The Way of Divine Love

Or

The Message of the Sacred Heart to the World

Nihil obstat

PATRICIUS MORRIS, S.T.D., L.S.S.

CENSOR DEPUTATUS

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FOREWORD

This new edition of a translation of *Un Appel a L'Amour,* is an amplification of the smaller book of the same name which was published in 1938.

On 13th November, shortly before her death, Our Blessed Lord had said to Sister Josefa: "My words will be light and life for an incalculable number of souls, and I will grant them special graces of conversion and illumination." These words have been verified, for as soon as the first small volume appeared it was eagerly seized upon, was reprinted several times, while letters from all parts of the world gave testimony to the profound impression created and to the signal graces that followed on the delivery of the Message.

Within a few months the book had been translated from the original Spanish into French, then into Portuguese, Italian, English, Chinese, and Hungarian—thus fulfilling Our Lord's wish that His call to the way of love should be heard as widely as possible.

The Message, providentially timed to appear before the general conflagration of nations in the World War of 1939-1945, did not suffer any interruption by it. In spite of many difficulties, it passed from hand to hand and continued to be widely read. At the same time, pressing requests for a more detailed biography which would make the bearer of Our Lord's communications better known, were continually being received and have resulted in the present publication.

The Message of Our Blessed Lord, framed as it were, in the life history of Sister Josefa Menendez, consists mainly in excerpts from her notes. These notes, written under obedience, and carefully preserved, are connected by a running commentary, the testimony of those who day by day assisted at the unfolding of a life which so amazingly carried out the designs of the Heart of Jesus.

In 1926, after careful examination of the writings of Sister Josefa, a Consultor of the Sacred Congregation of Rites concluded his report with these words: "I pray God that these things may become known for the glory of God, and to strengthen the faith of diffident and timid souls, and also that the holy religious of the Sacred Heart who wrote them may be glorified." (From the Italian.)

Without any intention of pronouncing judgment before Holy Church, to whom we submit unconditionally, we think that readers of these pages will be glad to find words of commendation from no less a personage than the Holy Father himself, who as Cardinal Pacelli, and Protector of the Society of the Sacred Heart at the time, gave his blessing to the first edition which appeared in 1938. A facsimile of his letter is reproduced, with his express consent, at the beginning of this volume.

INTRODUCTION

On 29th December 1923, Sister Josefa Menendez, when thirty- three years old, died a holy death at the Convent of Les Feuillants, Poitiers. She lived as a sister in the Society of the Sacred Heart only four years, and in so hidden a way that the world ought never to have heard of her, and even in her own community she should soon have been forgotten.

Yet, only twenty years after her death, she is known all over the world. In America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania people are praying to her and are listening attentively to the Message which the Heart of Jesus has given her for men.

In 1938 the substance of the Message, under the title of *Un Appel a l'Amour,* was published in Toulouse by the Apostleship of Prayer. Cardinal Pacelli, now gloriously reigning as Pope Pius XII, wrote a foreword of recommendation in the form of a letter. Five years later a complete biography was asked for with insistence, since readers were anxious for all the details of a life so rich yet so hidden and in which the very poverty of the human background threw into relief the splendour of Christ's divine action.

This second and complete edition is the answer to that demand. It is drawn from Sister Josefa's notes, written day by day, under obedience, its accuracy confirmed by the very exact reminiscences of the witnesses of her life, namely the Superior and Mother Assistant of the Convent of "Les Feuillants", Poitiers, and her director, Father Boyer, O.P.

The reader will feel a certain curiosity in opening these pages, but their contents will fill him with wonder and admiration, and he will finish the book determined to lead a better life and to love a God who has manifested so intense a love for His creatures.

For every page tells of the wonderful providence of God's love for man. Holy Scripture represents Him in the psalms as following the sons of men with ever-watchful care, attentive to their every action and answering their least efforts to pray. Turning with love towards His rebel sons, from the beginning He lets His voice be heard through marvels and through His prophets, until the day when He Himself, taking flesh in the womb of the Virgin, tells men in human language of the love that fills His Heart.

Jesus, the Word Incarnate, has transmitted in all its completeness the Message He Himself received from the Father: "Omnia quaecumque audivi a Paire Meo, nota feci vobis" (John xv, 15). There is nothing to add to Our Lord's words, and at the death of St. John, the last Apostle, the divine revelation was closed and sealed. Later ages could do no more than draw out its meaning. But its riches are unfathomable, and most men are too inattentive and superficial to sound the depths of the Gospel teaching; consequently, just as under the Old Law Prophets were sent by God to revive the faith and hope of His people, so in the New Dispensation Christ has from time to time given certain chosen souls the mission of interpreting His authentic words, and of revealing their depths and hidden meaning.

Long ago, on Easter morning, He charged Saint Mary Magdalen with announcing His glorious Resurrection to the Apostles. In succeeding ages likewise poor and humble women have been chosen out to transmit His most important desires to mankind.

To recall only the chief instances: Through Saint Juliana of Montcornillon He revived devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and obtained the institution of the Feast of Corpus Christi; through Saint Margaret Mary a new stimulus was given to devotion to the Sacred Heart; through Saint Therese of the Child Jesus He told a world which seemed to have forgotten it the merit and value of spiritual Childhood, and now, He has given a Message to Josefa Menendez.

The three above mentioned have been canonized by the Church, and so have received, as it were, an official recognition of their mission. Sister Josefa has not had this honour bestowed on her, but while she is not yet called their Sister in glory, she is indeed their Sister in grace, and God has been pleased to seal her testimony. He who treats His creatures with such reverence, "Cum magna reverentia disponis nos" (Sap. xii, 18), owed it to Himself to impress a stamp marking His messenger clearly as the bearer of His words.

"His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts," and that there may be no doubt that the communications come from Him and no other, He chooses weak instruments, humanly speaking unfitted for the task in view; so His strength shines forth in their infirmity.

He did not choose the learned and the great in the world's eyes to found His Church, Saint Paul expressly tells us, otherwise the rapid spread of Christianity could have been attributed to their talents and prestige. . . but He chose the poor and the ignorant, and of these He made vessels of election.

And that the greatness of their mission might not dazzle them and lead to vainglory, He again and again reminded them of their nothingness, their innate misery and their weakness. His gifts are only secure when bestowed on the truly humble of heart. His Providence has always worked in this way. His glory is manifest in man's nothingness. "If I had been able to find a creature more miserable than you" He said to Saint Margaret Mary, "I should have chosen her..."

And Sister Josefa repeatedly heard the same declaration: "If I could have found a more wretched creature, I should have chosen her for my special love, and through her revealed the longings of My Heart. But I have not found one, and so I have chosen you" (7th June 1923).

Soon after we hear Him say: "I have selected you as one utterly useless and destitute, that none may attribute to any but Myself, what I say, ask and do" (12th June 1923).

As far as appearances went, nothing signalized Josefa as in any way fitted for so high a mission. If we remember her repeated delays in entering religion, we might be justified in doubting the constancy of her will; then, too, her humble rank in the community, her status as a mere novice, her great love of retirement, and the very real obstacle of her ignorance of the language of the country, all these hindrances combined would at first sight appear insurmountable.[1] In reality they were tokens of God's choice. Though but a lowly little novice, so

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[1] If one had looked for a chosen soul among the novices of that time (they were for the most part Polish), Josefa's appearance, which had nothing of the mystic about it, would not have led one to suspect God's choice of her.

tender-hearted as to be frequently on the point of yielding to her sensitiveness, she would show later an unconquerable strength of will. In the blinding light of divine revelations, she only crept deeper into her littleness, and the closer God drew to her the more she humbled herself. In spite of the evidence of God's action, she was ever fearful of being deceived herself and of deceiving her Superiors. As a matter of fact, they had rarely met with a more obedient and docile subject, or one more deferential, more eager to submit to control, more ready to sacrifice herself. In her devotions, as in everything else, there was no exaggeration; she was perfectly straightforward and simple. She was mentally healthy and had a well-developed sense of order and proportion. The supernatural, whose weight was often crushing, never disturbed her interior poise, though this equilibrium was kept only at the cost of almost superhuman endurance. All this was in reality the best guarantee to Superiors that her communications were divine in origin.

To Sister Josefa Our Lord said: "You yourself shall be My sign."

Though at first suspicious and reserved in their judgments, both her Director and her Superiors were forced by the evidence of her life to believe that her mission was divine.

JOSEFA'S MISSION

Only very gradually did Our Lord unfold it to her; several times He had told her that He meant to make use of her to "carry out His plans" (9th February 1921) for the saving of many souls that had cost Him so dear (15th October 1920). On the night of 24th February 1921 He gave her a yet more explicit call during her Holy Hour. "The world does not know the mercy of My Heart," He said to her. "I intend to enlighten them through you. . . . I want you to be the apostle of My love and mercy. I will teach you what that means; forget yourself." And in answer to the fears she expressed: "Love and fear nothing. I want what you do not want, but I can do what you cannot." "It is not for you to choose, you have only to resign yourself into My Hands."

A few months later, on Monday, 11th June 1921, a few days after the Feast of the Sacred Heart, when she had received many graces, He said: "Remember My words and believe them. My Heart has but one desire, which is to enclose you in It, to possess you in My love, then to make of your frailty and littleness a channel to convey mercy to many souls who will be saved by your means. Later on, I will reveal to you the burning secrets of My Heart and many souls will profit by them. I want you to write down and keep all I tell you. It will be read when you are in Heaven. Do not think that I make use of you because of your merits, but I want souls to realize how My Power makes use of poor and miserable instruments." And as Josefa asked if she was to tell Reverend Mother even that, He answered: "Write it; it will be read after your death."

So by degrees Our Lord unfolded His plan: Josefa was chosen by Him, not only to be a victim for souls, especially for consecrated ones, but that through her Christ's Message of love and mercy might reach the world. A twofold mission — Victim and Messenger — and between the two missions there is a close connection. If Victim then Messenger, and because Messenger, necessarily Victim.

JOSEFA AS VICTIM

To be a victim necessarily implies immolation, and as a rule atonement for another. Although strictly speaking one can offer oneself as a victim to give God joy and glory by voluntary sacrifice, yet for the most part God leads souls by that path only when He intends them to act as mediators: they have to suffer and expiate for those for whom their immolation will be profitable, either by drawing down graces of forgiveness on them, or by acting as a cloak to cover their sins in the face of divine justice. It stands to reason that no one will on his own initiative take such a role on himself. Divine consent is required before a soul dares to intervene between God and His creature. There would be no value in such an offering if God refused to hear the prayer.

Already in the Old Testament victims of a certain sort only could be offered to God. To be acceptable they must have special, clearly defined qualities: they were to be spotless, without blemish, males of one year, and above all the offering had to be made by a priest according to a prescribed rite which was to be adhered to rigorously, and which symbolized not only the dispositions of the officiating priest, but also those of the donor of the victim.

In the New Testament a new sacrifice takes the place of the old; Jesus Christ is the sole Mediator, sole Priest, sole Victim, and His sacrifice is no longer symbolic, but real and infinite.

If, then, Jesus Christ wishes to associate other victims with Himself, they must be closely united to Him, and share His feelings, in order to enter fully into His sacrifice; hence they can only be human beings, endowed with intelligence and will.

He Himself chooses these persons, and because they are free. He asks them for their voluntary co-operation. Those who accept put themselves at His mercy, and He then makes use of them as by sovereign right.

Assimilated and transformed into Christ, the victim-soul expresses the sentiments of Christ Jesus to God the Father; and to Christ Himself her attitude is one of humiliation, penance, and expiation, sentiments which ought to animate the souls she represents.

And because of this identification with Christ, the victim-soul shares in His dolorous Passion and undergoes, to a greater or lesser degree, and in various but generally superhuman ways, the torments and agonies that were His.

When the suffering is borne for one specially chosen sinner the victim endures the just retribution due to this sinner for his crimes. Every kind of trial is endured, be it illness, or even persecution by the spirits of darkness of which the victim becomes the sport.

With Sister Josefa this was the case to an extraordinary degree. Victim at the express desire of her Lord, not only was her whole being immolated, but the manner of the immolation itself varied according to the particular attributes of God to which she had sacrificed herself.

Saint Therese of the Child Jesus offered herself as a victim of merciful love; Marie des Vallees, as a victim of God's Justice; Saint Margaret Mary, of both Justice and Mercy, and so it was with Sister Josefa. Christ told her His wishes in even more explicit terms than He had used with Saint Margaret Mary.

"I have chosen you to be a victim of My Heart" (19th December 1920). "You are the victim of My love" (2nd October 1920 and 23rd November 1920). "You are the victim of My love and mercy" (30th June 1921). "I want you to be the victim of divine justice and the comfort of My Heart" (9th November 1920).

For all these reasons Josefa must suffer. "You suffer in your soul and body, because you are the victim of My Soul and Body. How could you not suffer in your heart, since I have chosen you as the victim of My Heart?" (19th December 1920).

As victim of the Heart of Jesus she suffered in order to console the Heart that has been so wounded by the ingratitude of men. As victim of love and mercy she suffered that the merciful love of Jesus might overwhelm with graces the sinner He so loved. As victim of the divine justice she carried the intolerable burden of the divine reproaches, and expiated for guilty souls, who would owe their salvation to her. Her mission exacted perpetual immolation on her part, and Our Lord did not hide it from her. "Love, suffer, and obey," He said to her, "so that I may realize My plans in you" (9th January 1921).

On 12th June 1923 He corroborated the whole of this plan as it affected her. "As for you, you will live in the most complete and profound obscurity, and as you are My chosen victim, you will suffer, and overwhelmed by suffering you will die. Seek neither rest nor alleviation; you will find none, for such is My will. But My love will sustain you, and never shall I fail you."
But before making her endure such piercing and keen agony, He had asked and obtained her consent; for though He is Sovereign Lord and Master, He nevertheless respects the liberty of the creature.

"Are you willing? . . ." He said to Josefa, and as she shrank at the prospect before her, He left her. She was heartbroken at His departure, but Our Lady came, and suggested to her child: "Do not forget that your love is free." Several times Josefa tried to escape from the path before her, then Jesus left her, and it was only after she had called Him again and again that He came back to receive from her a willing offering of that which He had suggested only as a possibility. Usually she accepted most generously.[1]

"I offered myself to serve Him in any way He might choose." God knew Himself free to act in any way He chose, and He said once again: "I am your God, you belong to Me; of your own free will, you have handed yourself over. From now on you cannot refuse Me anything" (23rd July 1922). "If you do not deliver yourself up to My will, what can I do?" (21st April 1922).

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[1] Nothing was imposed on her by God; He did not force His reluctant creature, but with divinely consummate skill He pursued His purpose of obtaining her consent. At each recoil of Josefa's fears, Our Lord left her without reproach; but His departure so disturbed Josefa that she made a more than ever generous acceptance. Also, Jesus did not tell her straight away that he wanted her to be His Messenger to the world, the shock would have been too great; but He simply appealed to her generosity: "Are you willing to suffer? And are you willing to be a victim?" If a victim, then it was a question of suffering, not of coming prominently before the world, and Josefa accepted.

She surrendered; like her Master she would be a willing victim: "Oblatus est quia Ipse voluit." Like Him, too, she would be a pure victim. For how can one expiate another's sins, when one has to expiate one's own? From her birth God had enveloped her in purity, for there cannot be found in her life any fault to which she voluntarily consented. Her greatest infidelities, as she herself owned, were a certain reluctance to respond to the call of grace and indecision in the face of a disconcerting mission; nothing therefore that was a stain on her heart and soul. Jealously Our Lord guarded her: "I want you to forget yourself so entirely and to be so completely given up to My Will that I will not tolerate the slightest imperfection in you without warning you of it" (21st February 1921).

Many times when He wanted her to re-state that she was His victim He opened the question by conferring on her a grace of still greater purification. "I want you to suffer for Me, Josefa, but I will begin by letting the arrow of love which is to purify your soul fall on you, for as My victim, you must be all-pure" (17th June 1923).

In her pure conscience on which suffering was about to descend there was found no taint of sin, and consequently there was no work of expiation to be done, and that was why the fruits of salvation could be transferred to other souls. Her sufferings bore a twofold character, as is indeed the case with all true victims. As a victim chosen by Christ Himself to continue and complete His redemptive work, she must be very closely united with Christ the Redeemer, and share His Passion by enduring the self-same sufferings as His own; as an expiatory victim tor the sins of others, her pains would be proportionate to the sins of the offender for whom she was atoning.

(a) Participation in the Sufferings of Christ

The Passion of Christ being our sole salvation, if we are to be purified and saved, we must of necessity come into contact with the Blood shed by the Lamb. The great cry of the dying Christ is a pressing invitation to the whole human race to hasten to the Saviour's fountains from which all graces flow.

This contact with Christ's Blood is immediately secured by souls that answer His appeal. Others, and alas! they are many, voluntarily keep aloof. It is these that Christ will seek to reach through other souls whom He makes use of as channels of His mercies. They are the most fruitful of all the branches of the mystic vine. Loaded with the sap flowing from Christ Himself, and completely one with Him, by their solidarity with the sinner they stand liable for his sins; so being one with him and one with Christ, in them and by them, grace is communicated. They are victim-souls.

How intimate must be their identification with the Crucified if they are to carry out their part of the contract fully! Full union with Him is implied, whilst He on His part imprints on their souls, hearts, and bodies the living image of His sorrowful Passion.

All His sufferings are renewed in them: they will be contradicted, persecuted, humbled, scourged, and crucified; and what man fails to inflict, that God Himself will supply by mysterious pains, agonies, stigmata, which will make of them living crucifixes.

How great must be the power of mediation of such souls! How efficacious their intercession, when they implore divine mercy, pardon and salvation for their brethren; when in them and through them, the Precious Blood of Christ, infinitely more powerful than that of Abel, cries to the Father!

There is this, however, to notice with regard to some saints, notably Saint Francis of Assisi, that the Passion, as it were, abides in them, God's ultimate plan apparently being to shape them into finished copies of the Crucified. It is God's response to their adoring love of His Passion, and He makes them share both physically and morally in the torments of His Beloved Son.

There is a further purpose with regard to expiatory victims: He seems to dispossess them in favour of other souls, for the Passion of Christ, after marking them with its sign, passes through them, in order to bring about in the sinner for whom they suffer the graces of the sacrifice of Calvary.

They are thus co-redeemers in the full sense of the word; love for their neighbour urges them on, their mission is different from that of others. For whereas God is pleased to allow those other souls of whom we spoke to remain in contemplation of Him, giving glory to His infinite perfections by their love, it is otherwise with victim-souls: when they contemplate Him, He unveils the immensity of His love for souls and the grief with which the loss of sinners fills Him. The sight of this breaks their hearts, and their longing to console Christ is not satisfied with mere words of love; it stirs up their zeal. At whatever price, they will win souls to Him, and He kindles this zeal still more. It is the love of the Sacred Heart Itself, communicated to them, with which they love sinners; love which gives them a superhuman endurance well described by Josefa's own words:

"For the last two or three weeks, I have felt an immense desire for suffering. There was a time when the thought of it frightened me. When Jesus told me that He had chosen me as His victim my whole being trembled; but it is different now. There are days when I endure such agony that if He did not uphold me, I should die, for no part of me is free from pain! . . . In spite of this, my soul longs to bear more grievous afflictions for Him, though not without repugnance in the lower part of my consciousness. When these pains attack me I shake with fear and instinctively draw back, but there is granted to my will a strength that accepts, that desires and wants to suffer yet more, so that if the choice between continued pain and heaven were offered me, I should infinitely prefer to remain in the throes of pain, if by so doing I might console His Heart, though God knows how I long to be for ever with Him. I know that this change has been wrought in me by Jesus" (30th June 1921).

She was right indeed; the change had come not from herself, but from Jesus, or rather may we not say that it was His strength, His feelings, His desires and sufferings that He had passed on to her?[1] "As you are ready to suffer, let us suffer together" (19th December 1920), and He gave her His Cross: "Jesus came with His Cross, which He placed on my shoulders" (18th July 1920).

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[1] "My Heart finds rest in communicating its feelings. I come to rest in your heart when a soul grieves Me, and it is My longing to do it good that passes into you and becomes yours" (23rd October 1922).

"I come to bring you My Cross, thus unburdening Myself on you" (26th July 1921). "I want you to be My Cyrenean; you will help Me to bear My Cross" (23rd February 1922). "Let My Cross be your Cross" (30th March 1923).

Innumerable are the times He placed it on her willing shoulders for hours on end, even for whole days and nights. He entrusted her with His Crown of Thorns, which He left in her keeping for long periods, so that like Him she knew not where to rest her aching head. "I will leave you My Crown . . . do not complain of the pain . . . for by it you share in My pain" (26th November 1920). "My Crown . . . with it I will Myself encircle your head"(17th June 1923). He made her feel the pain of His pierced Side. Our Lady said to her: "This pain is a spark from the Heart of My Son; when it is at its worst, know that it is a sign that some soul is wounding Him deeply" (20th June 1921).

He wished her to feel the pain of the nails in both hands and feet: "I am about to give you a new sign of My love. To-day you will share with Me the pain of the nails" (16th March 1923). She suffered a veritable crucifixion on Good Friday, 30th March 1923: "Place your hands under My Hands, and your feet beneath Mine, so as to be closely united to My anguish. I want your limbs to suffer with Mine."

Again He associated her intimately with the agony of His Heart and Soul: "Every Friday, and especially on the First Friday of the month, I will cause you to share in the bitterness of My Heart's agony, and you will experience the torments of My Passion in a very particular manner" (4th February 1921).

