de Cicé left Paris at the same time as her brother. The Memoirs, written in 1845 long after the facts, contain several errors due to Mother de Saisseval's failing memory.

Cicé in a remote area. On their arrival there, she showed some discontent in saying: "Truly, this is located at the end of the world." Mademoiselle de Cicé replied, "This is the lodging which I chose for you." Madame de Carcado needed nothing more to form forever her obedience of judgment.

The need for meetings of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary obliged the two ladies to hold the gatherings outside their homes, either at the shop of the Berthonnet<sup>250</sup> sisters on Ile Saint-Louis (Paris), or at the home of the Misses Potel at Marais. They brought Mademoiselle d'Acosta and me with them. We were very faithful in attendance and especially faithful to the meetings at the home of Mademoiselle or Madame as we called them....

Mademoiselle de Cicé's health, always very poor, always seemed to improve at times of gatherings, and she always was sure to have something on hand to give us a very frugal dinner.

I never saw anyone more occupied with pleasing God in all things. Whether she was praying or writing it was always love of God which emanated from her. She often read to me what she was writing, and she always had new material for each conference. She based her conferences on the articles of the Summary, but she also liked to use as subject the feasts closest to meeting days. She had great facility in composing hymns. Father de Clorivière would correct them for her and he did not allow her any self-love in this matter. I also observed how much he made her practice obedience and poverty. Her room was very small and very low. In it she had a bed from her family home. It had a crimson damask cover. Father de Clorivière found this too elegant and had her remove it, so that the bed would then be more conformable to the spirit of poverty. Whenever I visited her, she spoke to me a great deal about the poor. Whenever she went out, it was to visit the poor. Mademoiselle was indeed very happy when, in 1803, Madame de Carcado had the inspiration to establish the work for abandoned children, and she involved me in it. It was the year I made my vows...

It was in Mademoiselle de Cicé's hands that Madame de Bouyer, the sister of Mademoiselle d'Esternoz and I made our final vows. Beforehand, I had gone to confession to Father de Clorivière. He told me, "My daughter, act in such a way that nobody will live in your heart and that you will live in nobody's heart." These words struck me very forcibly and made me understand what it means to belong entirely to God....

Mademoiselle de Cicé had obtained from Madame de Soyecourt, Prioress, permission to say aloud every Sunday at the Carmes the mysteries of the Rosary. Many persons gathered there for this.

## 1808

---

<sup>250</sup> Mesdemoiselles Berthonnet.

(Father de Clorivière had just been transferred to the Nursing Home of Doctor Dubuisson.)

As permission was not required to enter this house, I had the happiness of taking Mademoiselle de Cicé there, and she saw the good Father then for the first time since his imprisonment. I think I can say that this was one of the finest days of my life. Scarcely was the door opened than Mother de Cicé threw herself on her knees saying, "Father, give me your blessing." I did the same and I stayed with them throughout this first meeting for fear of arousing suspicions of a plot.

The good priest said Mass each day...Since Father de Clorivière had asked Mademoiselle de Cicé and me to assist at his Mass, we had the joy of receiving Holy Communion from his hand and to hear from his lips words of edification. On another occasion, he asked us to dinner with Father Bourgeois and Mademoiselle d'Acosta. He received us in his room. On that occasion he read us a plan for houses of the Society. Day by day we are seeing the execution of that plan in its most essential points.

Mademoiselle de Cicé lived on Rue Meziere with Madame de Carcado, but they ate separately. Madame Guillemain and Mademoiselle Adenis ran a small boarding place in the same building. The chapel was used for retreats, and the meetings of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary were held there at times when the young residents of the place were out at the Church of St. Sulpice for services....

Madame Guillemain's house was sold for the Sisters of Charity of St. Sulpice sometime after Madame de Carcado's death in 1808. This was a deep sorrow for Mademoiselle de Cicé, who had cared for her like a tender mother. I shared her concerns and gathered thoughts for her on the work for abandoned children. Responding to the fears I expressed to her, she said, "God needs nobody."

1814

(Father de Clorivière had been given charge of the re-establishment of the Society of Jesus in France.)

Mademoiselle de Cicé no longer had news from him so frequently, but she devoted all her cares to the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. The Society was growing but little, thus allowing her time to devote her charity to good works. With great pleasure she observed my regular visits with my daughter to the Hotel-Dieu Hospital. She learned with joy about the particulars of our visits. She also had much to tell me about the work which her own zeal for the salvation of souls inspired her to undertake, and she tried to involve persons who might be useful in those projects....

When Madame Guillemain's house where she lived was acquired by the Sisters of Charity of St. Sulpice Parish, Mademoiselle de Cicé was obliged to move. She rented an apartment in the house of the Missions Etrangères. It had a tribune facing out toward the main altar. When the curtains were drawn, the tribune served as a chapel for renovations. Meetings were held on the tribune or in Mademoiselle de Cicé's room. Her health was failing rapidly

day by day. That did not prevent her from going by carriage to her works of charity and, above all, to go to the Rue des Poste to the little house which Madame de Montjoie, superior of the Sisters of St. Mary, had given Father de Clorivière a room for use by himself and by the re-burgeoning Society of Jesus.

### 1815

I went there with her on March 20, 1815, when Father had to leave the place. Nothing struck me more than seeing Father de Clorivière's resignation in this circumstance....

I know that he often came to see Mademoiselle de Cicé and that he walked around the garden there....

### 1817-1818

Mother de Cicé's health became more alarming each day. The chest illness was very serious. Always with the greatest resignation, whenever a beverage prescribed by the doctor was given to her, she blessed it and said before taking it: "It is the Lord." She always received us despite her weakness, and she always had the most edifying things to say with her barely audible voice. Before becoming completely bed-ridden, she had gone out on a very bad day to see Father Menissier, vicar of St. Marguerite's Parish. She recommended to him soldiers who had made their first Communion at Rennes. She had asked me to buy some hymn books for them. She urged me to contribute and have our sisters contribute to the Society's purse. She stressed the importance of not neglecting that practice.

Father de Clorivière often went to see her during her illness. His deafness and Mademoiselle de Cicé's weakness from excessive coughing prevented him from hearing her last confession. It was Father Desjardins, pastor at the Missions Etrangères, who had deep respect for her, who assisted at her last moments. For our revered founders, this was a sacrifice which only God can appreciate. She had herself brought in bed to the tribune. Before her final illness, she had asked me to hold a meeting in her presence at the home of one of the Daughters of Mary, Mademoiselle Blanquet. A great number were present. It was the last time that all of them together received her blessing. Two days before her death, she gave me an individual blessing and said to Mademoiselle Adenis, who also asked for her blessing: "No, I gave it for you, too, to Madame de Saisseval."

On April 26, during the night she spent in her tribune, she rendered her beautiful soul to God as she faced the main altar. She remained there for two days, during which many touched rosaries to her body, which had all the suppleness of a living body. Her face reflected heavenly bliss. All the Daughters of the Heart of Mary attended the funeral services, and the veneration she inspired brought to her bier a large number of young persons dressed in white. They had not been invited, but they followed the body to the Vaugirard Cemetery. When this cemetery was destroyed a few years later, I had the responsibility of moving her precious remains, as well as those of my mother and daughter, to the cemetery at Mont

Valerien. When this, too, had to be destroyed in April, 1844, I had the remains of all three removed to the cemetery of the City of Mantes.

DOCUMENT XVI

EXCERPTS FROM THE LIFE OF MADEMOISELLE DE CICÉ

(abridged) (contained in Abbe Carron's Nouveaux Justes, Lyon, 1922)

This brief biography of sixty pages was written in 1820, only two years after the death of Mother de Cicé. It is a collection of various data, used by later biographers and well known to us. Below, there will be given particularly the account of our first Mother's final moments.