On the 1st March 1922, He appeared to her, His Face all bloodstained. "Draw near," He said, "come and rest in My Heart; and take part in Its grievous pain."

"He then drew me close to His Heart, and my soul was filled with such anguish and bitterness of sorrow that I cannot describe it."

Like Him, she suffered for others: "I want your whole being to suffer, that you may gain souls" (21st December 1920). "There is a soul that is grievously wounding Me . . . be not afraid if you feel yourself totally abandoned, for I shall make you share the anguish of My Heart" (13th September 1921). "Keep My Cross, until that soul recognizes the truth" (24th March 1923). "Take My Cross, My Nails and Crown. I go in search of souls" (17th June 1923).

These few examples will suffice; they abound throughout the book. As an atoning victim, Josefa shared in all the torments of Jesus, and her whole person, so to speak, was saturated with unutterable anguish. United with Jesus on the Cross, she was tortured by His sufferings, consumed by His desires; His burning thirst for the salvation of souls urged her to attempt every kind of reparation and expiation within her power.

(b) Diabolical Persecutions

And God allowed trials of every kind to rain down upon her. If illness was not one of them (yet who knows, for she never complained), nor persecution from men (for unlike a Margaret Mary, both her religious and family life appear to have been exempt from these), yet on the other hand, more than many another, she was given over to the fury of Satan. And this is not surprising.

There are few saints in whose lives his rage is not apparent. Christ in the glory of Heaven is beyond the reach of Satan, who as His personal enemy spares no pains to thwart the spread of God's kingdom on earth. The more he knows a soul to be beloved of Christ, the fiercer are his attacks; this, no doubt, in the hope of increasing the number of his unfortunate dupes, but above all, in the perverse hope of snatching from Christ the souls He loves and for whom He has paid so high a price in the shedding of His Precious Blood. Satan, therefore, chooses saints and consecrated souls whom he longs to besmirch, seduce, and dishonour, and flings himself on them. Above all, he abhors victim-souls, so Josefa was particularly hateful to him.

She had joyfully made the sacrifice of the three things she held dearest in the world: her mother, her sister, and her country; she had offered herself for the salvation of sinners, and was, in the event, to snatch a great number from hell-fire. Satan therefore made wanton sport of her. He is permitted by God to have a greater power over victim-souls. Surely this follows from their vocation,[1] for as they take on themselves the sins of others, they also assume the consequences which they know will follow. When a man consents to sin, whether he is conscious of it or not, he gives the devil great power over him, the power of seduction and possession. This is not very noticeable, as a rule, for the evil one excels in dissimulation and avoids disturbing those he believes he has in his net. He strengthens what is evil in his prey, multiplies occasions of sin and benumbs the soul, till it sinks into a state of torpor which is absolutely fatal.

When, however, the devil is met by the resolute resistance of the victim-soul who has taken the place of the sinner, unable to make her sin he takes fearful vengeance, using the very powers he has gained over the evildoer in order to torment his substitute.

And this is permitted by God to manifest to all the reality of both the devil and hell which so many try to forget and to bury in silence and oblivion.

The devil is a reality, and in his dealings with God's saints he shows himself in the undisguised perversity of his vicious and corrupt nature. What must his cruelty be to those souls that are damned and are his for ever, if he is so pitiless with those over whom, after all, he has but limited sway? Who would dare affirm that such a lesson is without its use, especially in our days?

God also confounds the pride of the spirit of darkness, who in spite of all his power and rage makes no headway, but meets with constant defeat, which greatly enhances God's glory.

So it was with Sister Josefa.

The devil tried by every possible means to delude and beguile her, disguising himself as an "angel of light", even going so far as to assume the very features of Jesus Christ Himself. Most often however, he tried to turn her from her chosen path by inflicting on her grievous bodily harm.

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[1] See especially the diabolical persecutions endured by Saint Margaret of Cortona, Saint Veronica Giuliani, the Cure d'Ars, and Sister Marie de Jesus-Crucifix, whose life has been written by V. R. F. Buzy, Superior General of the Fathers of Betharram, and many others.

When Satan, in all his strength, and a frail human being meet in mortal combat, God interposes His power in the conflict and invests the soul with superhuman endurance. He bestows on it unconquerable energy and makes it overcome all temptations and every suffering. The devil's power broke on the frailty of Josefa's resistance, who (though "nothing and misery", as Our Lord called her) with divine help triumphed over the "strong man armed". But God alone knew what it cost her.

Even as a postulant, showers of blows, administered by an invisible fist, fell upon her day and night, especially when she was in prayer and reiterating her determination always to be faithful. At other times she was violently snatched away from the chapel, or prevented from entering it. Again and again the devil appeared to her in the guise of a terrifying dog, snake, or worse still, in human form.

Soon the forcible abductions became more frequent, in spite of the supervision exercised by Superiors. Under their very eyes she suddenly disappeared, and after long search would be found thrown into some loft, or beneath heavy furniture, or in some unfrequented spot. In their presence she was burnt, and without seeing the devil, they saw her clothes consumed and on her body unmistakable traces of fire, which caused wounds that took long to heal. The evil one suggested despairing thoughts, blasphemies, and odious temptations that continued for days and nights, during which God hid Himself, and Josefa, bewildered, felt as if abandoned and at the mercy of the most ignoble and infamous of tormentors.

Lastly, there occurred a phenomenon[1] very rare in the lives of the Saints: God permitted the devil to take her down to hell. There she spent long hours, sometimes a whole night, in unspeakable agony. Though she was dragged down into the bottomless pit more than a hundred times, each sojourn seemed to her to be the first, and appeared to last countless ages. She endured all the tortures of hell, with the one exception of hatred of God. Not the least of these torments was to hear the sterile confessions of the damned, their cries of hatred, of pain and of despair.

Nevertheless, when at long last she came back to life, shattered and spent, her body agonized with pain, she looked on no suffering, however severe, as too much to bear, if by it she could save a soul from that dreaded abode of torment. As gradually she began to breathe more freely, her heart bounded with joy at the thought that still she could love her Lord.

It was this great love that sustained her, but at times the trial weighed heavily on her. Like Jesus in the Garden of Olives, she spent long hours in anguish and dejection. She realized the vast number of the lost, and was often perplexed as to the use of her descents into hell and all the tortures that she had endured. But quickly she regained her hold on herself, and her amazing courage did not falter. Then, too, Our Lady helped her: "While you suffer, the devil has less

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[1] A number of both men and women saints have had visions of hell; few have actually gone down into its depths, and fewer still have done so frequently, as did Sister Josefa in order to atone for sinners. Saint Veronica Giuliani, born 1660 and died 1727, thus a contemporary of Saint Margaret Mary, seems, like Sister Josefa, to have been a victim of expiation, and had this same experience.

power over that soul" (22nd July 1921). "You suffer to relieve Him; is this not enough to give you courage?" (12th July 1921).

Then Our Lord showed her the treasures of reparation and expiation she had gained by her repeated ordeals (6th October 1922 and 5th November 1922), and allowed her to witness in hell the devil's bursts of fury, when there escaped him souls of whom he thought he had a firm hold, but for whom she was offering expiation. The thought that she could console and rest Our Lord and gain souls for Him kept up her heroic spirit and excited her zeal.

Although she instinctively shrank from contact with the devil, for his power and vindictiveness were well known to her by personal experience, yet never did she allow this fear to make her neglect a duty. At one time he carried her off almost daily as she went to her employment; she knew this would happen and the thought of it made her tremble with apprehension, but undaunted she went forward, and on the morrow was still as determined as ever that she would not yield to terror.

In all her heroic fidelity, perhaps the most admirable feature was her conviction that, owing to her fear and occasional repugnances, she was (and this she sincerely believed) ungrateful and unfaithful, and had done absolutely nothing for God.

After nights of unspeakable torment, crushed, yet ever gallant, she rose at the hour of Rule and resumed her ordinary labours, asking no exceptions from common life. She burnt, indeed, with the very fire of the Heart of Jesus, for after all the agonies of hell and her share in Christ's sufferings, she was neither discouraged nor cast down, but her readiness to suffer only increased.

Like Saint Margaret Mary, she offered herself in sacrifice for religious souls, for priests, for sinners of every description. Docile and abandoned to the divine Will, she asked but one thing, to be able to console Him. She was ready to suffer a thousand martyrdoms to help those who for the most part were utterly unknown to her, but whom she loved in and through Him.

As we pointed out in the beginning, she had to be a victim in order that the Message might be delivered and be listened to by mankind for whom she endured so much.

She who knew the Heart of Jesus and His love for souls, was better qualified than any other to transmit this Message to the world.

THE MESSAGE

It is one of love and mercy. Nowhere is it fully stated, but it is found in fragmentary form all through the book. Its chief points were often reiterated, and with little verbal change.

Here is a short summary of them:

(*a*) In the first place, the Sacred Heart and the overwhelming charity of Jesus Christ for mankind are brought out in a striking way. It might almost be called a new revelation of the Sacred Heart, confirming and in certain matters completing and perfecting that previously given to Saint Margaret Mary.

More than two centuries and a half have elapsed since 1675, and new currents of devotion have arisen in the Church. At present, the mystical Christ is passionately (and very rightly) cherished by those souls who in their inmost being are conscious of Its reality and Its implications.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart would appear to have grown less, if anything, and to be less well understood,[1] to some the devotion appears a mutilation of the worship of the whole Christ, or perhaps feminine with too much sentiment or even sentimentality in it.

Our Lord reacts strongly against this false impression. He reaffirms that there is no mistake, that it is indeed His Heart of flesh, pierced by the lance that He offers mankind; His Heart so full of love and so little loved in return, and of which the gaping Wound cries out how immense is His tender affection for men.

Like all true love, His is consumed by desire for a return in kind, all the more, that only so can man attain happiness here below, and everlasting beatitude hereafter. Let those who reject His love realize the horror of hell to which they will be condemning themselves. . . . This was the appeal that, through Josefa, Jesus Christ sent out to the whole world.

(*b*) That men may be attracted (and herein lie the novelty and force of the Message) . . . the Sacred Heart manifests through her His *infinite mercy*. He loves them every one, just as they are, even the most despicable, even the greatest sinners, one can almost say, especially the most miserable and sinful. He does not ask for their good qualities or virtues, but only for their wretchedness and sins. Far from being an obstacle, their very faults are thus an encouragement to draw near Him.

Such is the gift God asks of His beloved sinners, on the one condition of a true repentance, and a readiness to turn away from their evil ways out of love for Him.

His Heart is there waiting for His erring sons with all the impatience of true love. He assures them beforehand of a free pardon. "It is not sin that most grievously wounds My Heart," He said, "but what rends and lacerates It is that after sin men do not take refuge in It once more" (29th August 1922).

What He wants and ardently desires is their trust in His infinite goodness and mercy.

(*c*) *To consecrated and therefore specially loved souls, Jesus offers a share of His redemptive life.* He would like them to act as intermediaries for the saving of souls, and that is why He asks of all the *spirit of sacrifice in love*. As a rule, no great sufferings are to be borne,

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[1] In his recent encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ (June 1943) Pope Pius XII tells us that devotion to the Sacred Heart has prepared souls to understand the doctrine of the Mystical Christ. The idea of reparation for others which Our Lord made an essential element in devotion to the Sacred Heart, implies the solidarity of all Christians — one with another — in the unity of the Mystical Body. But devotion to the Mystical Christ, the "whole" Christ, with its horizons attractive through their very vastness, inclines the superficially minded to find too limited a devotion, centred in the Heart of Christ. This mistake is due to a lack of understanding that devotion to the Sacred Heart is directed to Christ loving, wounded with love, and that by it all the members of the Mystical Body are united in this love with Him and with each other.

but He inculcates the importance of ordinary actions however insignificant, if done in union with Him, in a spirit of sacrifice and love (30th November 1922 and 2nd December, 1922). He lays stress on the value of the tiniest offerings, which not only can lead them far on in sanctity, but will effect the salvation of many souls (20th October 1922). On the other hand, He reminds them of the *danger of slackening in their efforts in little ways,* which may lead to greater infidelity and finally expose them to hell-fire, where their sufferings will greatly exceed those of less-favoured souls (3rd August 1921; 12th December 1922; 14th, 15th, 20th, 24th March 1923; 4th September 1922).

Let consecrated souls therefore re-animate their trust in the Heart of Jesus. "I easily condone their weakness; what I want them to know is that if after their faults and falls they humbly cast themselves into My Heart, I love them always, and pardon them all." He adds: "Do you not know that the more wretched a soul is, the more I love her?" "The fact that I have chosen a soul does not mean that her faults and miseries are wiped out. But if in all humility that soul acknowledges her failings and atones by little acts of generosity and love, above all, if she trusts Me, if she throws herself into My Heart, she gives Me more glory and does more good to souls than if she had not fallen. What does her wretchedness matter to Me, if she gives Me the love that I want?" (20th October 1922).

So what the Heart of Jesus demands of His own is humility, trust, and love.

(*d*) Finally, He repeatedly offers to all the *thought of His Passion,* for it is the sign of His immense love for mankind and the sole hope of salvation.

His sad and suffering Heart is again and again presented to us; He exhorts and entreats us in virtue of His immeasurable pains to return to Him. How great must have been the love that could bear such agony for us, and at the same time how terrible is the misfortune of those who through their own fault let such a Redemption pass them by! Man has put his sin between himself and God, a chasm impossible to bridge — yet our Jesus comes with His suffering Passion, and oversteps our sinfulness, even veils our crimes with His Blood. The road to salvation is once more opened, but it must and can only be through the Passion. This is the only way to establish contact with God again. The choice lies between the Passion and Hell!

So the work of consecrated souls is to enter into the Passion of Christ and, by personal sacrifices, to pass on its fruits to other souls for whom they pray and immolate themselves.

THE OPPORTUNENESS OF THE MESSAGE

How striking is its actuality to-day!

Everywhere sin is increasing to an appalling degree. The pride of man leads him to discard his God and attempt to make a paradise of earth. He has so far succeeded only in making it a vestibule of hell, where impiety, immorality, and the worst passions have free scope; wars rage that are more terrible than any yet heard of, the majority of mankind suffers poverty and slavery, and all without the comfort which faith alone can impart.

The Heart of God inclines in pity towards His forlorn children, and He points out to them the way of happiness, peace, and salvation.

This Message is not only transmitted by Josefa, but reproduced in her life through Christ's operations in her soul, for facts are more calculated to move than are mere words.
If anyone wants to realize the love of the Heart of Jesus for souls, let him read the pages in which Josefa notes down how she listens to the Heart-beats of her Master. "Every heart-beat is an appeal to a soul," He told her (25th September 1920).

Surely we cannot doubt the *reality* of His love, when the flames issuing from His Heart are seen to kindle Josefa's with a love so valiant and intrepid that she braves the sufferings of hell-fire to save the souls He loves. Nor can we doubt the immensity of His love, when for the same purpose she accepts unutterable tortures, and she who knew tells us that her love, "her poor love", is as nothing beside that of her Master, just as the torments she undergoes are but a shadow of those of the Passion (28th October 1920). The grief of Jesus at the loss of souls and His joy at their return, which are so plainly shown in Josefa's life, make it impossible for us to doubt the goodness of His love! (25th August 1920; 26th December 1920; 3rd-4th August 1921; 29th July 1921; 3rd, 12th, 25th September 1922). "Help Me," He would say, "help Me to make My love for men known, for I come to tell them that in vain will they seek happiness apart from Me, for they will not find it. Suffer, Josefa, and love, for we two must win these souls" (13th June 1923).

We get an inkling of the intense love of the Sacred Heart from that of Josefa for these same souls; it was so real and true that it could have been inspired only by Him.

Infinite Mercy, too, is manifested by Josefa's life. "I will love you," He told her on 8th June 1923, Feast of the Sacred Heart, "and by the love I have for you souls will realize how much I love them." "Since I forgive you so often, they will recognize My mercy." He even said to her one day: "I love souls even to folly" (27th September 1922).

Such a statement surprises us, yet in Scripture do we not read (and Scripture is inerrant): "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I. Behold, I have graven thee in my hands" (Isa. xlix, 15, 16). "He will put away our iniquities and he will cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea" (Mich, vii, 19). "Thou hast delivered my soul that it should not perish, thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isa. xxxviii, 17). "He loved me and delivered himself for me" (Gal. ii, 20).

We may well call these statements divine folly!

As to the reality of hell, again we see the Message lived by Josefa. The sufferings of the Passion which continue uninterruptedly in her, all the demoniacal persecutions and descents into hell have only one end: to snatch souls from perdition and bring them back to salvation from which they have strayed. We see here exemplified the dogma of the Redemption and of the Communion of Saints. How, then, would it be possible to deny on the one hand the existence of the devil, of hell and of purgatory, and on the other the adequate power of Redemption which suffering has when borne for others? These great supernatural realities we read in the moving pages in which Josefa has them graven in her very flesh and soul.

The Message itself cannot be called a new revelation, but it unveils in a most striking manner what faith has already taught us. Our Lord Himself told this to Josefa: "I repeat to you again that what I have said is not new, but souls need a new impetus to make them advance, just as a flame needs fuel, if it is not to burn itself out."

How great is the force of the appeal which the humble little Sister transmits to us from her Lord!

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE MESSAGE

We have been enabled to realize how the Message consists not only in the words entrusted to Josefa, but in her whole life. By her very existence, this soul, so beloved of Jesus, speaks to all who will listen, and her life stands as evidence of the divine action upon her.

She alone heard the words of Our Lord, and so is the sole witness; but her life testifies to the truth of the Message, and, moreover, she was closely followed up by qualified observers, who testify to the undeniable virtue of the obscure little messenger of infinite love, and to the reality of her supernatural states, of which tangible proofs were not wanting. All who had to do with her attested her very real virtue; not that she shone in a striking manner, for she was ever more imitable than admirable, but all felt the unconscious influence she exercised around her. No self-seeking, but rather self-denial in everything, unquestioning obedience, gentleness, and patience: all the result of true humility.

"You are the echo of My Voice," said Our Lord to her (10th December 1922), and, in fact, everything in her was an echo of the divine. Her unaffected virtue led one to a conviction that God was acting on this soul, and this by itself could have provided clear evidence that her supernatural communications came from God. Nevertheless, Superiors and her Director remained for a certain length of time deliberately hesitant and uncertain, and they deserve our thanks for their reserve and wary misgivings, which insisted on proofs.

With her innate candour and honesty, she could never have practised willful deception. Perhaps one is justified in asking whether she was led astray by her heart or imagination — a not infrequent trait in persons of sincere holiness. But (and this is a good sign) Josefa lived in perpetual fear that such might be the case, and was quite prepared, had Superiors deemed her to be in illusion, to consider all that had taken place as delusion. Such action was characteristic of her.

When she went to Rome to carry a message from Our Lord about the Society of the Sacred Heart to the Mother General, she was suddenly seized with a blinding fear (at the devil's instigation) that all was a dream and that she had no message from heaven to deliver. Without hesitation or reflection on the harm it might do her cause in the eyes of her Superiors, she confessed her anguish of mind, and the certitude she now felt that all was a chimera of her imagination, and she humbly begged that no credence should be given to anything she might say.

That she should have had this anxious concern at such a moment is another proof of the truth of her mission.

She could not have acted so had she not been profoundly humble and self-forgetful; her writings bear the same impress of sincerity.

It was by the express command of Our Lord and of Our Lady that she kept her Superiors informed of all that passed: "You must write," said Our Blessed Lord to her. This, no doubt, was meant to secure that none of His Words should be lost (6th August 1922), but also His divine purpose may have been that all Josefa's actions should be controlled and witnessed from start to finish. In all she wrote there never occurs a useless word, nor anything false or equivocal; nothing that could be regarded as self-praise nor that betrays a shadow of vanity. All is true, reasonable, moving, and holy.

The same control was exercised over her supernatural states. When she was carried off into hell, or when she returned to consciousness after an ecstasy, her Superiors were present; they watched with solicitous and maternal eyes her gradual return to life's interests, noting carefully words that escaped her in those impressive moments.

When she had communications with souls in purgatory who came to ask her prayers, the name, exact date, and place of their death, if given, were always found on investigation to be correct.

No possible doubt exists concerning the forcible abductions of Josefa by the devil; they took place under the very eyes of her Superiors, who were powerless to prevent them. Likewise the effects of fire which burned her were seen on her garments and flesh; fragments of scorched linen are still preserved.

The most convincing feature of these diabolic visitations (visions of Satan, descents into hell), which to most people would have been terrifying, was that they seemed neither to have troubled her imagination, nor to have disturbed the calm equilibrium of her eminently sane temperament. So also the divinely supernatural, with those simple and homely proofs of affection she received from Our Lord and His Mother,[1] must surely have moved her feelings to an extraordinary degree, yet they left her peaceful, silent, and apparently without even the natural desire to talk over her wonderful experience with anyone. The Mothers noticed how very discreet she was, never speaking of the favours she received, except to the two witnesses already mentioned. Finally, all the sufferings (nights spent in hell, or in bearing the Cross, or in wearing the Crown of Thorns) which might have made her beg for relief, only gave her a greater desire to suffer for love of Our Lord and of souls.

So her writings and her life confirm each other as evidence that all that took place in her was divine in origin. Even the most extraordinary happenings have an aim and significance. There are no useless details, no record of revelations that do not bring out in clearer light and force some

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[1] Delightful apparitions of the Holy Child at Christmas . . . of Our Lady, "in all her beauty and so motherly", as Josefa always describes her.

dogmatic truth, giving us deeper insight into the Heart of Our Lord, His love, the value of souls, the happiness of heaven, the irreparable loss of the damned.

Everything in Josefa's life is grace-giving and profoundly moving. The writings of this unassuming Sister, regarded as ignorant in the world's eyes, will, no doubt, be scrutinized and pondered over by theologians and masters of the spiritual life, and as in the case of Saint Therese of the Child of Jesus, numerous books will be written to develop the profound doctrine contained in these writings, and to make known the mysteries of love. But better still, the mere reading will bring numberless graces and lead many to conversion and holiness. The world may be astonished at the great things that come from a life so simple; but it is precisely in her nothingness that the overwhelming proof of the authenticity of her Message lies.

In very truth it was countersigned by a Hand that was nothing less than divine.

Digitus Dei est hic

(Signed) H. Monier Vinard S.J.

BOOK ONE

THE MESSENGER OF THE HEART OF JESUS

CHAPTER I

THE HEAVENLY CHOICE

A Soul's Awakening

1890—1907

"I want you to be all Mine"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 17th March 1901)

SPAIN gave Our Lord the soul He was to consecrate to His Love, though it was in France that He revealed Himself to her.

Josefa Menendez, a native of Madrid, was born on the 4th of February 1890, and was baptized in the church of San Lorenzo on the 9th of the same month, being given the names of Josefa Maria.

Her father, Leonardo Menendez, also a native of the same capital, had had a sad youth, for his father died when he was very young, and his mother marrying again, the unwanted boy was sent to school. When only seventeen years of age he lost the mother, whom he dearly loved, and to drown this sorrow and his loneliness, he enlisted in the army. His superior officer was not long in appreciating his marked artistic talents, and he was appointed decorator of the Artillery Museum, where he did so well that ever after he was in constant demand whenever military decorations had to be designed, either in the local cathedral of St. Isidore or at the Royal Palace.

In 1888 he married Lucia del Moral, a devout and conscientious girl who made him an excellent wife and devoted herself to the upbringing of their little family of four girls and two boys, though both the latter died as infants, leaving as the eldest of the family Josefa, who took her responsibilities very seriously.

The father, being energetic and intelligent, was able to provide them with a comfortable home, and the atmosphere of Josefa's childhood was joyous and carefree, and her childish piety developed early. She was only five when she was confirmed and the Holy Spirit took possession of a singularly docile and innocent mind which later on was to be so choice an instrument in God's Hands.

The little girl's confessor, R. F. Rubio, was a great enthusiast for devotion to the Sacred Heart, and he later entered the Society of Jesus. He cultivated her aptitude for prayer, for he was struck by the spirituality of his little penitent. He remained her confessor until her entrance into our Society. At seven she made her first confession; in later years she used ingenuously to recall the date, a First Friday in October 1897, exclaiming regretfully: "If only I could now feel such contrition for my sins as I had on that day."

Father Rubio gave her spiritual training suited to her age; he taught her how to meditate and use ejaculatory prayer, and Josefa gradually acquired the habit of constant awareness of the divine Presence. When she was able to read, she delighted in *El Cuarto de Hora de Santa Teresa,* a simple little meditation book which her confessor gave her, and she learned how, after

reading a passage slowly, to reflect on it and end with a resolution. She was extraordinarily faithful to the habits thus early acquired.

"I delighted in my little book" she said later, "especially when it spoke to me of the Child Jesus or of the Passion. I found plenty to say to Our Lord and already I planned to devote my life to Him who possessed all my love."

Josefa was by nature both serious and vivacious. She freely asserted her authority over her three little sisters, and often the harassed mother would proudly trust her eldest to replace her. She was no less her father's pet; he dubbed her his "little empress" and could refuse her nothing . . . a fact well known and exploited by the younger ones, who always had recourse to her intercession when some favour was hoped for. Every Sunday the whole family went to High Mass, and the father never failed to give each child a few coppers, to teach them generosity in almsgiving; they were known and loved by all the poor of the neighbourhood. If the weather was fine, the Sunday afternoons were spent in country walks; if cloudy and wet, they all stayed at home, and father and children enjoyed themselves together till it was time to say the rosary in common.

Leonardo taught his eldest little daughter himself, and so elated was he with her progress that he fondly hoped to have her trained for the teaching profession. This, however, was not to be, as we shall see; Our Lord had His own and very special designs for her future.

When she was eleven years old the all-important preparation for First Communion began. The very idea of it was an enthralling delight to the thoughtful and spiritual-minded child, who began to attend the instructions given at the Reparatrice Convent. The great day was preceded by a short retreat, and we still possess the "notes" of what she afterwards called the first appeal made to her by the Lover of her soul.

"In my first meditation I reflected on the words 'Jesus wants to give Himself to me, that I may be wholly His'. What joy! I thought, He is the one object of my desires. Yet how is it to be done? I consulted one of the nuns, and she explained to me that I must be very, very good, and that thus I should always belong entirely to Our Lord.

"The subject of meditation on the second day was 'Jesus, Spouse of Virgins, takes delight in the pure and innocent'. This was a great light to me, the solution of yesterday's puzzle; of course I must become His little Spouse, then indeed I should belong entirely to Him, just as Mummy belonged to Daddy. So there and then I promised Our Lord ever to remain a virgin (I did not understand what it meant) that I might always be entirely His. All day long I renewed this promise, and in the evening during Benediction I made a consecration of myself to the Child Jesus, asking with great fervour that I might be wholly and entirely His. That I was soon to receive Him in my heart by Holy Communion filled me with a strange joy, and while I was silently revelling in the happy thought, I heard a voice, that I can never forget, saying to me: 'Yes, little one, I want you to be all Mine.' What happened then it is impossible for me to put into words, but when I left the chapel my mind was quite made up: I would be very, very good.

"Of vocation I had never heard, and I thought nuns were unearthly beings quite apart, but from that time onward something seemed to set me, too, apart, and this feeling remained. It was only long afterwards that I knew it had been a vocation to religious life.

"On the third day of the retreat I renewed my resolution, and on St. Joseph's day, the happy day of my First Communion, I made this offering, and it came from my very inmost being:

" 'On this day, 19th March 1901, before all heaven and earth, taking as my witness my heavenly Mother Mary, and St. Joseph, my advocate and father, I promise Jesus that I will ever safeguard in me the precious virtue of virginity, my only desire being to please Him, and my only fear that of offending Him by sin. Show me, O my God, how to belong wholly to Thee in the most perfect manner possible, that I may ever love Thee more and more and never displease Thee in anything. This is the desire of my heart, on this my First Communion day. Holy Mary, I beg you on this the Feast of your Holy Spouse, St. Joseph, to obtain my petition.

" 'Your loving Child,

" 'Josefa Menendez.'

"I duly wrote and signed it, and at every subsequent communion I renewed this offering. When afterwards I told Father Rubio what I had done he explained to me that little girls should not make promises beyond that of being very good, and he wanted me to tear up the paper. I could not, and I continued to repeat: 'Lord, I am Thine for ever.' "

This witness of her first oblation was kept by Josefa till her dying day, and the little faded paper, covered with her large childish script, still bears witness to her faithful love.

This first meeting with her Eucharistic Lord initiated Josefa into the divine intimacy which was afterwards to become so powerful and so free. Holy Communion was her greatest happiness and all noticed how solid virtue began to develop in her.

"After Josefa's First Communion," wrote her sister, "one may say that she ceased to be a child. I don't remember seeing her take any part in the amusements she prepared for us with so much zest. Her charity was very great, too, outside the home. If a child she knew fell ill, she never failed to visit her. Her piety and spirit of sacrifice, the result of the good example given us by our parents, joined to her natural qualities, made her the soul of the little family. 'Pepa' as we called her, was a sort of second mother to us, and we never hesitated to confide to her our hopes, our troubles and our childish fears. One day when I was quite small, I was sent to buy something. I did so, but forgot to pay. Great was my apprehension when I became aware of my omission. I dared neither go back, nor bring the money home. I wrapped it in paper and left it beside a doorway in the street. Then I ran to Pepa and told her in secret what had happened. Very sweetly she comforted me, kissed me, soothed me, and herself went and paid for me. We always ran to her in our troubles, for she managed to arrange things so that we were not scolded.

"Thanks to her influence over our parents, Josefa obtained for this same little sister the grace to make her First Communion two years before the time that was then usual.

"Thus Pepa's childhood passed in great simplicity, as was customary in Christian families of our station in life, but already what our eldest sister was to become was foreshadowed."

At about this time her parents apprenticed her to a school of Arts and Crafts (Fomente del Arte),[1] where her intelligence and readiness in learning soon attracted attention. Her clever fingers turned out marvels of needlecraft, and she was very successful, securing the diplomas year after year.

When she was thirteen Josefa returned home, for the time had come to see to the education of her little sisters, but an accident had occurred at that time to their father, which determined their admission into the Free School of the Sacred Heart.[2]

It was the year that Catholic Spain was to choose Our Lady under the title of the Immaculate Conception as Patron of her Infantry Regiments. An open-air Mass was to be celebrated on that occasion in the Park of the Royal Palace. Leonardo, watched by the young King Alphonsus XIII, was working at the decoration of the altar. Suddenly he dropped a tool which might have wounded the Prince in its fall, and the abrupt movement he made to avoid this caused him to lose his balance. He fell from the scaffolding and broke his arm. The King, touched by this act which had preserved him, wished to take charge of the education of the children. He offered to place them with the "Dames Anglaises", which was a Royal Institution. But though Leonardo was deeply touched, he would not part with his family and preferred to send them as day-scholars to the Sacred Heart Free School, which was not far from his home. The two little girls were delighted, whilst Josefa was to benefit by the familiar intimacy with the Blessed Sacrament accorded by the Leganitos Chapel. The Blessed Sacrament henceforth became a daily attraction, Our Lord already directing this simple child so dear to His Heart to the Tabernacle where He for ever dwells.

Family life continued happy and peaceful. The "little empress" kept her place as the most devoted of daughters and the best of sisters. Everything in the family was simple and joyous, but faith above all reigned supreme.

The great treat of those days was a visit to the Carmel of Loeches, where the children had an aunt. They were received like little princesses and had the run of the Chaplain's quarters, where they discovered a copy of the Carmelite Rule, which they eagerly read. On their return home the great game was to play at being Carmelites. Office was chanted, penances performed, in all of which Josefa was the leading spirit, but it was for her a good deal more than a mere game.

Her parents were proud of her aptitude for dressmaking and held to her completing her training in a millinery establishment. The conversation of the workgirls was not always edifying, but in her daily Communion Josefa drew strength to retain her purity of heart; she wrote in her reminiscences of that time:

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[1] Institute for the development of the arts.

[2] The Boarding School and Free School of the Sacre Coeur were both situated in the street called Leganitos. It was destroyed by the Reds during the civil war of 1936.

"I went through many perils, but God always protected me amid the dangers of evil talk, so common in our workroom. It often made my tears flow to hear things that troubled me, but I never doubted that God meant me to be His own, and this was my comfort and my strength. Nothing and nobody could have altered my resolve or made me doubt its truth."

"On Sunday," her sister tells us, "she often went to a Patronage, of which the president was the daughter of the owner of our house. This lady was wholly given to good works and very charitable. On Sunday, therefore, we spent the afternoon in useful and merry surroundings, and many children found there a shelter which preserved them from sin. Josefa was the life of the little party, and brought all her self-forgetfulness and intelligence into play, and our benefactress, who appreciated her virtue, used to assign her those parts in our little plays that no one else wanted, and these she acted with ready grace and simplicity.

She often accompanied the Senora X in the visits she paid to the poor. Pepa saw how she not only distributed alms, but was glad to render the most humble services to her clients. This greatly attracted her own generous nature. One day Maria secretly confided to Josefa that she had discovered a poor leprous old woman and that she was trying to find among her friends one who would join her in seeing that the poor patient wanted for nothing and was loved. Her name was Trinidad and she suffered very much. Her left side was paralysed and her face and hands ravaged by the disease; she lived alone and was able to do nothing for herself. Pepa was delighted at this appeal to her generosity, and it was its hidden heroism that she most appreciated. For many weeks she went to feed Trinidad. Once she took her sister with her, thinking she could count on her discretion, but . . .

"The impression made on me by the poor leper was such that on my return home it was noticed, and I was questioned. I had to tell. Our mother forbade Pepa ever to go back to the poor invalid; a prohibition which cost her very much."

So her time passed between family life, her work, and the exercise of charity. But Divine Love's austere law was soon to be fulfilled in the sufferings which would try and strengthen her young soul.

"Never doubt the love of My Heart," the divine Friend was to say to her later. "What matter if the wind of adversity blow, I have planted the root of your littleness in the soil of My Heart."

Waiting

1907 -1920

"Let yourself be led blindfold, for I am your Father, and My eyes are open to lead and guide you."

(Our Lord to Josefa, 18th September 1923)

SUFFERING so characteristic of the whole of Josefa's life now first made its appearance in the home where hitherto it had been unknown. It was accepted peacefully as the friends of God are wont to accept it. Josefa learned to suffer as she had learned to love, and her heart opened wide to sorrow and sacrifice. It was going to do its work in making her will more flexible, teaching her to overcome her nature, while contact with the cross strengthened her love, maturing it without destroying its intensity.

In 1907 death came to the happy little home. Carmen, one of the little sisters, was carried off by sudden illness, and the children's grandmother followed soon after. The loss of Carmencita was like a death knell to her parents. They fought against it, but it was more than they could bear. Both father and mother were laid low, the one by typhoid fever, the other by congestion of the lungs. Josefa's true worth was at once revealed; she gave up her work and divided her attention between the two invalids, the care of her sisters, and the manifold home duties that pressed on her young shoulders. Medical advice was costly, and soon ran away with all their savings. Poverty was now added to sickness, yet not for a moment did Josefa's courage flinch, and for a period of wellnigh seven weeks she bore unaided the full responsibility of anxiety and privation.

"We three children all slept together on a mattress on the floor," she said. "Our kind doctor wanted father and mother to be taken to hospital, but I did not consent, for I was certain Providence would not forsake us, and it came to our help through the nuns of the Sacred Heart. Oh! I shall never forget how good they were to us."

A novena to Saint Madeleine Sophie was begun, and in the course of it the mother, whose life was now despaired of, called the family to her bedside. "Do not cry any more," she said. "Mother Barat has just been here to visit me. She told me that I am not going to die, because you still need me."

"We never heard the particulars," Josefa said afterwards, "but the next day she was out of danger, and father got well too, but his strength was gone and he never was able to work again."

The nuns of the Sacred Heart watched discreetly over this interesting family. Josefa had no sewing-machine, and her slender resources did not allow her to purchase one. The Superior sent for her and asked her to buy her one, and to use it for a time to try it, and gave her an order for literally thousands of scapulars of the Sacred Heart for the soldiers of Melilla. When Josefa

wanted to return the machine to Leganitos the Reverend Mother refused, saying that the making of the scapulars had more than paid for it; Pepa was profoundly touched by this kindness; she felt that such generosity was drawn from the Sacred Heart, and she henceforth became so attached to the Society that her one desire was to enter there.

Work came to her from various quarters. She already had a reputation for clever dressmaking, and before long had more orders than she was able to attend to, which spelled for her days of uninterrupted labour prolonged far into the night, but her energy and self-denial were equal to the occasion. She organized a workroom and there trained a number of young girls. She rose at six in the morning, and after hearing Mass at the Sacred Heart, returned to her labours till midday. After the meal, which was always followed by a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the apprentices returned, and all the afternoon was spent in work. They were a happy little band, for Josefa's good temper made all go smoothly, and her girls appreciated her thoughtful kindness, always alive to what could give them pleasure. But she was conscious of her responsibilities, and with gentle firmness insisted on good work and order. Every evening the rosary was said in common, and Josefa's devotion added many other prayers. On Saturday the two sisters went to confession, and Father Rubio followed up Josefa with paternal interest.

"On Sundays," this sister tells us, "the whole family rose early, in order to assist at several masses. In the afternoon Pepa and I went to see the nuns of the Sacred Heart at all three houses in Madrid, and in the evening the whole family assisted at Benediction at Leganitos."

When they were obliged to go out the two sisters accompanied each other; they exchanged thoughts, told each other of their fervent aspirations, and both spoke of vocation, a thing not possible at home, as their mother's tears flowed freely whenever they alluded to the subject, so they resolved not to sadden her by speaking of it in her presence.

"One day," wrote Mercedes, "Josefa told me she wanted to be a nun, but far from Spain, so that her sacrifice might be complete. As I did not agree with her in this, she answered me that nothing was too good to give God."

In spite of her thoughtful character, she was always gay, and whilst this disposition of hers sweetened all contact with her, her efficiency and self-denial were equal to every occasion. Little by little comfort once more returned to the home-circle, but it was of short duration, and in the beginning of 1910 their father was carried off by a heart attack. During his last illness his wife never left him day or night, and spared nothing to give him relief. One day when she had gone out to procure a medicament for him, she saw a statue of the Sacred Heart in a shop window among a quantity of antiques. She was much moved and would have liked to buy it, thinking what pleasure it would give them all at home, and of the love with which they would pray around it. She went in and timidly asked the price, but alas, it far exceeded the small contents of her purse, for she had only enough to pay for the medicine her husband required. She thanked, left the shop, and had already gone some way along the road, when she heard herself called back. "Pay what you can, and take the statue," said the man. Touched and delighted, Lucia gave the money she had with her, carried off her treasure, and returning to Leonardo—"Instead of the medicine," she said, "I have brought you the Sacred Heart." The sick man was pleased beyond

measure, for his faith was very great. The statue was placed at the foot of his bed, and he never tired of looking at it. He died, with eyes fixed on it, on the 7th of April 1910, leaving it to his family as a pledge of assured protection. Father Rubio, who had assisted him in his last moments, now constituted himself the friend and adviser of the sorrowing household, while Josefa became the sole support of her mother, and her earnings alone kept the wolf from the door. Her soul lived ever on her one love, and her offering was daily repeated and remained the strength and horizon of her life in the difficult days that followed. Before her father's death she had already made known her secret aspirations and begged leave to enter the Society of the Sacred Heart. For the first time in his life he was angry with Pepa. She dried her tears, but kept her treasured vocation unchanged in her heart.

Later on, a Carmelite Father offered to obtain her admission into his Order. That was not her vocation, and she gratefully refused, but took occasion to tell her mother once more where God called her. She met with no other opposition than tearful appeals not to abandon her, and for the second time she deferred her entrance. Great, however, was her grief when her younger sister obtained their mother's leave and left for the Noviceship at Chamartin (Madrid). Josefa who had trained her with a view to passing on to her the support of the family was deeply disillusioned. Her faith in God was her only support, and her mature virtue once more helped her to forget herself. Her sister wrote on this subject:

"We were inseparable till the day of my entrance into the Noviceship. My departure gave her keen sorrow, but in my youthful thoughtlessness and desire to consecrate my life to Jesus Christ, I hardly realized it. It was only later that I became aware of the sacrifice I had imposed on my beloved sister; then I he thought that God had so arranged it alone consoled me."

Josefa continued her devoted life of hard work and made light of her fatigue; she turned her hopes towards the youngest of her sisters, but she, too, in time, was to have a vocation, and three years after Josefa's death entered the Carmelite Convent at Loeches, where she took the name of Madeleine Sophie of the Sacred Heart. She was later sent to Portugal, where the Order was to be restored at Coimbra.

God who was leading Josefa by hidden though sure ways, was more than once to allow her to take the wrong path, thereby teaching her the science of abandonment and the perfection of sacrifice.

Father Rubio, who had followed her up for the last twelve years, did not abandon her, and in February 1912, when she was twenty-two, he thought the moment opportune. The Order of Marie Reparatrice seemed to him one that would suit Josefa; he knew the nuns intimately, and began to direct her vocation towards them. Though her attraction lay in a different direction, Josepha stifled her feelings and asked to be admitted at the Reparatrice Convent. Here she was happy; she appreciated the spirit, and generously embraced her new religious life. The thought of making reparation for the sins of men through the Heart of Mary appealed to her, and no sort of temptation or trouble came to mar the happy months that followed. Gradually, however, and almost in spite of herself, there stole over her soul's consciousness the reawakening of another love—that of the Sacred Heart—her first attraction, and every time she heard the convent bells

ringing (for they were close to her convent) the inward struggle was renewed. Our Lady herself intervened and showed her that she had not found her true home.

Josefa had charge of a large room which contained a big statue of the Blessed Virgin, under the title of Our Lady of Sorrows; in accordance with Spanish custom, it was adorned with rich vesture, and in her hand Our Lady held a crown of real thorns. Josefa was surprised one day to see the crown lit up by a shaft of light coming from she knew not where. She did not venture to speak of the marvel, but as the light continued for three or four days, she resolved to investigate its origin. She found that it proceeded from one of the thorns, and at the same time she heard a penetrating voice saying: "Take this thorn, my child; Jesus will give you others as time goes on." Josefa detached the thorn as she was bid, and the response she gave to her Mother's gift was a fresh offering of herself which was before long to receive its seal in suffering.

Her six months' postulantship was over and the day of her clothing fixed, when her mother, who had missed her sorely, came and claimed her again. Father Rubio seconded the mother's request, and so it came about that Josefa's return home was decided, and she left the Novitiate with the feelings we can imagine. She took with her the thorn, whose light, like that in her own heart, was quenched. Its reality, however, had sunk deeply into her inmost being, and this reality was suffering.