According to Madame de Saisseval, who had known him for many years, Father Carron, "father of the poor and of all the afflicted ...was not a member of the Society, but he loved it, esteemed it immeasurably, and gave a retreat which showed to all our friends how much he possessed the Society's spirit." (Cf. letter to Mademoiselle Amable Chenu, March 17, 1821, announcing the death of Father Carron on March 15.) Let us add that Father Carron was born in 1760 at Rennes and had spent the first part of his life there.

In his work, there occurred this marvelous description of our founder: "To mention Father Picot Clos Riviere is to mention a living gospel." There followed these lines, which also fixed the date of his work:

His holy life, which was an ongoing apostolate, ended this very year, 1820, in a retreat house in Paris...Before the Blessed Sacrament ...the venerable old gentleman happily slept away in the embrace of the Lord.

Below, the final pages, the most interesting ones for us, gave certain details about Mother de Cicé found in no other work:

Nevertheless, the victim purified by long sufferings and by all sorts of tribulations, was approaching the moment of receiving her crown.... Before the danger became immediate, she wished to receive the sacraments. Prior to this moving ceremony, she insisted on asking for a general pardon for the scandals of her lifetime. Her confessor bade her receive Communion. She replied that she felt too unworthy, adding: "Alas! I cannot pray. I can only suffer." Obedience gave the decision, but she once more asked for pardon for the bad example she feared she had given in resisting. Joyfully she renewed all her commitments towards heaven. Not wanting to concern herself with anything but eternity, she made a sacrifice that must have been costly to a soul so sensitive and so tender — not to see again at her side nephews whom she loved as if they were her own children, as well as all her dearest friends. Those of her friends who lived far from the capital in far-flung provinces have preserved interesting letters from her, precious monuments to friendship, as well as admirable counsels and light-filled reflections. But she bade all of them, orally or by letter, a final adieu. At the same time, she blessed them. She wished to be in the presence only of the adorable Spouse of her soul. Her failing hands continued to form the sign of the Cross over the beverages prescribed for her. Never did her sufferings extract from her the least complaint. The internal tearing of her chest, the bruises of her mouth which rendered swallowing so difficult — none of these deprived her of a moment's peace and joy in God. The stronger her pains, the more she loved to repeat: "This is my happiness." On other occasions she said over and over with secret joy: "My sufferings are my joy and my delight." Sometimes it was with an indescribable expression that she remarked to persons who gave her an often bitter potion: "But this is the Lord." These were admirable words of the Apostle St. John, words which she loved to hear from those who came near her and to whom she loved to repeat with her feeble voice, "But yes: It is the Lord."

During her entire life, Adelaide had delighted in blessing, praising and adoring Jesus Christ in the sacrament of His love. In His presence, she had experienced her happiest, nay her only happy moments....

Also, during her long career, she had considered the tabernacle as her heaven on earth. She, therefore, had always desired to live in a place as close as possible to a church where dwelt the Saint of all the Saints. In her mortal illness, she tasted ineffable joy, for her apartment had a tribune facing the Blessed Sacrament. To adore Him, she always turned toward His altar. Until her final days, she had herself brought before the altar. On Thursday of the week of her death, she had remained there a long time in the morning. On Saturday evening at eight o'clock she again asked to be brought there. No longer able to give expression to her thoughts, she continually united her heart to her adorable Spouse. She looked with goodness and tenderness on the persons around her who had been so constantly devoted to her. With attention and affection, she listened to all the prayers which the Church addresses to heaven for those in their agony. And peacefully she thus rendered her soul into the hands of her Creator on Saturday,<sup>251</sup> April 26, 1818, at four o'clock in the morning.

Her remains were kept in the same tribune, exposed at all the Masses celebrated for three mornings, until the time of the funeral. Her relatives wished the obsequies to be more prominent than her humility had expressly desired. The mother of the poor wished to be buried like the poor. At the final ceremony, all present were in tears. All the youth of the Missions Etrangères Parish accompanied the model of virgins to her gravesite. As long as her body remained in view, her members retained a perfect suppleness. Her face reflected heavenly bliss. And everything around her coffin seemed to say: "I am happy." Many persons who had rightly appreciated her had a powerful impression after her death that the divine Goodness had not delayed in receiving her into the sojourn of the blessed. The holy priest who assisted her in her last illness wished to own something that belonged to her. He touched the object to the body of her whom he venerated as a member of the triumphant company of the Elect. Her remains were buried in Vaugirard Cemetery.