Courageously she faced the upward path to God, and resumed the old tasks. This time she was employed very largely by the nuns of the Sacred Heart in making the children's uniforms. Simple, modest, and conscientious in her work, her life was illumined by her constant prayer. She went every fortnight to see her sister, now a novice at Chamartin, and they talked together of what filled her soul. She loved to talk of the life of a sister in the Society of the Sacred Heart, which she felt fulfilled every aspiration she had.

The nun who was over her in the school linen-room was struck by her devotedness, her love of duty, and the sweetness of disposition that made light of every difficulty and never caused the smallest embarrassment to others. Her tact, her dexterity and judgment, her silent activity all greatly impressed her; she was always on the watch to render service and every spare minute was spent before the Blessed Sacrament. "I feel thoroughly in my element when I am here," she used to say in speaking of Chamartin.

Very different was the story when she was obliged to work for clients outside. Her delicate conscience was many a time outraged by the absence of modesty in dress of those she worked for, and who as Catholics should have known better; it was then more than at any other time that she felt her "banishment" from Convent walls, and she would exclaim: "Since childhood my one prayer has been that 'I might dwell in the House of the Lord', and the more I see of life outside, the greater is my longing to die, if this wish of my heart cannot be granted."

She lived on her burning hopes, and her daily Communion was fuel to the fire. This was the source of her serenity and of her courage; to others the secret of her cross and of her thorn was never told.

She had few friends, but her example and her counsels had made her the centre of a group of working girls on whom her influence was remarkable. She would head a pilgrimage to Avila or

to the Cerre de los Angeles,[1] where the memorial to the Sacred Heart had been erected in accomplishment of the national vow, and on these and other rare outings her bright cheerfulness and fervour made a deep impression on them.

The months dragged on, and all the time Josefa was watching her opportunity. In 1917 she thought the moment had come, and when she begged her admission at Chamartin she was kindly received and her mother's consent obtained. Her departure was fixed for the 24th of September, Feast of Our Lady of Mercy. Alas, when the long-desired day dawned her mother's tears shook her resolution, and again prevailed . . . tender-hearted Josefa yielded at the sight of her distress; her place in the Novice- ship remained empty, and she was left to weep over the frailty that had prevented her from keeping her tryst. But He who "works in obscurity, and who nevertheless is light" pursued His purpose and in His own good time brought her out of darkness into light.

The French houses of the Sacred Heart which had been suppressed by iniquitous laws were just at this time taking on a new lease of life, and many were reopening after the expulsions that had marked the beginning of the century. The old monastery of Les Feuillants at Poitiers had been preserved for the Society, and here a Noviceship for sisters was opened, in the house that had been the first General Noviceship of the Society and was still redolent with memories of Saint Madeleine Sophie. It was here that God called Josefa, and He Himself guided her through the final storms of her vocation.

In 1919 she was already twenty-nine years of age and she felt that she had forfeited her chance of success by her former act. What was she to do? An interior voice urged her to try and try again, but an irrevocable denial met her advances; Superiors mistrusted her long and repeated hesitations.

"On the 16th of September, I felt my courage at an end, and kneeling before my crucifix, I begged Our Lord either to take me out of this life or to admit me into the Society of His Sacred Heart, for I could bear no more. Then it seemed to me that He showed me His Sacred Hands and Feet and said to me 'Kiss these Wounds. Can you indeed bear no more for Me? Have I not chosen you for My Sacred Heart?' I am unable to put into words what then took place in me. I promised—oh, I promised Him to live henceforth only for Him and to suffer . . . and begged Him to pity my weakness and wavering."

Two months passed in fervent supplications, till there dawned a memorable day for Josefa; it was the 19th of November.

"That day in my Communion I implored Our Lord by His Wounds and Precious Blood to open to me the doors of the Sacred Heart, which I knew I had closed by my own act."

That morning Josefa went as usual to fetch work at the convent at Chamartin; on her arrival she was told that the Superior wished to see her: a letter had just arrived from Les Feuillants (Poitiers) asking for one or two good vocations to begin the projected Noviceship. Did they know of any, and could they send anyone? The Superior asked Josefa if she felt equal to entering

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[1] This is a hill situated in the geographical centre of Spain, and on it the National Monument of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was erected.

in a French house of the Society. This time there was no hesitation; at once she wrote to offer herself, and kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, she begged that grace and strength might be given her to triumph over her weakness. This prayer was answered, and she was able to say afterwards: "I felt endued with a power I had never before experienced."

Her broken-hearted mother this time offered no opposition, and in order to avoid painful scenes, Josefa left home without saying good-bye and carrying nothing with her. The Mothers at Chamartin gave her her fare and provided her with all she needed. She reached San Sebastian, the first stage of her journey, and there found a warm welcome in the Sacred Heart.

"Jesus took me," she said, "I still do not know how, but I arrived at San Sebastian without money or strength—with nothing but love, I think . . . but I was at the end of my pilgrimage . . . I, the same as ever, so weak, but He sustained me."

The nuns at San Sebastian who had received her with so much affection prolonged her stay there for a whole month. Full of gratitude, she devoted herself to helping in the household. All noted how silently and deftly she worked, always in deep recollection. However, sad letters from her mother and sister and the realization of the difficulty the French language was going to be to her caused her some misgivings, still she kept her will firmly fixed on her goal, and when asked how she would manage in a country whose tongue she did not know, "God is leading me," she answered simply, and on 4th February she left for Poitiers.

It was a final departure, for she never saw Spain again. But what of that? Was she not obeying the call of One whose sovereign love can never ask too much?

CHAPTER II

LES FEUILLANTS
THE OLD MONASTERY OF THE SACRED HEART AT POITIERS

In the Open Heart of Jesus

4th February-16th July 1920

"For all you give Me I give you My Heart"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 17th March 1920)

THE old-world town of Poitiers is perched above the valley of the Clain, and from the top of its highest hill the ancient monastery of Les Feuillants dominates the surrounding country. There two centuries earlier, a colony of Cistercians had settled; it was a place of prayer and labour, and though the French Revolution left the hallowed spot desolate it was destined to live again, when the storm had passed and faith had revived, for the monastic buildings were peopled once more at the coming of Saint Madeleine Sophie and her newly founded Order. Here the Saint opened the first Noviceship of the Society of the Sacred Heart, here she made long sojourns, and here, too, many graces were conferred on her. Ever since, the house, the cloisters, and the garden have been regarded by the nuns of the Sacred Heart as a sort of reliquary and memorial of their holy Foundress.

To this remote and solitary house of prayer Josefa was guided by God, that He might there cultivate her soul and train and associate her with His divine Heart in the work of Redemption.

None who saw Josefa on her arrival at Poitiers could have suspected how great a work was beginning, for from the first days of her postulantship she passed unnoticed, and during the four years of her short religious life remained ever the same simple, silent, laborious, and unassuming religious. There was nothing particularly attractive in her exterior; she was usually serious and seemed at times to be suffering, but a bright, intelligent smile lighted up her face when she was addressed, especially if a service were asked of her. Her large dark eyes alone expressed and at times betrayed her inmost feelings; they were limpid eyes, gentle and ardent, and bespoke her interior recollection.

Her gifts, if hidden, were very real ones: she was swift and capable, active and adaptable to all sorts of conditions; she possessed rare good sense and excellent judgment. These gave her character an earnest and balanced foundation on which grace could build at will. Her heart was both tender and generous; her past sufferings had given her breadth of understanding and the kindliness which self-forgetfulness alone engenders. She brought to her religious formation a maturity which was the fruit of sacrifice and a supernatural understanding of the value of a religious vocation, together with a highly developed interior spirit and an immense love of God.

These gifts were hidden from herself as they were from those around her, and from the day of her arrival till her death she went her way utterly unknown, in the complete effacement of a very faithful and obscure life.

There were few novices at Poitiers; Josefa remained first postulant and eldest novice among the members, who came like herself from various houses of the Society.

The humble hiddenness of the life filled her with enthusiasm; it was modelled on that of Nazareth, and she found in it the fulfillment of her most sanguine expectations. It was in effect just what Saint Madeleine Sophie had defined as her ideal-—a great deal of strenuous labour offered for the souls of children, accompanied by the vivifying charity and prayerful atmosphere that result from close union with the Heart of Jesus. Josefa threw herself with her whole soul and heart into the current of life as she found it.

Events were few, and there is little to record of the months of her postulantship and noviceship, and the short eighteen months of religious life that followed after her vows till her death. None of the things that made up her daily life are of any value in the eyes of the world, yet are not the first years of the life of the Man-God all summed up in one short sentence: "He was subject to them"? And so it was with Josefa; the less a Sister is spoken of, the more unnoticed, the truer she is to type. None of those who lived with her knew anything of her mysterious intercourse with the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, and when after her death they were asked to recount all they could recall about her, how little they were able to say! She had passed unnoticed and hidden, simply and faithfully doing her duty-—that was all.

In this way Our Lord veiled from all the special graces which He now began to give her; day by day His designs of love were imprinted on the warp and woof of a career so hidden from human eyes that no exterior sign revealed the secret of which God Himself was the guardian.

Certainly it is one of the marvels of this narrative that the exterior and visible was such a contrast to the inner and invisible life she led. Josefa always followed common life and seemed in no way different from her sisters, yet she bore on her soul the weight of the most extraordinary and momentous graces of divine predilection which at one moment delivered her over to the onsets of excruciating physical pain, and again held her captive under the Hand of God; there was a twofold current of love between Him and her: Love Divine, which like the eagle precipitates itself upon its prey, and whose velocity none can stay, and a love frail yet ardent-—that of Josefa-—whose constant endeavour was to hold herself ever ready to accept all the urgent requirements of God's plan.

These pages are an attempt to narrate something of the mystery of her life. While we unhesitatingly submit to the judgment of the Holy See, sole judge in these matters, it would seem that the silence and shade under which that life was to unfold itself bore the stamp of the Holy Spirit, and we are therefore less afraid of temerity in discerning His Hand in the heavenly prudence which surpassed all human feasibility and succeeded in keeping undiscovered, except by her Superiors alone, the course of Josefa's uncharted ways-—for the big household of Les Feuillants remained totally ignorant of the mysterious marvels that were being enacted within its walls, and that to the very end of Josefa's life.

Another sign of God's action, and by no means the least, was the jealous care with which Our Lord kept his instrument lowly in her own eyes, as in those of everybody else. "It is not for what you are that I have chosen you, but for what you are not. So I have found room for My power and My love." He reiterated this to her again and again.

It was fundamentally necessary that the Lord of all Wisdom should begin by sinking deep in her consciousness this capacity for humility in which the predilections of His Heart could, so to to speak, engulf themselves. Josefa, whose frail skiff had reached the port of the religious life she so coveted, was soon to be tossed by storms and high winds more perilous than any that had hitherto rocked her little craft. "A fortnight of delicious peace," she noted, "followed on my entrance into the Postulantship."

She soon made acquaintance with the Mothers and Sisters, the house and the garden. Memory still recalls the arrival of the little Spaniard with her big black eyes, who did not know how to express her joy and her gratitude for being there. Simple and good- natured, she soon became quite at home in her new surroundings. The Mother Assistant and several Sisters who had spent long years in Spain and had become familiar with the language were able to greet her in her own Castilian tongue. A few days rest, and the new recruit was sent to help the Sister in the kitchen. Josefa was unaccustomed to that particular kind of work, but she put her whole heart into it and her face beamed with pleasure, showing how little it mattered to her what form the work took, if she was thereby able to prove her love for Him who possessed her whole heart. Nothing, it seemed could cast a shadow over such happiness, but the evil one, who had a presentiment of her future worth, was close by, ready to suggest subtle temptations. God was going to allow him to come on the scene, and Josefa sank into the darkest night of trial.

"Soon," she wrote, "I began to waver at the thought of my mother and sister . . . of my home, and of the language that I did not understand. The temptation was so strong in the first months that I felt I could not possibly withstand it. Above all, the sad thought of the pain I was inflicting on my sister seemed intolerable. However, I made up my mind to leave them all to the Heart of Our Lord, to place them in His care, and every time the remembrance of these much-loved ones returned I did as I was advised and made an act of love and confidence.

"One evening in the beginning of April the temptation to leave was stronger than usual. All day long I had been repeating: 'My God I love Thee', for above all I wanted to be faithful to Him. When I went to bed I put my crucifix under my pillow as I always did. I woke towards midnight, and kissing it, I said with all my heart: 'My God from to-day on I will love Thee more than ever.' At the same instant I was seized by an invisible force, and a shower of blows, as if from a fist, fell on me; they were so violent that I feared I should die. This torture continued all night, all through meditation and Mass. I was so terrified that I never left hold of my crucifix. I felt exhausted and dared not move. At the moment of the elevation of the Sacred Host I saw a sort of flash pass by me, there was a rapid current of wind, and suddenly all was quiet again, but the pain of the blows lasted several days."

This was but the prelude to a lifelong fight Josefa was to wage with the powers of darkness, but it never affected her work nor her fidelity to the Rule. Her confidence and obedience to her Mistress of Novices grew,[1] and she went to her in all her troubles, there to get the peace and strength she needed to go on suffering.

"On Thursday, 7th of May," she wrote, "being absolutely exhausted by my struggles, I begged to be allowed to go, but the Mother Assistant showed me the note I had written with my own hand, asking that for the love of God, in the name of the Blessed Virgin, of my Father Saint Joseph, and of our Holy Mother Foundress, even if I asked a thousand times to be sent away, that I should be reminded a thousand times that in moments when the light shone I was convinced that God wanted me here.

"From that hour I had not a day of peace, and God only knows what I endured . . ."

Five weeks of struggle went by; they were exceptionally hard to bear, and Josefa continued to repeat the words obedience had put into her mouth: "Yes, dear Lord, I will stay here; I love Thee, and I will obey. I can see no light, but in spite of this, I will be faithful to Thee." One evening in May the diabolical assaults became more tangible:

"I was in the chapel for my adoration," she wrote later, "when I was suddenly surrounded with what seemed to be a crowd of spirits, I saw horrible faces, heard sharp yells, and there rained on me a shower of furious blows. I could not call for help; I was so overcome that I had to sit down, and pray I could not, so I just looked at the Tabernacle. Suddenly I was roughly seized by the arm, as if someone wanted to force me to leave the chapel. The power that held me was irresistible, and not knowing what to do or where to go, for I was afraid of meeting someone, I went up to our Blessed Mother's cell.

"When the Mother Assistant found me and asked me what I was doing there, I was unable to answer her. Interiorly I said to myself: 'Even if they kill me, I will go and tell her everything'—but I was once more surrounded by that awful crowd whose screams terrified me. When I reached her door in a flash they all disappeared, and I found such peace that I should have liked to stay there for ever. . . .

"The same thing has often happened since. As soon as I have determined to speak, everything stops as I reach the Mother Assistant's door. I have noticed, too, the rage of the devil when she makes a little cross on my forehead; he seems to stamp his foot in fury, and at other times, if she forgets it, I hear hideous guffaws."

It was after such trials that Josefa's postulantship ended. On the 16th of July she was to take the habit, but so many unexpected sufferings and the thought of future trials left her undecided and hesitant; at one time she made up her mind to embrace God's Will at whatever cost, at

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[1] In the Society of the Sacred Heart it is the Mother Assistant who is specially charged with the Sisters and the direction of their Noviciate.

another she felt paralyzed and could not accept what must be bought at such a high price. "It was thus," she wrote, "till the day when Jesus made His divine Presence clearly known to me, and since then He has given me so much light and consolation."

On Saturday, the 5th of June 1920, after a formidable attack of the devil, Josefa decided to go; she went into the chapel with her sisters for the evening adoration; there, Jesus was waiting for her. Under the influence of the arch-fiend who dominated her: "No," she said, "I will not take the habit, I am going home." "I said it five times, but could not go on," she wrote later. "My Jesus how good Thou art to me."

All of a sudden she was, as she naively expressed it, wrapped in a sweet slumber, from which she awoke in the Wound of the Sacred Heart.

"I cannot explain what happened . . . Jesus . . . I want nothing more than to love Thee and to be faithful to my vocation."

In the radiance now illuminating her, she saw all the sins of the world, and offered her life to comfort the wounded Heart of Our Lord. She was seized with a vehement desire of uniting herself to Him, and no sacrifice appeared too great that she might be faithful to her vocation. In the effulgence of the Godhead the night had faded away and desolation had given place to unfathomable bliss.

"It was God who did it," she continued in the notes she wrote under obedience. "I am abashed at so much goodness; I want to love Him to folly. . . .I have but two requests: love and gratitude to His Sacred Heart. . . . More than ever I recognize my weakness, but also I shall now find strength and courage in Him. . . . Never before have I rested in that Divine Wound . . . . but now I know where to go in moments of tribulation: It is a place of sweetest repose and much love.

"I feel keenly that I have been resisting grace and have been unfaithful, but this has become a further motive of confidence and hope that Our Lord will never fail me, even when I seem to be all alone. That was what made me so afraid before: to be alone, and unfaithful. But now I see that, even though I did not know it. He was helping me. Well, I simply cannot express how much I want to love Him."

When Josefa came out of the chapel, still strongly under the influence of the divine contact, she was a totally changed person.

"And then, I don't know what it is," she added two days later, "but I believe He wants to tell me another secret, because during my prayer yesterday, Monday, 7th June, He made me re-enter that Divine Wound: O my Jesus, how great is Thy love for me . . . I shall never be able to respond to so much goodness. It seemed to me that I saw in that Divine Wound a tiny opening, and I wanted to know how to get in . . . but He made me understand that it will not be till later."

"Twelve days have passed," she wrote on the 17th of June, "since the signal grace Jesus granted me. I have had immense consolation during that time, but especially I have been able to study all that this Sacred Heart was teaching me. He showed me clearly, that what pleases Him most is to do little acts out of obedience. I understood that I must direct all my energies to this, for that is how I shall learn to deny myself in everything, and however small the act is, it will still be pleasing to His Sacred Heart. . . . Oh, I want to be burnt up by love. Oh, what a Heart is that of my Jesus!"

Crushed by the weight of so much grace and such amazing happenings, Josefa continued to jot down on paper the overflow of her heart.

"To-day, Wednesday 23rd of June, I was meditating on the kindness of the Heart of Jesus and this thought came to me: that His Heart so full of love for souls and for me, that this same Heart is to become my Bridegroom, if I am faithful. I did not know what to say, and how to thank. 'O my God, I can only pay Thee back with Thyself, for I am Thine and Thou art mine. . . . I give myself up to Thee, my life must be solely in God . . . and for God. . . .' I must so abandon self that everything in me may be consumed and obliterated and that all I do and am, may be solely of Him.

"After I had received Him in Holy Communion, I told Him, as I always do, how much I love Him, and want to love Him. Then He made me re-enter my place of refuge; it is the third time I have rested in that Divine Heart. . . . I am not able to explain what happens . . . except to say that I am too little for so many graces. . . . My God, Thy Heart fills with love those who seek and love It.

"During the heavenly moments that I spent in that Wound, Jesus gave me to understand that He is rewarding me for the very little I have done to prove my fidelity. I will never again neck my own interests, but only the glory of His Heart. I will try to be very obedient and very generous in the smallest details, for I believe perfection consists in this, and that it is the one way straight to Him."

"To-day, 24th of June, I saw in a way impossible to explain what the Heart of Jesus is. ... I asked Him to make me thirst for Him. I cannot set down in writing what I saw . . . but it was Himself, heaven on earth . . . . O my God, it is too much, I cannot bear such happiness . . . would that I had something I could offer Him . . . give to Him, who gives me so much, but I am so little. . . . I again promised to be faithful and above all to let myself be guided in everything so as to go more surely to His Divine Heart."

Here Josefa stopped, for she does not allow her feelings to run away with her. She tried to penetrate to the very depths of the Heart of Jesus to discover what He expected of her, and to realize the immensity of His loving-kindness.

"As each moment goes by, I notice two things, first, a greater understanding of the divine goodness, for if I certainly have always known that God loves mankind to folly, now I know that it is His Sacred Heart that does so. . . . His greatest sorrow is not to find a return of love, and if a soul is wholly abandoned to Him, she can be sure that He will fill her with graces, will make of her His heaven, and take up His abode in her. I promise in a very special way fidelity, obedience, confidence, and abandonment. The second thing I have noticed is the clearer view I have gained of myself. I see myself as I am (though I am not sure that I do fully): cold, distracted, immortified, and ungenerous. . . . O my God, why dost Thou love me so? Thou knowest what I am . . . but I will not lose confidence, Lord . . . what I cannot do myself, that Thou wilt do, and with Thy love and Thy grace I will go forward."

Jesus, too, was about to take her deeper into His Heart; the graces with which He had overwhelmed her in this month of June were but a prelude. Josefa wrote on the evening of the 29th of June:

"Meditation to-day was on the three denials of Saint Peter, and comparing my weakness to his, I resolved to weep for my falls, and to learn to love as he did. How often I, too, have promised fidelity . . . but I did so to-day with more force and decision. Yes, Lord, I will be faithful. I promise not only to refuse Thee nothing, but to go forward to do what I know will please Thee.

"I was thus in converse with my God, when again He made me enter the Wound of His Side. The little passage by which I was unable to enter the other day opened, and He gave me to understand the happiness that is to be mine if I am faithful to all the graces He has prepared for me.

"I cannot very well describe what I saw; my heart was being consumed in a great flame. I could not see the bottom of this abyss, for it is an immense space and full of light. I was so taken up with what I saw that I was not able to speak or ask any- thing. . . . I spent meditation and part of Mass in this way . . . till, a little before the Elevation, my eyes, even my poor eyes . . . saw my Beloved Jesus, my heart's desire, my Lord and my God. He held me against His Heart in the midst of a great flame and He smiled a little. I did not know what to do. . . . He Himself drew me close to His Wound. I cannot say what passed; it is not possible. . . . Would that the whole world knew the secret of happiness. There is but one thing to do: love and abandon oneself. Jesus Himself will take charge of all the rest. . . .

"I was annihilated in the presence of so much beauty and so brilliant a light, when He said to me in a voice so sweet and grave: "

'Just as I sacrificed Myself as a victim of love, so I want you to be a victim: love never refuses anything.'

"So this heavenly moment passed, for I can give it no other name. I could only say: 'My God, what wouldst Thou have me do? . . . Take and dispose of me, for I no longer belong to myself, but I am Thine.' Then He vanished."

When recording this experience Josefa was unable to contain herself Already her love had become a consuming zeal, for in drawing her near His Heart, Our Lord allowed the thirst that devours His own to overflow onto hers.

"Jesus," she wrote, "I have but one desire—that the whole world may know Thee, but especially the souls of religious whom Thou hast chosen for Thy adorable Heart. If they know Thee, they will love Thee, for Thou art the one and only Good. Inflame me with Thy Love and that is enough for me. . . . Inflame all hearts and this, too, will suffice, for where there is love, we run to Thee by the shortest way. As for myself, I ask only to love Thee daily more and more, only Thee! Everything else will be but a path to lead me to Thee. Would that I could bring the whole world to the divine furnace of Thy Heart, even if it cost me my life.

"Jesus has given me such a thirst to make all men love Him that I am ready to offer all, to undertake all that costs me most, to please Him and obtain that others may know and love Him.

"I promised Him to do nothing except what Holy Obedience prescribes, and I understand that it will please Him very much if I am simple and very open with Superiors, so as to allow myself to be guided as a little child."

A few days after "this great and heavenly moment", Our Lord showed Josefa the cost of this thirst for souls that He was beginning to communicate to her. She wrote on Saturday, 3rd of July:

"I was working in the Noviceship to-day and thinking of the happiness it was to be living under the same roof with Him and to have Him as the Companion of all my labours. I don't remember exactly what I was saying to Him, but suddenly He showed me His Heart all surrounded with flames and wreathed with a crown of thorns. . . . O my God, what thorns! . . . they were very sharp and penetrated very deeply, and from each there flowed a great deal of blood. . . . I should have liked to take them from Him. Then my heart was as it were torn with sharpest anguish, and He placed it next His Own under the thorns. My heart was so small that only six of them pierced it. Then there was silence . . . . I could not utter a word. He knew that I longed for my heart to be bigger that so I might have freed His from more of the thorns.

"Then in a voice so gentle and yet so full of pain, He said: 'My Heart has suffered all this and infinitely more. But some souls unite themselves to Me and comfort Me, and so make up for those who go away from Me.'

"Oh, how He has suffered. . . . I understand that some thorns wound Him more cruelly than others. I should have liked to know what to do to console Him, for what I can offer Him is very little, and when compared with His torments, very little indeed—but He did not tell me."

On Sunday, 4th of July, Josefa was at Holy Mass as usual, associating herself with the Divine Mysteries:

"To tell the truth," she wrote soon after, "not knowing what to say or do, if not to humble myself, for every day I get a clearer insight into my misery and littleness, I was trying to do this, when I saw before me the Adorable Heart. It was pierced through with a large thorn, which caused much blood to flow. O my Jesus! who is wounding Thee so? . . . Is it I? . . . What sorrow to see Thy Sacred Blood flow; it pains me more than I can say. My Lord and my God, take me and do with me what Thou wilt, but do not let that thorn transpierce Thy Heart. . . . Then I saw what looked like a very large nail drawn out, leaving so gaping a wound that I could see deep into that burning brazier, and Jesus replied: 'That large nail is the coldness of My Religious, I want you to understand it that you may be all on fire with love and may console Me.'

"On Tuesday 6th of July, while I was at prayer, He again showed me His Heart; It was transpierced by six thorns. My grief was very great, because of His sufferings, and of the impossibility I was in to give Him consolation or to assuage His pain. He made me understand that those six thorns are six souls that are offending Him in a particular way. He said: 'These are the thorns I ask you to draw out by your love and desires.'

"Then He allowed a few drops of His Blood to fall on my heart . . . O my God, my heart is too small for so much love, hut such as it is, it belongs entirely to Thee."

The next day, once more Jesus made her enter His wounded Heart, and left her this watchword: "Love Me in your littleness; I his will console Me."

"Of all the graces that I receive," she concluded at this time, "two things remain deeply engraven on my heart: first, a very great desire to love and to suffer in order to correspond to His love, and this I shall find in fidelity to my vocation; second, an ardent thirst that many souls may know and love Him, especially those He has chosen and consecrated to Himself. This, I think, is to he my path in life: to spare myself in nothing, and offer many little acts to Jesus whom I love to folly, or at any rate desire so to love."

Such were the dispositions in which she waited for the day of her clothing. The retreat which was to bring her through many a struggle to this much-longed-for day began on Wednesday, 7th of July.

"Ardent desire to surrender wholly, leaving nothing out and refusing nothing of whatever I know to be God's Will. Be very attentive to the voice of God, so that this retreat may be the foundation of my Noviceship. I will ask especially for a great love of my vocation which is for me the means of union and conformity with the Heart of Jesus."

Such are the opening words Josefa wrote in her retreat notebook. She noted faithfully day by day the result of her efforts, and one becomes conscious as one reads these very simple jottings

destined for no eye but her own, how great was the storm and commotion of temptation that had arisen within her.

"I was in great consolation," she wrote, "until the third day of my retreat. But in the meditation on the Judgment, when I suddenly found myself alone before God, as my Judge, my soul was filled with fear, and I lost the peace which had not left me since the 5th of June. I saw before me all the graces that will one day accuse me, and the sight plunged me into such desolation and solitude that it seemed to me far preferable not to receive them, rather than to have to give an account of them. . . .

"Several days went by and I decided to go home. My God! What darkness and what anguish. . . . My mother and sister were expected, and this increased the temptation, as it revived my affection for them and for my home.

"From the very first I had told the Mother Assistant everything, and I constantly repeated the offering she had taught me and which had helped me so much before; I wanted to stay and be faithful, and there were moments when I saw that the whole thing was a temptation. But nothing availed and the day before my clothing, July 15th, the struggle was so great, that I could think of nothing to offer God but the temptation itself: O my God, I love my liberty, my family and my home—in a word all that makes up this temptation—I offer it all to Thee, for what else do I want but to be faithful and die. . . .

"Then it was that Jesus deigned to console me as I shall relate."

But before telling of these graces, Josefa held to stating explicitly her reply of love:

"Practical result of the first three weeks[1] of this retreat:

"I saw that God is calling me to great perfection and it consists in complete conformity to His Heart.

"The means: my vocation and holy Rule.

"God is calling me to a life of intimate union with Himself; He wishes me to live in a state of sacrifice, as a victim. . . . He will choose my cross. It is not for me to ask or select; He will give what He pleases. He wants my life to be spent in His Heart, and I know that the cross and thorns are part of it. Such is my life; it must be so, and only so shall I be doing God's Will.

"I do not feel that I can very well explain what took place during the contemplation *ad Amorem: I* had so ardent a desire to give Him all He asks for, that I said with my whole heart: 'Take, O Lord, and receive all my will; I give Thee all I care for most in the world . . . if there is anything else that Thou requirest of me, I give it with joy—take my miseries and consume them, take my heart and my soul, take me, Lord."

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[1] In the Exercises of Saint Ignatius four periods are named "weeks".

The response was immediate:

"He drew me into His Heart, and a stream of the Precious Blood escaping from it submerged mine. ‘For all that you give Me,' He said, 'I give you My Heart.'

"I thought myself no longer on this earth—He was clothed in white, and this made His Sacred Heart stand out in an ineffable manner. . . . His Face was like the sun. . . . O my God, what beauty. . . . How entrancing to those who know Thee."

Naively Josefa explains in the lines that follow how she required no book in order to meditate on heaven: "For the real heaven is in my heart. Love is all I want . . . love, love."

Once more before the great day He wished to show her whither He was leading her, and Josefa, who had leave to make a Holy Hour, began it with an act of profoundest humility.

"I adored the Divine Majesty," she wrote, "and then I thought of the graces I had received from God, and of my desire to console Him which was growing ever stronger.

"Suddenly I saw Him standing before me in His gleaming white raiment, and His Heart seemed about to escape from His breast. As I was alone in the tribune, I fell on my face, humbling myself all I could, but unable to speak.

"After a moment of silence, He drew me to His Heart, and showing me the six thorns, He said in a voice that is so piercing- sweet: 'Daughter, take them out . . . yes, take out these thorns.'

"On Friday the 16th of July, the day of my clothing, as I received the white veil and all through Mass, Jesus was present to me, and made me enter the Wound in His Heart. All I was able to say was . . . My God, I am Thine for evermore . . . and I went so far as to babble nonsense in my love . . . then He answered: 'I, too, Josefa, love you to folly.'

"It is quite impossible to say all He did for me that day. My soul brimmed over with peace, and was filled with joy."

Vocation of Reparation

17th July-25th August, 1920

"If you love Me, Josefa, remove this thorn"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 17th August 1920.)

THE Wounded Heart of Jesus was very soon to make a further appeal to Josefa, as to one chosen for a special share in His redemptive work for souls. He reminded her of her vocation as Victim, and two days after her clothing, on Sunday, 18th of July, He again showed her His Heart transpierced by the six thorns, and repeated the same words: "Josefa, remove these thorns from My Heart."

"The following day," she wrote, "I had leave to make the Way of the Cross, and I prayed in reparation for the sins of mankind, and especially for the coldness of chosen souls. Jesus came, He carried His Cross on His shoulder; He placed it on mine and left it to me till I had finished the Stations."

This gift of the Cross was to be renewed the three following days. When on Thursday, 22nd July, Josefa was making a Holy Hour with the other novices, she offered herself to Our Lord as was her wont.

"He was there," she said, "His Heart bleeding from the six thorns. He drew them out and pierced my heart with them. I then saw in His Heart the burning fire which consumed It. I tried to console and love Him for those who do not love Him. At the end of the Holy Hour, when we were about to go away, He said: 'This Heart . . . I want you to rest in It as a child, to love It as a spouse, and to console It as a victim.'

"Then He took back the six thorns and made me understand that He had been comforted for that short space of time.

"The next morning He repeated what He had said to me on the day of my clothing: 'I also love you to folly.'

"Then He disappeared, leaving me alone, as if He had never given me any consolation at all."

Henceforward Josefa was to know the vicissitudes by which Our Lord intended to forge her soul: a path of faith and of love, of humiliating experiences of her weakness and of trustful returns to His untiringly forgiving Heart. A few days after she wrote quite simply:

"I felt as if it would be impossible to let my mother and my sister go, so strongly did the temptation return. I spoke about it at once in order to get help, for what could I do alone? . . . I

said good-bye to them and they never suspected what a trial it was to me, but it is not yet over . . . I am so poor and weak."

She then explained how the graces she had received were a perpetual torment to her. The thought of the corresponding return she would have to make for such signal favours, and the account she would have to give of them filled her with apprehension. A voice seemed to pursue her all day, telling her she was making straight for perdition. This temptation never left her for a whole month. However, Our Lord did not abandon her to herself completely.

On Thursday, 5th August, He made her share once more the pain of the six thorns that were wounding Him, and comforted her with the words: "If you are faithful, you shall know the riches of My Heart. You will carry My Cross indeed, but as on a well- loved Bride shall My benefits be heaped upon you."

"This time," said Josefa, "I saw Him surrounded with such splendour that it was not possible to gaze fixedly on that dazzling light. His Heart was all aflame and seemed to be escaping from His breast.

"When I asked Him not to allow me to be tempted against my vocation, He wrapped me in His mantle and I was enveloped in peace!"

A few days later, Jesus, Saviour of mankind, made her feel for the first time how great was His joy when souls come back to Him. On Tuesday, 10th August, she wrote:

"At meditation I had a great desire to comfort Him. I offered Him all the actions of my day, and begged Him to tell me if there was anything else I could do. I promised not to let Him out of my thoughts for a single instant, and I never stopped telling Him of my love. That evening before going to adoration, I went into the oratory of *Mater*[1] to ask our Blessed Lady to help me to console her Son; when I reached the chapel I suddenly found myself in the presence of Jesus. . . . He drew me to His Heart and let me hear harmonies such as I had never heard here below. . . .My God . . . this is Heaven . . . not earth. . . . He then said: 'What else do I want but love? Look at My Heart, Josefa. It alone can make you happy. Rest in It.'

"Then He went on to say: 'I had six thorns. You have taken out five; only one remains and that is the one that wounds Me most. Spare no pains to remove it.'

'Lord,' I answered, 'what shall I do?'

'I want you to love Me and to be faithful to Me. Remember, no one else can make you happy. I will lay open to you the riches of My Heart. Love Me without measure.'

"And again I was left alone."

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[1] Oratory near the door of the chapel at Les Feuillants, dedicated to Our Lady under the title of Mater Admirabilis. In Convents of the Sacred Heart copies of the miraculous fresco painted on the wall of the cloister in the Trinita-dei-Monti at Rome are specially honoured.

The feast of the Assumption came round. Josefa, who loved Our Lady so dearly, spent the day in union with her, and as the remembrance of the thorn deeply embedded in the Sacred Heart haunted her:

"I begged her," she wrote, "to take charge of that soul and to draw out the thorn that Jesus had asked me to remove from His Heart.

"The next day, towards three in the afternoon, while I was at my sewing, I was telling Our Lord that I wanted every stitch to be an act of love so as to comfort Him; hardly had I finished the words than I saw Him standing there. He took my heart and drew it close to His own."

Josefa tells of happenings like these in the most matter-of-fact way, as if they were quite natural. By faith she had risen to the level of the graces she was receiving, though they seem to be of an exceptional order.

" 'I have not come to comfort you, Josefa,' He said, 'but to let you share My suffering. Can you not see how that thorn pierces My Heart? Draw it out; that soul is almost forcing My justice to act.' "

The salvation of that soul was to cost Josefa a great deal of suffering. Gradually Our Lord was initiating her into His redemptive work, which later was to occupy so great a part of her life. He continued:

" 'The sins of mankind wound Me deeply, but not nearly so much as those of My religious. Of the five thorns you have removed, two were religious whom I had overwhelmed with favours, but they had turned to creatures, and were forgetting Me; I summoned them back to a life of love, but they turned a deaf ear, and I was about to abandon them to their own devices. . . . Now they are in My Heart once more.

" 'The other three were chosen souls, but cold . . . so cold, that My justice was about to overtake them. That is why I seek for love . . . love from souls I have redeemed with My Blood, but above all I want that of My religious.'

"Then He asked me again: Do you love Me?'

"This pierced me like an arrow, for He seemed to be begging love of me.

"Yesterday, Tuesday, 17th August, it was the first thing He asked me at my prayer: 'Do you love Me? . . . If so, Josefa, take out that thorn.'

"I answered: 'Lord, Thou knowest very well that I love Thee, but poor as I am I can only offer Thee Thy own love and that of my Mother the Blessed Virgin.'

"He repeated these words 'Do you love Me?' at least thirty times that day, in a piercing tone of pain that stabs my heart. During Mass He said to me: 'That thorn is a religious on whom I have bestowed many talents. She appropriates them . . . her pride will be her ruin.'

"That evening I saw His Heart all on fire, the Wound gaping wide, and still that thorn was there. 'I have two measures for every soul,' He said, 'one is of mercy, and already it has

overflowed . . . the other is of justice, and it is very nearly full. Nothing grieves Me more than the obstinacy and resistance of this soul . . . I will make a last appeal to her heart; if she still resists, I will leave her to her own devices.'

"Here I do not know what He made me understand . . . but I would give my life to save that soul.

"As I had permission to make a Holy Hour that evening, I offered myself in union with His Passion. 'Do not look at the sins of that soul, but rather at the Blood that Thou hast shed for it . . . and which can cleanse all the sins of the whole world.'

"Then I said the litanies of Our Lady and repeated many times, 'Refuge of sinners, pray for us.' When I got to the words 'Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world . . .' my soul was filled with anguish. Jesus was silent; He did not seem to be listening; He seemed deaf.

"At the end of the Holy Hour He came, His Heart still pierced by that thorn. I begged Him to give it to me so as to rest Him a little. He did so. I implored Him to have mercy on that soul, and as He did not answer, I said: 'But Lord, wilt Thou not forgive her? . . .' 'I will touch her heart once again, and if she responds she will be the beloved of My Heart. If she still holds out, My justice must act.' "

Many days went by, Josefa's offerings were more and more costly, but as she said, her soul was plunged in unspeakable sadness.

"I think that never before have I understood as I do now what is meant by resistance to grace. I seem to endure something of the grief of the Heart of Jesus when a soul turns away from Him.

"If you are ready to suffer," said Our Lord to her on Wednesday, 18th of August, "I will wait for that soul, but unless she herself wills to be forgiven, I cannot pardon her. She was created without her co-operation, but she is free to save or lose her soul."

"A few days later He added: 'When I find a soul that is loving and wants to comfort Me, I am ready to grant whatever she asks, so I will wait, and knock again at the door of her heart; if she is willing, My Heart is ready to forgive.'

"There were tears in His voice, and His words left me in agony. He has taught me to repeat often: My God, I will suffer for love of Thee, and to comfort Thy Sacred Heart."

Josefa was oppressed by the suffering she was undergoing, she felt as if the divine anger had fallen on her.

"At the same time," she wrote, "I feel in my heart what His must suffer, if a consecrated soul is damned."

Once, when in still greater distress, she met Our Lord weary and covered with sweat. It was Friday, 20th of August, and in her notes we read:

"My God, who has put Thee in this state?

" 'I am tired of appealing to that soul, for her heart is insensible and full of pride. Acts of humility on your part would be a compensation to Me. Ask forgiveness of God My Father, and humble yourself; thus you will be a comfort to Me.' "

Our Lord's calls pursued her and left her no rest either day or night. The weight of that soul was heavy on her own. Suffering of all kinds increased, till her whole being shared in them, without, however, lessening her desire for reparation.

On Wednesday, the 25th of August, after a night of agony and supplication, Josefa, ever faithful to her morning's meditation, began it with the other novices.

"Suddenly," she wrote, "I saw Him. . . . He, the all-beautiful. . . . I cannot attempt to describe Him. He was standing upright, vested in white, He held His Heart in His Hands, as in a brazier of fire. His whole Person shone with radiant light. His hair was like spun gold, His eyes like brilliants, and His countenance . . . what can I say . . . I can find no comparison worthy of It. . . . . His Heart surmounted by the cross no longer had any thorn in It. The wound which was open wide, emitted flames . . . . a very sun. . . . From the wounds in His hands and feet also came bright flames. . . . From time to time He opened and extended His arms; all I could say, was, O Jesus! how beautiful Thou art . . . how hearts would be ravished could they behold Thee . . . and the thorn? . . . He smiled, and His Heart looked as if about to escape His hands, while He answered: 'The thorn? . . . It is gone, for there is nothing so strong as love, and that I find among my religious,'

"His Heart was kindling more and more. I thanked Him for having drawn me to this Society, and begged Him to have compassion on me who am a miserable creature and unworthy to be here: O Lord, do not permit me to be the one blot on this holy group of consecrated souls. Do not allow the graces I receive to be my condemnation, for there is no evil of which I am not capable; I want to be faithful or to die."

It was in this new joy that a few minutes later Josefa assisted at Mass, associating herself with the thanksgiving of the Blessed Virgin, when Our Lord again manifested Himself to her.

"He drew me to His Heart and held me in so close an embrace that I could not stir. After a few moments of silence, He said: 'Do you see, Josefa, how I hold you so that you can make no movement without Me? That is how I wish to hold the souls of My religious.'

"Then He went on to say: "That thorn was removed here; that soul will be saved by the prayers and sacrifices of My consecrated ones in this the Garden of My delights. . . . Tell your Mother this.'

"After Communion I asked Him to consecrate me His true spouse by fidelity . . . but to leave me in the common way, for I should never be able to correspond to His graces.

" 'Leave yourself in My Hands, Josefa. I will use you as seems best to Me. I will take you when I need you, for you are Mine. What of your littleness and weakness . . . no matter . . . All I ask of you is to love and console Me. I want you to know how dearly My Heart loves you, how great are the riches it contains, and you must be like soft wax that I may mould you to My liking.

" 'Tell Reverend Mother that it is because of My religious in this house that this soul has been saved. She is not from these parts, but belongs to your home-country, so I have saved her through your sacrifice of your native land. Tell Me, Josefa, do you love your homeland?'

" 'Yes, Lord, but I love Thee more.'

" 'Listen, then. Since you came here I have made use of your sufferings to save that soul, and the other five that were far from Me. I want you to offer Me all, even the smallest things, so as to comfort My Heart's sufferings, especially those I have to endure from consecrated souls in religion. I want you to rest in My Heart without any fear. Gaze on it; cannot this flame burn up all your imperfections? Leave yourself entirely in My Hands and be busy only in pleasing Me.'

" 'I want you to tell Reverend Mother in all simplicity whatever I ask of you, and you must have no personal care as to how they use you. Lastly, I repeat: be like soft wax, to which I can give any shape I please. . . . Remember that I am your Father, your Spouse, your God.'