## DOCUMENT XVII

### SOME ARCHIVE NOTES ABOUT MOTHER DE CICÉ

---

<sup>251</sup> Abbe Carron seems to have made an error. April 26, 1818, fell on a Sunday.

Mother de Cicé's will and its related papers are contained in the National Archives of France. The Archives of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary possess a copy of the will, as well as copies of several of the related papers.

The will, written by Mother de Cicé's own hand and dated September 5, 1816, indicated legacies made by her to certain members of her family. She then specified the distribution of some income, of which Catherine Allouard was to be one of the recipients.

Mother de Cicé continued in this way: "As regards the surplus of my goods, I give and bequeath them to the said Catherine Allouard whom I name as my sole legatee."

Related papers mention interchangeably Catherine or Agathe Allouard, Mademoiselle de Cicé's faithful servant, who lived at the same address as Mademoiselle de Cicé, who was a faithful domestic to her, and never abandoned her, and who was a Daughter of the Heart of Mary. Without hesitation, it can be concluded that Agathe Allouard's official name on civil records was, indeed, Catherine. The Annals of the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, Volume I, erroneously refer to two different persons. It must be added — and this is decisive — that Father de Clorivière's letter to Mother de Cicé on November 25, 1807, concludes as follows: "I greet Agathe today on her feast day."

A certain "Collection of Prayers" containing various works includes "A brief instruction on devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus...Second Edition, Paris, 1824." On pages 10 and 11, there occurs this statement: "In his final hours, Louis XVI made the vow of consecrating his ill-fated kingdom to the Heart of Jesus." There is a footnote, stating that Father Hebert, his confessor, had made several copies of the vow, and that "Mademoiselle de Cicé, so well known for her piety and her zeal for good works, was in possession of one of those copies. She had hidden it within a certain wall, and later she showed it to several persons."

#### DOCUMENT XVIII

### LETTER FROM FATHER DE CLORIVIÈRE TO MOTHER DE CICÉ ABOUT THE DEATH OF MADAME DE CARCADO

Even though this letter does not directly relate to Mother de Cicé herself, it is believed useful to include it here. Does it not contain, from the very hand of the founder, the portrait of a true Daughter of the Heart of Mary, embodied by Mother de Cicé herself?

It is a model for all Daughters of the Heart of Mary.

January 29, Feast of St. Francis de Sales, 1808

Praised be Jesus Christ!

My dear Daughter:

I should have many things to say to you in the sad circumstances in which we are, and I have little time, having passed all the day yesterday in writing letters to M. d'Aubonne and the other colleagues. My first care ought to be to console you and through you the entire desolate family, but how shall I do this, since I myself am in desolation? At first I bore the blow, it seems to me, with great resignation, although so unexpected; but it is one of the sufferings which makes itself felt more later on when one considers more at leisure the sad effects; what we are now feeling is of that kind. I judge of your grief by my own, and I believe yours is even greater because your heart is more sensitive and the object of your grief is always before your eyes. I shall try then to say a few words of consolation to you.

The remembrance of the virtues of her for whom we now weep offers us a great motive; you know her virtues and you have often admired them. Since she has given herself entirely to the service of the Lord, her life has been nothing but a tissue of holy and heroic works. The day of her death, feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, recalled to me the generosity of her conversion; she said, as did the Apostle: "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?", and she has always been faithful to this first sentiment. She no longer lived for herself; she gave herself entirely to God and to the neighbor. What did she not do during the gloomy days of the Revolution? After having lost everything, after being reduced almost to indigence, without resources, having the responsibility for several nephews and nieces, she put all her glory and happiness in the cross; her peace and confidence have never been shaken by the most violent and continuous blows. She hoped in God, and God often came to her help in almost miraculous manner, but without ever taking her from the state of distress and restricted circumstances, of which she made a holy use, and which did not prevent her from coming to the aid of an infinite number of persons, and procuring the glory of God in many ways.