"A little before the end of Mass, He again said to me: 'Do you love Me?'

"Then He vanished. Never had I seen Him so beautiful!

"All this time I was able to talk to Him and listen to Him because I had leave. But from to-day onward I have been ordered to make no more account of these things, and not to answer anything."

Josefa under Trial

26th August -8th October 1920

"I will give a sign in you"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 20th September 1920.)

TOWARDS the end of August 1920, in order to try the spirit that actuated Josefa, she was forbidden to have any communication with the apparition that had so often filled her heart with such joy. She was told to turn away, and to attach no importance to anything she might see or hear.

Was doubt beginning to creep in? Her soul was thereby profoundly unsettled, and she asked herself if she had not all along been the sport of illusion, as others seemed to think. Moreover, the devil had already suggested this to her many times, and she had rejected it as a temptation, so as to remain faithful to what she deemed God's Will in her regard. Oh, where was the truth?

At the same time her mind was tortured by the fear that this path which she had neither sought nor wanted might eventually become an obstacle to her vocation. Her instinctive horror of all that was out of the ordinary, her genuine wish for a life hidden and humble, added to her present confusion of mind.

Already accustomed to the most intimate self-sacrifice and matured by her spirit of faith and obedience, she never hesitated to do as she was told, without allowing herself either to reason or to argue interiorly, and so she entered on the obscure path where her love was to suffer so keenly, as her notes indicate:

"Thursday, 2nd of September, I saw at meditation the same Person, so beautiful, with His Heart as before. He asked me twice if I loved Him. I gave no answer, out of obedience, although it cost me immensely, for in spite of myself, my whole soul bounded forward towards Him."

On 5th of September Josefa was in the Noviceship . . .

"When suddenly," she said, "I saw a brilliant light, in the midst of which was the Person as always with a Heart all on fire. I was so frightened that I fled to our Blessed Mother's cell. I rubbed my eyes and asperged myself all over with Holy Water, but the Vision remained.

" 'Why are you afraid?' said a voice. 'Do you not know that this is the abode of your peace?' A few minutes passed, then the voice added: 'Do not forget that I want you to be a victim of My love.' Then all was quiet again."

The trial continued day after day, Josefa resisting and making no response, but sometimes she was unable to withdraw from an overwhelming attraction—it dominated her, filled her with happiness and heavenly peace.

" 'Come,' said the voice, 'enter in . . . lose yourself in this abyss.' "

On Wednesday, 8th September, towards evening, she was praying in the cell of Saint Madeleine Sophie, when like a flash of lightning the burning Heart of Jesus passed before her and she heard: "Which do you prefer, My Will or yours?"

"I understood that to be the answer to what I was asking of Our Lord with all my heart; to be a good religious, solely occupied in loving His Divine Heart, but following common life, for I am so afraid all those things will be an obstacle to my vocation."

Next day, the 9th, at Mass, she saw Him whom for so long she had never doubted. In one hand He held His Heart, and with the other He offered her a chalice:

"I have heard your distress," He said to her. "I know your desires, but I cannot grant them. My love needs to rest in you. Take this Blood which has flowed from My Heart. It is the source of love. Do not fear, and do not abandon Me. I delight in living in you, for so many turn away from Me."

Josefa remained silent . . .

"But," she wrote, "I could not help thinking: My God, if I had known, I should never have come here! The idea tormented me, for I thought that if I had stayed in the world, nothing of all this would have happened, and every day my anxiety increased. I will surely go backward, unless God keeps me faithful to Him. But I feel myself bound in a way I cannot understand and the love of my vocation grows and grows. That is what makes me constantly beg the Heart of Jesus to leave me to common life, I mean, with none of these extraordinary happenings, even if it be with no consolation whatever, if that were His Will, provided I can remain faithful in little things and love His Adorable Heart above measure."

This Heart again showed Itself to her on 16th September. She heard:

'To satisfy a love so great, you must try to find souls for Me. You will do so by suffering and by love. You will have to bear many humiliations, but do not be afraid, for you are in My Heart.'

In the face of doubt, she tried to close her eyes, but was unable to distract her mind from the urge to love God which daily increased in her soul.

"The only comfort I can get is in incessantly telling Him of my love," she wrote; "it detaches me from the things of earth. The ardent love I used to have for my family and for many others, though still there, has changed . . . nothing of it all can fill my heart now. When I say even

unconsciously: 'My God I love Thee;' it satisfies me and helps me to do what otherwise would be impossible.

"Sometimes I am distracted when at work; then suddenly the Heart of Jesus passes before me like a flash, and rekindles the flame of love in my heart."

The crucifying trial increased in severity as time went on, and Josepha's fears grew, but her spirit of obedience kept her faithful, and it gradually became evident how Our Lord, by detaching her from created things, was attaching her more and more to Himself.

On Friday, the 17th of September, He showed Himself to her at Mass. His Face was sad, His Hands bound, the crown of thorns encircled His Head, and His Heart as always was on fire. He offered her a cross which she had not at first noticed.

" 'Behold the Cross that I give you,' He said. 'Will you refuse it?'

"I was in anguish at not being able to answer," she wrote, "for in spite of myself my heart went out to Him. I burn with longing to love Him; but I am not sure that it is really Himself, and this fills me with acute distress. What I now ask is that once and for all these things should cease."

But He came again:

"On Sunday, the 19th, during my prayer, I was turning over in my mind how to love Him more, for I can think of nothing else. Suddenly I saw Him. His Heart was like a great conflagration . . . the Heart that fills me with peace, and makes me able to bear anything."

" 'If you love me,' He said, 'I shall always remain near you. If you follow Me closely, I shall grant you victory over the foe; I shall manifest Myself to you, and teach you how to love.' "

The next day, 20th, while her mind was still preoccupied with the same trouble, she begged Our Lord to give a sign to her Superiors, that they might know for certain whether or not these things came from Him.

He appeared suddenly and said to her: "A sign? I will give a sign in you. All I ask of you is to surrender yourself entirely to Me."[1]

And so it came to pass, for God was imprinting His sign on the docile and generous heart of Josefa, whose obedience throughout this trial was a proof in itself. In spite of the divine advances, she continued to keep silence. But there came a day . . .

"When," she wrote on 27th September, "I cannot say what happened. I found myself obliged to surrender, and give myself up to God's demands, and I was only able to say: 'Yes, Lord, I am Thine; whatever Thou wiliest, I also will.' At the same moment I saw Jesus in all His beauty, and He said: 'Have no fear. It is I.'

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[1] "La senal, la dare en ti. Lo que quiero es que te abandones a Mi."

On Friday, 29th, she saw Him once more, when again He asked her: "Are you ready to do My Will?"

"My God," she wrote, "I deliver myself over into Thy Hands to do whatever is Thy Will, if really it is Thyself. All I ask is that I should not be in delusion and that nothing should prejudice my religious life.

"Then He answered: 'What is there to fear, if you are in My hands? Never doubt the goodness of My Heart, nor the love I bear you.' A flame escaped from His Sacred Heart and wrapped me round. 'All I ask of you is that you should always be ready to console My Heart, whenever I call on you. The comfort given Me by one faithful soul compensates for the coldness and indifference of so many others. You will sometimes feel in your heart the anguish that is in Mine, and that is how you will allay My sorrow. Fear nothing, I am with you.' "

But even so she was not fully reassured, and when the Presence had left her and she was once more alone she was again a prey to very great distress. Tossed between an attraction that was at times irresistible and fear of the abnormal, and bound to silence by obedience, she implored Our Lord to leave her to the simple and common life that her love ambitioned, or to give light to her Superiors that would put an end to so many doubts and so much suffering.

She whom no one ever invokes in vain was to come to Josefa's aid.

In the evening of Sunday, 3rd of October, the Mother Assistant guessed from Josefa's face of acute agony all that the poor novice was going through, and she sent her to bed early. In the lonely little dormitory where she could not find relief in sleep she prayed to Our Lady.

"I recited the litanies of Our Lady," she wrote, "then with all my heart I prayed, telling her with anguish what I had been saying for many days past: O Mother, for the love of God, do not let me be deluded, and make me know whether it is all true or not.

"At once I heard a light footstep, as of somebody coming, and then I saw, standing by my bedside, a person clothed in white and wrapped in a long veil. Her features were very fine, her hands crossed; she looked at me very tenderly and said: 'My child, you are not mistaken, and Reverend Mother will soon know it, but you must first suffer if you are to win souls for My Son.'

"She disappeared, leaving me in peace beyond all words."

It was the Queen of Heaven, and Josefa never doubted it for a minute, but Mary had said "you must suffer", and Josefa was being asked to give her consent freely to an appeal to co-operate in redemptive suffering.

The following day, 4th of October, Our Lord, showing her His Wounded Heart, said: "Look at the state to which unfaithful souls have reduced My Heart. They do not know how much I love them, and that is why they forsake Me. Will not you at least do My Will?" A flood of apprehension overwhelmed her soul.

"I did not answer," she wrote honestly, "but everything within me said No. He disappeared. I felt I must have displeased Him, for He vanished like a flash.

"Next day, 5th October, while I was saying the litanies of Our Lady, she came again, stayed quite a long time and then said to me: 'If you refuse to do my Son's Will, you will wound His Heart. Consent to everything He asks of you, but do not attribute anything to yourself. Be very humble, child!' She looked at me with great compassion, then went away."

From now on Our Lady, full of tender compassion and strong kindness, intervenes in Josefa's life. Her Son's part is paramount, she helps only when there is question of reassuring Josefa in her faltering hesitations, of strengthening her in her fears, or of bringing her will into line with God's. She acts as a warning, sometimes as a support; she initiates her into Our Lord's plans and prepares her for His coming; she teaches her how to guard against the snares of the devil and how to repair her failings. She, "as an army set in array", is there to defend her in the perilous combats with the evil one.

This intervention of Our Lady increased in the eyes of Superiors the light beginning to dawn around Josefa; her simple and courageous obedience, her indifference and abandonment, as well as her humble distrust of herself, her fear of an abnormal path, and above all her love of her vocation, which she held in higher esteem than anything else in the world—all pointed to a heavenly origin in her state; and these signs could not be opposed indefinitely. The time seemed to have come to allow full liberty to the divine action, whilst still surrounding Josefa with vigilant control. She was given permission to "offer herself", and that in spite of her acute repugnance to it.

"On Friday, 8th of October," she wrote, "at Meditation, I made an act of conformity to the Divine Will. During Mass, a little before the Gospel, I saw Our Lady. I begged her intercession; I told her why I felt such repugnance for those graces, but that I had quite made up my mind to accept all to glorify the Heart of Jesus, to console Him and to win souls for Him. I think she had pity on me, for she said: 'My child, this is the prayer you must say to Our Lord, and His Heart will not resist: "O Father, make me worthy to accomplish Thy Holy Will, for I belong to Thee." '

"Then she added: 'If you are in the hands of a good Father, what more do you want?'

"I implored her to receive my offering and to carry it herself to Jesus.

"That same evening when I went to the chapel I found myself suddenly in Our Lord's presence.

"His Face was so beautiful, His Heart encircled with flames; in the midst, in front of the Cross, was an open book. I did not understand what it signified. . . . I offered myself once more and promised never to take back my gift. He placed His Hand on my head and said: 'If you do not forsake Me, neither will I desert you. Henceforth, Josefa, call me nothing but Father and Spouse. If you are faithful, we shall make this pact together: Bride and Bridegroom, espoused to

one another, you Mine, and I yours. And now write what you read in My Heart; it sums up all I want of you.'

"Then I read in the book:

" 'I shall be the one love of your heart, the sweet torture of your soul, and the welcome martyrdom of your body.

" 'You shall be the victim of My Heart through a bitter dislike for all that is not Me; victim of My Soul by all the anguish of which yours is capable; victim of My Body, by the denial of all that could satisfy yours, and by your hatred of the flesh which is both criminal and cursed.[1]

"When I had read the book, He made me kiss it, and then He disappeared."

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[1] These words, which were not spoken by Our Lord, but shown to Josefa written in a book in the midst of the flames of His Heart, are to be found word for word in the works of Saint Margaret Mary. They are at the hour of Sext of the Office for Tuesday in the Little Breviary of the Sacred Heart. Through them the Saint marvellously explains her mission as a victim and it would seem that in reproducing them here as His own it was Our Lord's intention to associate humble little Sister Josefa with the Saint.

CHAPTER III

TAUGHT BY THE HEART OF JESUS

First Steps

9th-28th October 1920

"Your misery attracts Me"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 15th October 1920)

HUMANLY speaking, one might expect that so luminously mapped- out a path would have offered Josefa neither obstacles nor shadows. This would be to forget God's ways with souls He has specially chosen: He draws them, and then hides Himself—He attracts, then baffles them—He fills them with gifts and next leaves them to their native poverty. He carries them in His arms, and then allows them to fall back into nerveless weakness. These are the searching alternatives that confirm them in detachment, abandonment, and humility, and alone can convince the creature of its nothingness, placing the instrument passive and quiescent in His Divine Hands.

Josefa's notes acquaint us with these vicissitudes, and their moving simplicity and candid sincerity make of them a document of real importance.

From the very first she had been put under obedience to write down all she saw and heard. To begin with, this was a kind of relief to her feelings, but whereas she then threw on paper with burning and naive diffuseness the sentiments she felt incapable of keeping to herself, later she became aware that these notes which she believed to be for herself alone would become a necessary means of control in the hands of her guides, and her habitual self-diffidence and the reserve that had always surrounded her relations with Our Lord reasserted themselves in her writings.

She sacrificed her repugnance by obeying the injunction, but her acceptance was not free from struggle and some wavering, as her notes bear witness, even to the end. Her style changes from now on, and becomes very sober, facts alone are briefly mentioned. We rarely meet with the outpourings of the earlier days, but what is very characteristic is that she never fails to recount her own weaknesses and vacillations, nor her occasional resistance in the face of some particularly crucifying event. No doubt Our Lord meant us to learn from these honest acknowledgments how great is His compassion and how untiring His mercy.

Before recording the contents of Josefa's note-books it may be well to answer the perfectly legitimate question as to how in general they were written.

From the very beginning of her supernatural intercourse Josefa had been told to ask permission before entering into communication with her celestial visitors, and to give an account of what had passed immediately afterwards. She submitted to this control, which cost her nature very much. This gave her Superiors the possibility of writing down these divine appearances at

once, noting the place and time of these messages, in the very words which she used to repeat, as if still under the ascendency of an invisible Presence.

In this manner Our Lord's words were accurately recorded—words of which He had said that none of them were to be lost.[1]

During her days of laborious work which left her little leisure Josefa was glad to hand over her papers to the secure keeping of her Superiors. When in the evening her labours were at an end, or during the freer hours of Sunday, she knew that the transcription of her notes was expected of her as part of her obedience. Leaving her needle, her sewing-machine or her broom, as the case might be, she went to her cell to complete this task, which always cost her a great deal. There, oftenest kneeling before a small table, she re-copied in her rapid if unskilled writing the notes that had been left in the care of her Mothers. The only additions she made were of facts which formed the setting to Our Lord's words, a few heartfelt comments and a more detailed avowal of her failings.

All these precious documents have been religiously preserved.

The principal facts of Josefa's life were published in 1938 in *Un Appel a /'Amour,* but the wish to know more than this slight biography revealed was expressed by many. The time seems to have come to give Josefa's writings more fully to a wider public. Perhaps this is also the best way of fulfilling the wishes of the Divine Heart. He wants the riches of His love and mercy to be known. He wants souls to understand to what an extent He condescends to live their ordinary life with them, so as to transform it into "days of divine life"; He thirsts for a union which our frailty need not interrupt, and above all He longs to let souls know how certain they are of His forgiveness, for all their weakness. But if He seeks their love and trust to this extent, it is because He wants to associate them with Himself by total surrender, that they may with Him carry out His work of love and redemption.

All this imprinted itself day by day and hour by hour on the life of Sister Josefa. If Our Lord imposed on her the duty of writing down in detail all He said to her, certainly it was not for her own benefit, since it entailed nothing but sacrifice. It was in order that many souls might gather from these pages the lessons and appeals of His Heart.

Since 8th October, the day on which she made her offering, Josefa had recovered her peace of soul, together with divine light. Her work had in no way been modified throughout this difficult period, and when Our Lord wanted her He always found her at her duties.

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[1] Let us here note once and for all that Josefa never had to translate into human language visions, locutions, or interior promptings. It seemed to her that Our Lord was manifesting His thought and wishes in the direct form of human words which she believed that she perceived in a sensible way, and which she had only to transcribe in the very same terms.

It may be added that, fully occupied as her days were by household work, obliged to ask leave before each meeting and to give a full account of it immediately after, Josefa never had time to invent, prepare, or make up her narrative; these conditions necessarily excluded any premeditation on her part and so stamped all she recorded with a further mark of veracity. However, the Church alone has power and authority to pronounce with greater certainty on this matter."

"To-day, 15th October, while at prayer, I was asking Him for a love strong and courageous like that of Saint Teresa; suddenly He presented Himself to me with outstretched arms; I was not able to resist the attraction of those arms. I asked Him why He loved me so . . . and I surrendered myself wholly to Him to do or undo in me just as He pleased. . . .”

"He said to me: 'Your misery attracts Me. What would you do without Me? Do not forget that the lowlier you become, the nearer I shall be to you. Let Me do as I please.' "

That same morning Josefa had renewed her act of total surrender into His Hands by way of preparation for her Communion. No sooner had she done so than Jesus appeared and said: "I forgive you all; you are the price of My Blood, and I intend to use you to save the many souls that have cost Me so dear; do not refuse Me anything. See how much I love you."

"As He said these words He enveloped me in the flame of His Heart and gave me great courage, for now I am no longer afraid of suffering; my one wish is to do His Will."

The Blessed Virgin strengthened her a few moments later:

" 'My daughter,' she said, 'you will never forsake My Son, will you?'

" 'No, Mother, never.'

" 'Do not be afraid of suffering, for you will always be given sufficient strength to bear it. Think of this: you have only to-day in which to suffer and love . . . eternity will be all joy.'

"I begged her not to desert me, but to obtain for me from Jesus the fidelity I need. Then I asked her forgiveness, and she answered:

" 'Have no fear, Josefa; leave yourself in the hands of Jesus and constantly repeat this prayer: "O Father, merciful and good, look upon Thy child, and make her so entirely Thine own, that she may lose herself in Thy Heart. May her one desire, O Father, be to accomplish Thy holy Will." This prayer will please Him, for He wants nothing so much as surrender, and thus you will comfort His Heart. Do not fear, abandon yourself. I will help you.'

"It seems to me," commented Josefa, "that all that made me braver, and as I have now given myself over entirely into God's hands, nothing else matters.

"On the evening of Saturday, 16th of October, I asked Him why He gave me so many totally undeserved graces. During my adoration I saw Him crowned with thorns and He gave me this answer: 'Have I asked you to merit the graces I give you? What I ask is that you should accept them. I will show you the School in which this lesson can be learned. Leave Me free to do as I like in you."

This School was about to open for Josefa.

"The very next day, 17th October," wrote Josefa, "I saw Him just as He was yesterday, His Heart all aflame and the Wound even wider. I adored Him with deep respect and asked Him to

kindle a fire of love in my heart. Then He drew my head to His Heart, and I could hear its beating, and He said: 'This is the School where you will acquire the knowledge of complete renunciation, and thus I shall be able to do with you what I will.' "

Josefa made a beginning in this science of all sciences; she had yet to learn how to make a complete surrender of herself to her Master, which would leave Him free to use her as He wished.

Two days of great loneliness of soul went by. She asked herself whether she had perhaps displeased Him. . . . She appealed to Him. . . . He came. . . .

" 'Why do you call me, Josefa?'

" 'Lord, I cannot live without Thee, and I was afraid I might have saddened Thee.'

" 'No, Josefa, I love to hear you calling Me; I thirst so for love.'

"As He said these words, I understood that I had not so much as begun to love Him. I asked Him to teach me how to love Him. He made me listen to the beating of His Heart; then He said: 'If you are resolved to be faithful, I will pour into your heart the flood of My mercy and you will know what My love for you is. But always remember that if I love you it is because you are little, not because you are good.' "

Many a time this lesson of humility would be repeated, and while Our Lord enkindled in her heart a most vehement love of Himself, He constantly reminded her of her utter insignificance on the one hand, and on the other of the souls for whom He thirsts.

"To-day at my prayer," she wrote, on Thursday 21st of October, "I asked Him that souls may love Him, and I said: 'If it is love that Thou askest. Lord, attract many souls to this Society, for here they will learn to love Thy Heart.'

"During my thanksgiving, first I saw His Heart surrounded with thorns and with flames, which I take to be love; then I saw Him, extending His arms.[1] He said: 'Yes, Josefa, all I ask of souls is their love, but they give Me only ingratitude; I should like to fill their souls with grace, but they pierce My Heart through and through. I call them and they turn away from Me . . . if you accept, I will give you charge of souls, and by your sacrifices and love, you will win them for Me.'

"As He said these words, He again drew me close to His Heart; I heard Its mysterious beating; the sound filled me with a kind of agony. Then He went on to say: 'You know very well that I want you to be the victim of My love, but I will never leave you without help. Surrender yourself entirely to Me.' "

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[1] This divine gesture of outstretched arms has already been noted by Josefa, and was to be repeated many times; it would seem to be significant of Our Lord's appeal to the whole world through His Messenger. That is why this attitude of the Montmartre Statue with Heart inflamed and Arms open wide has been selected as the most suitable in representing and illustrating the Message of the Heart of Jesus.

Josefa was often to hear these mysterious heart-beats of her Lord: appeals of love which filled her with distress and tenderness.

"Between one and the next," she wrote, "a moment elapses, and my soul is in such anguish that it feels as if torn from my body. I feel sharp pain, but at the same time long to suffer more . . . for all I want is to win souls and so bring some relief to His Heart."

"Don't forget what you read in My Heart. Think well over it and have no fear," Our Lord said to her on Saturday, 23rd of October.

That same day, in a way peculiarly His own, He told her that her whole life was to be a dwelling in love as in its appropriate atmosphere. Josefa was working in the linen-room when suddenly He stood before her. There happened to be a great press of work at the moment, and she asked Him to allow her to remain at her task, at the same time begging Him to forgive her for the liberty she was taking. . . .

" 'For I would not willingly pain Thee, my Jesus' . . . but He at once vanished. I was rather sorry for having said that to Him, and to comfort Him I kept on telling Him how I loved Him."

That evening she was on her way to the third storey to close some windows, and as she walked along she constantly murmured her love for Him the thought of Whom never left her. "Suddenly as I reached the top-storey corridor," she wrote, "I saw Him coming to meet me from the other end."

Jesus was surrounded with light so radiant and so lovely that it lit up an otherwise dark passage. He walked rapidly, as if eager to meet her.

" 'Where do you come from?'

" 'I have been closing the windows. Lord.'

" 'And where are you going?'

" 'I am going to finish doing so, my Jesus.'

" 'That is not the way to answer, Josefa.'

"I did not understand what He meant, and He continued: 'I come from love and I go to love. Whether you go up or down, you are ever in My Heart, for it is an abyss of love. I am with you.'

"As He disappeared, He left me in such joy that it is quite indescribable."

This exquisite little incident is remembered at Poitiers, for the dark passage goes by the name of *The Corridor of Love.*

But rare were the moments of consolation in Josefa's history at this period; she had to learn by experience what was the true significance of self-surrender and the value of souls.

She thus notes the apparition of Our Lord at the beginning of her prayer on Tuesday, the 26th of October:

"He looked utterly forsaken and suffering. The Crown of Thorns encircled His brow, and little streamlets of blood ran down His face. His Heart, too, was wounded and torn. He did not speak. I offered Him my love and that of all the others to comfort Him. I told Him I wished I could wear myself out through love of Him, and ended by asking Him to give me the fire of His Sacred Heart with which to love Him. Then He said to me: 'Yes, love is all I ask for; contemplate Me . . . and share in My sufferings.'

"Then He vanished, leaving my soul in a great solitude.

" 'I want you to console My Heart, Josefa,' He said again to her that same evening; 'I am so lonely.'

" 'No, my Jesus,' she replied, 'am I not here? Lowly indeed, but entirely Thine. Besides, Thou hast many other souls here, only too ready to console Thee.'

" 'Yes, but so many others forsake Me, and so many are lost for ever. Come, draw near My Heart and share Its grief.'

"Then I heard the beating of His Heart . . . after a moment another beat, and so I counted seven.

" 'Each of these beats is for a soul I am calling.'

"The next day, Wednesday, 27th October, during my evening adoration, He came again and said: 'I want you to save those souls. . . . Look at the fire of My Heart; it is the craving to save them that will burn up yours.'

"He made me see in the very depths of His Heart the seven souls that He is begging to return to Him.

" 'You will gain them by your offerings. Stay still in My Heart and fear nothing.' "

Did Our Lord, Who reads into the depths of hearts, see in Josefa's an ever-present apprehension that something out of the ordinary might be noticed by those around her? . . . Next day, during her thanksgiving, while she was confiding this worry to His compassionate Heart, He came at once as if anxious to reassure her: "What does it matter, Josefa? Have I not told you that you will have to undergo humiliation?"

This lesson in humility and abandonment was one Our Lord never tired of reiterating to her. It was one which only suffering and love was to teach her; but it was the foundation of all He meant to build. That evening He again appeared to her in the dolorous condition which made her write:

"Oh, how sorry I felt for Him. . . . He looked at me in such a way that I could not complain as I wanted to, for I realized that my pain was but a shadow of His. I then saw behind Him an interminable file of souls, and looking at me significantly He said: 'All these are waiting for you . . . you are free in your choice, Josefa, but if you truly love Me, you will not be afraid.'

"I again murmured how afraid I was these things might be noticed.

" 'What matter if they are? If so you can give glory to My Heart.'

" 'But I am only a novice. Lord!'

" 'I know that quite well, but only be faithful, and nothing of this will harm you. Do not fear.'

"Then I offered myself to His service, to be used just as He wills.

" 'Yes, I shall make of you a victim, for you must resemble Me if you are to be My Bride, and can you not see what I am like?'

"I have not seen Him again since then."

Daily Precepts and Forgiveness

22nd October-18th December1920

"I will seek you in your nothingness, to unite you to Myself"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 8th November 1920.)

JOSEFA'S offering was to carry her still further on the way marked out for her by Our Lord. More than ever she came to know experimentally what courage and confidence the Divine Will was to ask of her.

"I am so tempted, so cold, so unsettled," she wrote at the end of October, "that my vocation seems to have vanished—no faith left, all is black, and I so unfeeling. I offer this suffering to console His Heart and win Him souls, but this very thought continually brings to my mind what a life of infidelity I have led. When I see what I myself am, it seems presumption to pray for others. How helpless I am!"

It seemed to be Our Lord's will to leave her to herself for a while; though this abandonment was only apparent and nothing abnormal in the spiritual life. Coming as it did after the familiarities of love she had experienced shortly before, it threw her soul into a kind of confused distress to which she was as yet unaccustomed. Nevertheless, she reacted bravely and never ceased affirming a love which it was her determination to maintain faithfully, come what might.

"O my God," she wrote, "I want to comfort Thy Heart . . . though I see nothing and feel nothing, yet I believe in Thee and I love Thee, and needless to add, I call on Our Blessed Lady all the time."

A week passed, but the temptation grew as time went on . . . on Saturday 6th of November, Josefa woke up convinced that nothing was of any avail and that her vocation was lost. She tried hard to make acts of faith and trust.

"In the midst of this storm," she wrote, "I was able to repeat only these words: 'Jesus, Jesus, forsake me not.' Awful thoughts had taken possession of my mind and I implored Our Lady to stop me in time if I were not in a fit state to go to Holy Communion . . . My time of prayer was spent in this way. Then Mass; I went to Holy Communion, but could only call on Jesus to help me, and say over and over again: 'I believe that Thou art in the depths of my soul, O my God—indeed I believe it!' Suddenly I heard His answering voice: 'I am there!'

"At once peace returned to my tortured soul, and I saw Him. He was wearing His Crown of Thorns, and some little streamlets of blood coursed down His face. His Wound was wide open and His hands pointed to His Heart. 'O my Jesus, how lonely Thou hast left me . . . and for so long . . . and I was so tempted.' I did not dare go near Him. Then He took my hand in His own, and little by little, I know not how, I found myself close to His Heart.

" 'When I leave you so cold,' He said, 'I am using your warmth to give heat to other souls. When I leave you a prey to anguish, your suffering wards off divine justice when it is about to strike sinners. When it seems to you as if you did not love Me and yet you tell Me unceasingly that you do, then you console My Heart most. That is what I want: that you should be ready to comfort My Heart every time I need you.'

"I told Him that what most troubles me is the fear of having offended Him, for He knows well enough that I do not mind pain.

" 'Come, Josefa, do not be afraid, for you are never alone. How could I forsake you, seeing that I love you to folly? The lowlier and the more humble you are, the more you must be kept safe, and I am always close to you."

In the face of such divine assurances, Josefa could but repeat how feeble she knew herself to be, how great was her love, how whole-hearted her surrender. . . .

"I begged Him to give me the virtues I lack, especially humility. He interrupted me: 'I possess humility for your pride.'

" 'I am such a coward, so weak when I have to suffer. . . .'

" 'Am I not strength itself?'

"Finally, I offered myself, keeping nothing back.

" 'That is well said, Josefa: nothing for yourself . . .you all for Me . . . and I all for you. When I leave you alone and in agony, accept My Will, and abandon yourself to Love.' "

The next day, the Master of love further insisted, and repeated whilst showing Himself to her during her prayer (7th November).

" 'Tell me that you love Me; that is what I like best to hear.'

"I answered that there was nothing that I wanted more than to love Him and that all other things called forth in me but a shadow of love."

" 'Yes, keep for Me the heart I have given you and seek for nothing but love. That is My wish. My Heart longs to burn and consume hearts in the glow of Its fervent love."

Jesus made known to her at the same time what were the exigencies of a love so impassioned as to consume gradually all that was still alive and imperfect in her nature. Her smallest faults seemed to her to be real infidelities, and in her self-reproach she continually implored forgiveness.

"On Monday, the 8th of November, while I was sweeping the stairs, I was telling Him how sorry I was for a stirring of impatience to which I had yielded in the morning, and which gave me great remorse. Near the bottom of the staircase I saw Him before me and He seemed to be searching for something. I finished the sweeping, then I followed Him to the Noviceship, and there He said to me: 'You must not grieve overmuch at your falls. Why, I could make a saint of

you without more ado, but what I do ask of you is that you should never hold out against My Will. Do what I ask you to do. Let Me act, humble yourself, I will seek you out in your nothingness, and unite you to myself.' "

Such clear directives throw ample light on the path Our Lord had chosen for Josefa. Humility was to make it secure and obedience would be her guiding star.

" 'If I give you these graces, it is because I trust in your fidelity and obedience to Myself and to Reverend Mother who represents Me. Abandon yourself to My care; I want you to become the victim of divine justice and the solace of My Love. I will immolate you, but with arrows of love. I will take you prisoner, but with cords of love. Fear nothing. You are deep down in My Heart. Abandon yourself to Me and let Me do as I will.' "

This divine action on her soul was one of trial, and all Josefa saw was her own frailty. Ten days of brave struggle followed, in which she fought through costly efforts to overcome long, obscure, and difficult temptations from within and without. "However," she commented on Friday, 19th November, "I do not think I offended Him, though the temptations were many."

Notwithstanding, when Jesus appeared to her during her adoration that evening, with His Heart torn and lacerated, she exclaimed:

" 'O my Jesus, is it I that have thus wounded Thy Heart?'

"He did not let me finish: 'It is not you, Josefa, but the coldness of those souls who make no return for My love. If you could but understand My sadness that My love meets with no return.'

"His Heart then became a living flame.

" 'See what your loving heart does to Mine, for though you feel cold and imagine you no longer love Me, it holds back My justice from punishing sinners. One single act of love in the loneliness in which I leave you repairs for many of the acts of ingratitude of which I am the object. My Heart counts and collects these acts of your love as a precious balm."

Her anguish was dispelled in the flame that blazed from the divine Wound, and even at times invested her.

"I prayed to Him for all those souls, begging of Him to make many of them know the goodness of His Heart and love Him.

" 'It pleases Me to see you famished for My love and burnt up with longing to see Me loved. That by itself is consolation to My Heart. Yes, pray for souls, for the seven of which I have given you charge. A few more sacrifices, and they will return to Me.' "

On Saturday, 20th of November, He came to her, as a beggar, destitute and asking for love.

"Many little wounds were lacerating His Heart," she wrote.

" 'Tell Me, would you not attempt the impossible to comfort Me, Josefa? . . . Share with Me for a moment the bitterness of My Heart.'

"Then helpless distress seemed to overpower my soul. He was still there, and gradually His Heart lit up, and all His Wounds disappeared.

" 'Listen,' He said, 'I want you to give Me souls. Only love in all you do is required. Suffer because you love, work because you love, and above all abandon yourself to love. When I let you feel anguish of spirit and great loneliness, suffer in love. I want to make use of you as a tired man uses a stick to lean upon. . . . I want to possess you, to envelop you, to consume you entirely, but all in great sweetness, so that enduring a martyrdom of love, you thirst to suffer more.' "

These visits always brought pain to Josefa, but though they at times baffled her, they never tired her generosity. "For the last few days," she wrote, "my soul is as it were immersed in fear, and weighed down by God's Justice . . . shall I ever emerge from this abyss?"

Our Lord sustained her, nevertheless, and He made Himself manifest to her during Mass, on Sunday, the 21st of November.

" 'I come to rest in you, for I am so little loved,' He said. 'I am in search of love and meet only with thankless neglect. Rare are the souls that truly love Me.'

"I asked Him if this Noviceship did not comfort Him a little. Then to console Him, I offered Him the love of Our Lady, of the Saints, of all faithful souls, and even mine.

" 'Yes, Josefa, love Me and never tire of telling Me of your love.'"

She obeyed His instructions with all her heart, in spite of the dark night of desolation into which it was His Will to plunge her.

"I tried," she wrote next day, "to say over and over again 'My Jesus I love Thee.'

" 'And so do I love you,' she heard Him answer during her prayer.

"He came with no radiance round Him, looking like a beggar; I was silent. But as He continued to gaze sadly at me I ventured to speak, and I told Him how much I longed to comfort Him.

" 'Yes, do comfort Me, to-day; I will stay beside you all the time, so that you may not forget.'

"At the end of my prayer, as He did not go away, I said to Him: 'Lord, it is time for me to go to my sweeping, but Thou knowest that I love Thee, and that all I do is done solely to please Thee.'

"Twice in the course of my work He asked me again whether I loved Him. 'Say it often, to make up for the forgetfulness of so many.' "

That day, Monday, 22nd of November, she spent entirely in that divine company.

"He stayed all the time," wrote Josefa; "we were not separated a single instant. From time to time He stopped me in my work, and once while I was sweeping the old cloister of Les Feuillants, with its primitive tiled pavement. He asked: 'Why are you doing that?'

"He seemed to take delight in the answer He forecast: 'Lord, I do it because I love Thee. See all the tiles of this corridor—as many times I say: I love Thee, Lord.' "

Later on she had to go and fetch some coal from the garden:

' "What are you going to do?'

"' I am going to try and prove my love for Thee, by all these little things.'

"He went on: 'Many souls think that love consists in saying: My God I love Thee. No, love is sweet, and acts because it loves, and all that it does is done out of love. I want you to love Me in that way, in work, in rest, in prayer and consolation as in distress and humiliation, constantly giving Me proofs of your love by acts; that is true love. If souls really understood this they would advance in perfection rapidly, and how greatly they would console My Heart.' "

Consciousness of the divine Presence made Josefa anxious, lest the Novices should notice her absorption when she was at work with them; it seemed to her impossible to give due attention to her work while in the presence of God's Majesty, which captivated and held her. "O my God!" she cried, "what will become of me? I am afraid of forgetting everything.

"A little before midday I asked Him if He would go, because I had to serve the children in the refectory.

" 'But, dear Lord, indeed I shall not forget Thee, while I do it.'

"Jesus replied: 'Go and ask Mother what you must do. Tell her that I am with you; let us go together.' "

Docile as usual, she went in search of the Mother Assistant, and explained the case; but it was not possible to free her at that moment. She begged.her Master's pardon for the refusal of the request. "It cannot be helped, Josefa, but you have made an act of humility and obedience."

Life together continued that afternoon. If Our Lord thus made Himself visible to Josefa, was it not that later on the faith of many souls should be revivified, that they should realize His invisible Presence through grace which is so much more certain and authentic?

As for Josefa, the simplicity of her faith never rested on these favours; she feared them for herself and thought that those around her were bound to notice them. "Lord, how will all this end?" she said. "Thou seest how difficult I find it to attend to anything but Thy Presence; something will be noticed. . . ."

" 'Look, Josefa, if a tiny child finds itself at the foot of a steep hill which it has to climb, and its father is at hand, do you think it will be allowed to fall?'

"These words gave me great confidence, and again I abandoned myself into His Hands, that He might do with me whatever He willed."

That evening, Our Lord, who had not left her for a single moment that day, appeared to her during her adoration in the chapel:

" 'It gave Me great comfort to-day,' He said, 'that you never left Me, and it was your littleness that pleased Me. I must be present to you always, and the more helpless and lowly you find yourself, the surer you can be that I am pleased with you.'

"Then He put His Hand on my head and added: 'Do not forget that I shall be the divine torment of your whole being, and that you are the victim of My love; but I support you, and will not abandon you, if you are faithful.'

"Then He disappeared."

However, Our Lord did not allow her to rest in the thought of herself. The grace of His habitual Presence had for its evident object to make the instrument He was forging adaptable and ready to His Hand that He might use her for the salvation of the world. She was to be ever more occupied with souls.

"The next day, Tuesday 23rd of November," she wrote, "I asked Him to give joy in His service to all the other novices, as He gives it to me.

"He came at once and said: 'Are you happy in suffering?'

" 'Yes, because it is for Thee that I suffer. Lord.'

" 'Will you carry the burden of other souls?'

" 'Yes, provided they love Thee, Lord.'

" 'Well then, you shall suffer because you are the victim of My love, but it must be in love and joy and peace in everything and always.'"

One day, about that time. Our Lord said to her: "I will join the fidelity of many other souls to yours." And for the first time—always in view of souls—He let her share with Him the pain of the Crown of Thorns.

"I was in the little chapel of Saint Stanislaus,"[1] —she wrote on Friday, the 26th of November. "He was asking me to comfort Him and I was thinking what I could do.

" 'I will leave you My Crown of Thorns for a few minutes, Josefa, and you will see what My suffering is.'

"At that instant I felt my head encircled with thorns, which pierced deep into it.

[1] The cell where Saint Madeleine Sophie used to gather her first novices in 1809, and which had been transformed into a small oratory where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved during part of the year.

"Many times this same pain was renewed. So terrible was it that I was about to complain, but He said: 'Do not complain, for nothing will cure you of this pain; it is a share in My sufferings.' "

From that time on the Crown of Thorns became part of Josefa's life of reparation. Sometimes it signified her union with Our Lord crucified; at others the quota of pain apportioned to her love; at others again the sign of long-desired forgiveness. There would be times when it never left her forehead. But no outward mark of these mysterious mystical sufferings was visible. The pallor of her face, and the sorrowful expression in her eyes, alone betrayed the intensity of her pain. Her bowed head could find no rest either day or night. Efforts at relief could do no more than help her bear her heavy weight of pain. It was a continuation of her apprenticeship to Christ's redemptive work for which He had selected her. He gradually revealed to her His anxieties about the straying sheep of His fold, and His patient longsuffering which no delays rebut. Towards the end of November He gave into her charge a soul about which she wrote:

"Yesterday He came to the linen-room, where I was working. His Heart was wounded and His countenance was like that of the Ecce Homo.

" 'Till that soul comes back to Me,' He said, 'I shall come to ask you for the love she is refusing Me.'

"At about half-past one I followed Him to the dormitory where I sleep, and with profound respect, I adored Him.

" 'That you may better understand My sorrow, Josefa,' He said, 'I will make you share it.'

"Then my soul became a prey to sadness. Jesus stood there with His wounded Heart and sad countenance. He was silent. I comforted Him as best I could . . . when He left:

" 'You have rested Me,' He said, 'because you have given Me love.'

"On Monday, the 29th," she again wrote, "He said to me during my prayer: 'I am leaving you My Crown of Thorns and you will offer Me the pain of it for that soul. If she delays, we shall unite our burning longings for her return. And this will solace My Heart.'"

But while telling her of His ardent hopes for the return of certain souls, Our Lord allowed her personally to experience the longanimity of His Heart. She knew her frailty, and how vulnerable she was to the slightest suggestions of temptation, whenever she was left to her own resources.

"Words fail me to express my anguish," she wrote on the 29th of November. "My soul seems far, far from Him . . . my body exhausted, my courage gone!"

She asked her Master how He could make any use of her in such a state of powerlessness and distress. "What I want," He answered her, "is that you should live so united to My Heart that nothing whatever can separate you from Me."

Again He appealed to her generosity:

" 'I want to rest in you; do not refuse to give Me what belongs to Me.'

"And there was I so afraid that I should not have time to do my work!

"And I said to Him: 'Lord, I shall be late for my employment.'

" 'Do you not know that I am the Master of your heart and of your whole being?'"

Did she really know it? She tried to escape from His appeal . . . Jesus vanished, leaving her to her regrets. Many a time she would fail to take the path He pointed out to her, but these omissions were always followed by fresh forgiveness on His part. It was only through many struggles that she learnt the "science of abandonment".

Her love of common life would be to her to the very end a cause of repugnance and temptation. Her Master left her this battlefield on which to contend, that (so it would seem) He might have the joy of expending on her His longsuffering mercy.

"I have not seen Him again . . . but I cannot live without Him . . . and since He left me I have never stopped begging Him to forgive me," she wrote. "Yesterday, 3rd of December, after my work, I went to the tribune and knelt before the Blessed Sacrament exposed: O my Jesus, I do not deserve to see Thee, but show me that Thou hast forgiven me. I stayed quite still. Suddenly all the temptations of the last few days vanished and I felt round my head the Crown of Thorns."

This was a sign of coming pardon, to be followed by one of those scenes of loving-kindness, so revealing of the Heart of God.

"The next day, Saturday, 4th of December, after my Communion, He stood before me, as a Father awaiting His child: 'Come and tell Me all you are afraid of', and showing me His Heart: 'When you feel unable to bear pain, come here! If you are afraid of being humbled, come here! If you are seized with apprehension, come closer still!'

"I told Him that these graces frighten me, because I do not deserve them. ‘I know you do not deserve them, but I only ask you to accept them.' "

Josefa then laid before Him all her sadness, "for the more I see how kind He is the worse I feel about myself. Drawing me gently to His Heart, He said: 'When a tiny child turns its back on his father, do you think he takes offence? . . . come, rest in My Heart.'"