Her progress in perfection has been even more evident since she submitted herself to obedience in the Society of the Heart of Mary. She then despoiled herself of whatever was too ardent in an imagination fertile in projects for the glory of God. She no longer had any other will than that of her Superiors whom she loved tenderly and for whom she had the most profound respect because she saw in them God Himself. She allowed herself to be guided like a child; her zeal for the glory of God, for the salvation of souls, for the good of the

Society, made her do continually for God what was naturally above her strength. Her health, her rest, her children, her own affairs she counted as nothing, in comparison with what was for the service of God and for the good of souls. I have no need to speak to you of her other virtues, of her patience, her sweetness, her humility; she had them all to a very high degree! Her faith was admirable, her hope in God's mercy had no limits. Her heart had only charity for God and the neighbor, and this charity showed itself in all her actions. You know how tender was her devotion for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for the most holy Virgin, etc. With what an overflowing heart did she speak of all these things, and of all that regarded perfection.

I have no need to tell you about the work, a work which we can truly call miraculous, for Foundlings. What misery alleviated! What families aided! How many young persons placed in a position to gain their living honestly! And especially how many souls snatched from the jaws of the dragon; withdrawn from the abyss of vice, instructed in their religion, formed to the practice of all the Christian virtues! As you know, she was the originator of this work, following out the lights that she had received from the Lord. She began it with nothing; she has been the Founder, the principal directress, the most firm support, with a few other pious ladies who came to her help. Even if we should be ignorant of these things, the public mourning would be enough to inform us of them. What a multitude of good works embodied in that one person! And all these works have been crowned by a most edifying death! It is from you that I should learn the details.

How sweet it is, how consoling to be able to let our eyes rest on such a sight, on a life so holy! What new subject of consolation does she not furnish us when we reflect on the state of this soul and the great reward which is reserved for her in heaven, if she is not already enjoying it! We have reason for hope, but since we are not fully assured of it, let us do all that depends on us to hasten the moment of her happiness.

The death of Madame de Carcado deprives us of a great support and a fervent cooperatrice. This loss and what it means to the Society might appear, humanly speaking, irreparable; but let us console ourselves. Before God, no loss is irreparable. God draws good from evil. He is pleased to show us that He has no need of any person for His works. It has pleased Him to take away from us a help which He in His mercy had given us. In His Wisdom, He will know well how to give us another. Let us place our confidence in Him. Let us have recourse to our great protectress, the Holy Virgin; the holy soul whom we have lost, close to her, will help us, will protect us.

You have no doubt been careful to collect all the papers, writings and manuscripts of the Society.

I particularly recommend to you my manuscript on "The Canticle of Canticles" which I loaned to Madame de Carcado. I am anxious about it.

Mr. Fauconnier, our concierge, obtained for Madame de Saisseval permission to come to see me. I doubt whether she will be able to do it for some time to come.

I am sending you the letter from Fr. d'Aubonne. You will see there the little difference of opinion between the new Superior of Dole, Mademoiselle Amoudru, and the Mistress of Novices, Madame Garnier. I think that he sees things well; I have approved of his manner of looking at things, excusing the Superior on account of her good intentions and her lack of experience. Support my decision by your own, if you think it good.

Be friendly to Mademoiselle Puesch; but do not disguise the fact that Fr. Beule has been a little too hasty in receiving her, before having had your consent, and outside the time prescribed by the Rules of the Society, as I pointed out to him; but he could not yet have received my letter. Place everything in order with your usual gentleness.

You must have Assistants; think this over before the Lord.

Be more than ever unshaken in your confidence in God and let us be but one heart and one soul in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Entirely yours in O.L.

P.J.