Then she reminded Him of the soul He had confided to her care some days ago, and which she could not forget. "Go on suffering for her; she is getting nearer."

So much compassionate kindness filled Josefa with amazement and desire. She would so like to correspond fully to it, and what she calls her ingratitude filled her soul with sorrow. Our Lady came to comfort her:

"She came," she wrote on Monday, 6th December, "while I was praying for forgiveness and true love.

" 'Daughter', she said, 'you must not worry like this; you know all that Jesus is to you. Suffer in silence, but without this mental anguish. Love very much, but without introspection and without even knowing whether you love or not. If you fall, do not be afflicted above measure. We are both here to raise you up, and I will never forsake you.'

"I explained to her that my biggest trouble was that I could not follow common life in everything, and that I was so afraid of drawing attention to myself.

" 'Do not forget, Josefa, that it is for souls. If the devil is so desperately determined to make you give it all up, it is because he sees in you, as it were, a rivulet which in its course is going to carry many souls to Jesus.'

"I asked her to bless me and not to leave me all alone, because she can see how weak I am.

" 'Yes, I bless and love you.' "

The next day, 7th December, that gracious Mother came again:

" 'If you want to be a comfort to Jesus, I will tell you what gives Him pleasure: you must offer everything you do for souls, without any personal interest whatever, and act solely for the glory of His Heart.' "

And coming down to particulars, she suggested:

" 'Till I tell you to stop, say every day nine *Aves*, with your arms in the form of a cross. You must do this, humbling yourself, and recognizing your nothingness; at the same time adore the Divine Will, and leave your Jesus perfectly free to do exactly what He pleases with you. Confide in His Heart and in me who am your mother.'"

A few minutes later Our Lord Himself once more affirmed the rights which His Mother had pointed out, and reminded Josefa of His plans for her.

"During my thanksgiving, He covered me with the flame of His Heart and said: 'I want you to leave Me absolutely free to establish a current between your heart and Mine, in such a way that you are in Me, without living in any way for yourself.'

"He stayed for a few moments in silence, consuming my soul in the glow of that flame, then He added: 'I want you to help Me by your littleness and helplessness to snatch souls from the enemy who wants to devour them.'

"About midday, He appeared to me with a radiant countenance: 'Come and rest in Me and share My Joy,' He said, 'another soul has come back to Me.' "

So as she went through a whole series of struggles, obscurities, and humble efforts, Our Lord re-animated her courage by showing her the fruits of her conflicts, and how He availed Himself of them.

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception was approaching, and Our Blessed Lady would not let it pass without lighting it up by her loved presence. As soon as it was daylight, as if in haste to comfort her, she appeared to Josefa.

" 'My child,' she said, 'never be afraid of suffering or of sacrifice; such are God's ways. If you want to come out victoriously from the assaults of the devil, pay great attention to two things: first, humble yourself, for you are nothing and deserve nothing . . . everything comes to you as a grace from God. Second, when you feel lonely and given up to temptation, when your soul is cold and you have no courage to go on, do not give up prayer. Pray humbly and confidently, and go at once to seek guidance from her whom God has given you for that purpose. Believe me, child, if you do this, you will make no mistakes. Let me bless you, for I am your mother.' "

Motherly counsels of this nature were the sure forerunners of greater trials, and already the devil was planning to counter God's designs, but our Blessed Lady came to give her help.

On Friday, 10th December, she brought her the Crown of Thorns after her Communion, as a pledge of Our Lord's special love.

" 'See,' she said, 'I bring it to you myself, that it may be less hard for you.'

"She pressed it right down on my head, and I told her how much I dreaded these graces.

" 'If you refuse them, child, you will endanger your salvation. You will indeed suffer by accepting them, but you will never be left without help. I myself will never abandon you, as I am your mother, and both of us will come to your aid.' "

The very next day, 11th December, Our Lord was to ask a fresh proof of her love. During her thanksgiving He spoke these words: "To-day I will imprison you in My Heart."

Soon after, when she was sweeping the children's dormitory. He joined her: "When I call you leave everything and come," was all He said.

"I followed Him to the Noviceship.

" 'I shall be your torment, Josefa, and you will be My repose. Just as a traveller tramping along from time to time seeks a shelter where he may rest, just such a shelter are you to Me.' "

She scarcely dared murmur a few words about her usual fears: "But what will happen. Lord, if Thou dost not let me do my work?" Jesus answered by the one lesson, that of abandonment: "What does it matter if you are in My Heart?" He saw her soul about to waver, for His penetrating glance pierced deep, and He understood her trouble: "Remember what I suffered for you in My Passion . . . the one important thing is that you should not fail Me."

He kept her prostrate at His feet, till she acquiesced in His Will, then He said: "Get up now and go to your work; I shall stay with you. Look at the fire of My Heart . . . but some souls are so cold that even that flame fails to warm them."

"I asked Him how it was that being in contact with His Heart they did not take on Its fire.

" 'It is because they do not come close enough,' He answered.

Then solemnly, so that every word was engraved deeply on her soul, He said: "Love is not loved: think of that, and you will not refuse Me anything I ask of you."

These luminous days were quickly merged in deepest night. That very evening Josefa felt a fresh wave of repugnance and terror rise in her soul for "all those things". Were they not a delusion? This idea took strong hold of her and soon reduced her to the deepest distress.

"From the 11th to the 17th of December I spent thus," she wrote, after describing the dark tunnel through which she had passed; that evening I went to the chapel and said to Our Lord with my whole soul, 'Lord, do not allow me to be unfaithful to Thee. Thrust me deep down in Thy Heart, that I may die without ever having been separated from Thee.'

"That same instant Our Lord appeared. His Heart open and surrounded with flames: 'How can I put you deeper in My Heart than you are, Josefa? When you think you are far from Me, I am just thrusting you down deeper into It, that you may be safe.' "

And as if this assurance were insufficient, He revealed to her on the next day, Saturday, 18th December, what her affliction had wrought for souls. He appeared to her after Communion, and three souls rested on His Heart:

"I saw them," she said, "like tiny children, and His right arm was embracing them.

" 'What does suffering matter, if it gives such results?' He said.

"I did not quite understand what He meant, and He continued:

" 'I use your helplessness to save souls, Josefa—see, these are the price of what you went through.' And He pointed to the three souls that were resting on His Heart. 'I want you to be the victim of this Heart. Do not refuse Me anything; comfort Me when I need comfort, and remember that I spared nothing to prove My love for you.' "

Nothing was now wanting to Josefa, surely, except perhaps encouragement from Our Lady, to guide her definitely towards a generosity that refuses nothing and does not spare itself in anything.

She appeared to her a few moments later:

" 'Child of my heart,' she said tenderly, 'I beg of you not to refuse My Son anything He asks of you. Not your happiness only, but that of many others depends on your generosity. Many souls will be the gainers by what you endure, so be faithful and abandon yourself wholly. If you

but knew the value of a soul! You are unworthy of so many graces, as I have already said, but if God wishes to use your littleness, have you any right to hesitate?'

"I asked her to bless me; she put her hand on my forehead, and left me."

Invitation to Souls

19th December 1920- 26th January 1921

"It is My Will to use your suffering for the salvation of many souls"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 25th January 1921)

ALREADY five months had passed since Josefa had been clothed in the habit of religion, and all this time Our Lord's training had aimed at making her adaptable and supple in His Hand. He had shown her the redemptive result of her struggles and suffering, as well as the effects her fidelity had on the salvation of souls.

She was to go forward, henceforth, strengthened by this twofold light and to understand more deeply the interests of the Heart of God.

On Sunday, 19th December, she heard the well-known voice calling: "Josefa!"

She looked about, but seeing no one, went on with her work; however, on reaching the bottom of the stairs near the chapel:

"I felt drawn somehow, and went up to the Noviceship. He was there, and from His Heart there gushed a stream of water. 'This is the tide of love, Josefa, for your martyrdom will be one of love,' He said.

Josefa's one ambition was to love Him and make Him loved, and she cried: "I will never again go back, O my God; I will suffer whatever Thou wilt, provided Thou dost never cast me out of Thy Heart."

" 'You console Me by saying that,' He answered with enthusiasm. 'I want nothing else from you. You may be poor, but I am rich; feeble, but I am strong. But I do ask you never to refuse Me anything. I will defend you, I will raise you up, I will never forsake you. Only surrender yourself entirely into My Hands. The rest I shall do.'

" Then He drew me to His Heart.

" 'As you are prepared to suffer, let us suffer together. Never mind your littleness, for I am your support.' "

Then her whole being was suddenly steeped in pain; but faithful to His promise, Jesus strengthened and encouraged her and reminded her that she was united to His offering. "You are suffering both in your soul and your body," He said, "because you are the victim of My Soul and of My Body; how could you not suffer in your heart, since I have chosen you to be the victim of My Heart?"

He then brought before her mind the thought of the souls to be saved: "Listen to My Heart beating . . . each beat is for a soul I am calling. . . . I wait and wait in expectation of them. If they

heed Me not, I will call again . . . I will wait for them with you. We shall suffer, but they will come, soon they will come."

This share in Christ's offering and hopes went on all day. When evening came, Jesus left her His Crown of Thorns, the pledge of divine fidelity, which would always sustain her. As He pressed it on her brow He said: "When two love one another as Bride and Bridegroom, if one suffers, so does the other. But do not forget that I am your strength."

So union in a common suffering drew them closer together. Our Lord constantly reminded her of His hopes and wishes, and often He timed His visits in the midst of Josefa's work.

"I was in the dormitory, making the children's beds, and telling Him all the while how much I loved Him," she wrote on Tuesday, 21st December, "when He came to summon me; His Face was streaming with blood.

" 'Come, I want you.' "

She went upstairs to the loft where she slept; Jesus was already there. As on the preceding day, a stream of water was flowing from the Wound in His Heart. He first kept her silently by His Side; then drawing her to His Heart, He communicated something of His acute pain to her. "I shall go on calling those souls," He said at last, "and we shall not tire of waiting for them. My Heart is so sharply wounded at the loss of souls . . . especially when they are among My chosen ones."

Josefa prayed and suffered a long time with Him, then these grave words fell from His lips, the command of Love Itself "I want you to offer yourself as a victim to-day, and that your whole person may agonize for those souls; humble yourself and ask pardon. I am with you."

Then, enveloping her with the fire of His Heart, He added: "Courage. I can give you no better gift than suffering. It is the self-same road that I trod." She now seemed to have fully understood the value of the gift, if one may judge from her progress since the day when Our Lord first asked her: "Do you love Me?" Now He was able to say: "Will you suffer?" The next day, 22nd December, she wrote:

"After Communion, I saw Him; His hands were bound and His head was crowned with thorns. Drops of blood oozed from a small wound in His Heart, others trickled from His face and flames issued from His Heart.

" 'See the state I am in, Josefa. Are you willing to suffer?'

" 'Yes, Lord.'

" 'Take My Crown, and if you want to untie My hands, be on the look-out to-day for what costs and mortifies you most, and make as many acts of love as you can. How different souls would be if they knew this secret . . . how dead to self they would become and how they would console My Heart.'

"That evening He returned," continued Josefa, "His hands were untied and there was no longer any blood on His Face. He drew me close to His Heart and said: 'All you suffer is nothing, if those souls are won to Me.' "

Night and day Josefa offered herself for this intention. "I only ask Thee to give me fidelity and courage," she wrote, "for I have not the slightest desire to enjoy myself here below."

"I too ask you for one thing only: fidelity and abandonment."

And then He told her in detail what He required of her. "I want you to be like an empty vase, which I Myself will undertake to fill. Let your Creator care for His creature. As for love, let it be without measure."

That same evening He reminded her why He wanted to be able to count on "a love without measure".

"I was in the linen-room and I heard His voice: 'Josefa! My bride!'

"I could not see Him, but I answered: 'What wilt Thou, Lord?' . . . Some time after, in the chapel during my adoration. He called me again: 'Josefa! My bride!'

" 'Why do You call me 'bride'. Lord? I am only a novice.'

" ‘'Have you forgotten the day when I chose you, and you chose Me? That day I had compassion on your littleness, and that you might not be left alone, we made a pact of mutual alliance for ever. That is why you will have no other love than that of My Heart, and I will ask of you, and give you, whatever I like. Never resist Me.'"

Christmas night was to see the ratification of the divine choice, and Josefa heard for the first time the call that had brought the shepherds to the Crib, and like them she contemplated the "Great Little One" in His Mother's arms.

"During Midnight Mass," she wrote, "I was already in the middle of the chapel on my way up to Communion, when I saw Our Lady coming towards me. In her arms she was holding the Child Jesus, covered with a white veil which she took off as soon as I had communicated. His little garment was white and His hands were crossed on His breast. Then I did not see Him anymore. . . . When I had reached my place in the chapel Our Lady came again quite close to me. She lifted the Holy Child slightly; He was lying in her arms. Little Jesus stretched out His hand and fondled His Mother. Then with His tiny right hand He seemed to be asking me for mine, and I gave it to Him. He seized hold of my finger and held it tight, and all around both of them floated an unknown but delicious aroma. Our Lady was smiling: 'My daughter,' she said to me, 'kiss the feet of your God, Who will be your inseparable Companion if you wish. Have no fear, draw near. He is all love.'

"I kissed His little feet; He looked at me and then He crossed His hands on His breast and Our Lady wrapped Him once more in her veil. She looked at me and I asked her to bless me, which she did; and then they vanished.

"This time," commented Josefa, who had not lost her eye for dress designing, "Our Lady wore a white tunic, a very pale rose mantle, and a veil of the same colour, but it was of much finer stuff; the Holy Child's raiment was of a material I had never seen before; it was as light as foam . . . and an aura of radiance surrounded His Head, and Our Blessed Lady had the same."

The radiant happiness of Christmas extended over the following days, and after having associated her with His redemptive sorrows. Our Lord made her share in His joys as Saviour.

The very next morning He appeared in all His beauty, and holding close to His Heart two souls to whom He had appealed for a long time: "See, My beloved," He said, "we have saved them! Your pains have consoled My Heart."

A new experience of the predilections of His Sacred Heart still awaited her: on the 27th of December Saint John, the Beloved Disciple and sharer of graces like her own, appeared to her. During the short span of her religious life he would be several times the bearer of messages to her.

There is little variety in the form of Josefa's notes on these stupendous happenings. At that date we read in her papers:

"I was asking for love . . ." (her usual petition) when after Communion Jesus, who always responds to this petition, even amid the gloom of faith (a fact she was quite aware of) to-day gave her a more tangible proof that He was attentive to her than was His wont:

"Jesus came," she said simply. "I did not know where to look, for I did not dare fix my eyes on His face. He drew me to Himself, and I heard His Heart beating. Then I fell into a sweet slumber that I am not able to explain.

"First, I became aware of a very bright light, which, however, did not dazzle the sight, and an immensely broad expanse of which the entrance was quite small. Here all the senses are entranced with delight, while the soul is enwrapped in God. I think it is lost in Him, intoxicated with delights. . . . I found myself as once before (on the 5 th of June) in the Wound of His Heart. . . . He said nothing, but never before had my soul been so steeped in happiness. Then all vanished."

With no transition whatever, she adds: "That same evening Jesus left me all alone."

It is unnecessary to call the reader's attention to the method so often adopted by Our Lord with His little victim: brusquely He detaches her from the delights she has been experiencing, delights both supernatural and very pure. They are but a passing flash, destined to light up the arduous path by which she is rising heavenwards.

"The next day," she continued, "my soul was in such a state of coldness and aridity that I had to force myself to say even a few words to Our Lord. I did my best, and tried to make as many acts of love and confidence as possible. Soon I was unable to hold my own against the temptations which oppressed me."

She noted humbly every detail of these struggles, in the midst of which it seemed to her that her courage must suffer shipwreck. Though the devil's assaults varied little as to their object, being always directed against her vocation, they were nevertheless so acute that she was badly shaken.

"I was thus tempted from the 27th of December to the 9th of January," she wrote, "suffering more than I can say. That morning, on awaking, I thought it impossible to go on with the struggle, and the same inexpressible anguish continued during my prayer."

In spite of her distress, she never failed to seek the encouragement she needed in obedience, which alone could defend her, and with touching fidelity she did her best to follow advice which aimed at keeping her safe for God, and relieving her affliction.

"I promised Our Lord to make as many acts of humility as I could, so as to draw down His mercy on me, and during Mass at the Consecration, with all the determination I could muster, I once more made my offering. Suddenly, even before the elevation of the Chalice, I saw Jesus: His Face was so kind. His Heart so ardent. I prostrated myself at His Feet to beg His forgiveness and to humble myself

" 'Love never tires of forgiving!' He said.

"And with gentlest compassion He added: 'But you have not offended Me, Josefa. The blind stumble as you say. . . . Come, draw near My Heart and rest awhile. I wish you could realize how much you have comforted Me these last days . . . and all the time I held you so close to My Heart that had you fallen it could have been only into Its depths.'

"I asked Him why He allowed such darkness and temptations."

" 'It seems to you that you see nothing and that you are about to fall into the precipice. But need you see, if you are guided? . . . What you need is to forget self, to abandon your own will and offer no resistance to My plans. Thanks to the acts done in the midst of your sufferings, several of the souls that you will see later have come nearer to My Heart.' "

Our Lord was here alluding to the souls He had been calling when He made her listen to His Heart beating on the preceding 19th of December.

"I then explained to Him that when I am thus tempted and lonely I look everywhere for Him and cannot find Him.

" 'When you cannot find Me, look for Me in your Mother. Follow her directions implicitly, for she will guide you to Me. I gave her to you for that very purpose; and know, Josefa, that if you do what she tells you, you are giving Me as much satisfaction as if you were obeying Me personally. Love, suffer, and obey. So doing you will enable Me to carry out My plans in you.' "

That very evening, in a charming object-lesson, such as He loves to give simple souls, Our Lord renewed recommendations which were very dear to His Sacred Heart.

As she was praying before the Tabernacle, He appeared to her, "holding in His Hand", she wrote, "a little chain of brilliants which held three small golden keys, very pretty ones."

" 'Look,' He said, 'one . . . two . . . three . . . they are of gold. Do you know what these keys represent? . . . each of them guards a treasure that I want you to secure.

" 'The first is complete surrender of will to all I ask of you, directly or indirectly, steadfastly trusting the goodness of My Heart that always takes care of you. You will repair in this way for the sins of many who doubt My love for them.

" 'The second is a profound humility which consists in knowing that you are nothing, in humbling yourself before all your sisters, and when I tell you to do so, asking your Mother to humiliate you. Thus you will repair for the pride of many souls.

" 'The third is great mortification in your words and actions. I want you to mortify yourself corporally as much as obedience allows, and to receive with real joy the sufferings I send you. This will repair for the immortification of many, and will console Me in some measure for the sins of sensuality and illicit pleasures of the world.

" 'Lastly, the little chain on which the three keys are strung is an ardent and generous love, which will help you to live abandoned, confidingly trustful, humble and mortified."

Josefa never forgot the three symbolic keys. Many a time Our Lord would give her just such a simple object-lesson. They abound in the Gospels, and contain very deep and profound teaching.

But the hours in which Josefa was to find rest became more and more rare. From now on they were seldom granted her, and were of short duration. Our Lord kept before her mind the thought of the souls He had entrusted to her a month previously: they were waiting for her efforts to detach them from self, and to give themselves up definitively to Him. This work was of prime importance in her life. "Do not tire of suffering," He often repeated. "If you only knew how greatly it profits souls."

Before long He sent her the suffering she most dreaded; she had had it before, and it would often be renewed. "I do not ask Him to take away my pain," she wrote, "but only to give me strength to bear it."

A violent storm of doubt and obsessions clouded her soul. Then, as if it gave her some relief, to hide nothing of her weakness and failings, her notes became longer and more circumstantial. Friday, 21st of January, was one of those terrible days:

"I was no longer able to pray . . . and if from time to time a cry still burst from me to His Heart, it was to say: 'Lord, why didst Thou attract me here, if I am not to be faithful?'

"When you led me into your cell, next day. Mother," she wrote, addressing the Mother Assistant, "you asked me where was my love for Him. It seemed to me when you said that that my soul was being torn from me, because, even in my worst moments, the only thing I am afraid of is not to go on loving Him. . . . Then I resolved to obey you at all costs, and though the temptation remained strong, yet I had a little more light."

Two days passed in which it was difficult to gauge the great moral distress of her soul. Not even those who usually followed her up were able to do so, and just as a storm, lashed by a furious wind, ravages everything in its passage, then suddenly abates and fades away on the horizon as it came, so was it with Josefa; temptations raged furiously, then all at once subsided. "Monday, 24th January," she wrote. "All day I have been begging Our Lady to deliver me . . . and quite suddenly during my adoration in the evening, I recovered my peace of soul."

This sudden peace in the midst of her militant life, always portended the coming of Our Lady. She stood there, smiling with motherly tenderness, bearing in her hands the Crown of Thorns.

" 'Here I am, daughter,' she said. 'Do not get weary of suffering. Take the Crown of Thorns; it is a jewel sent you by your heavenly Bridegroom; accept it gladly.'

" 'O my Mother! why are these temptations so strong? . . . You see how they torture me.'

" 'It is right, Josefa, that you should endure them. Jesus wills it so. Tell your Mother that one of the souls with which He entrusted you has come back completely to Him: your agonies won her this grace. Now, suffer for the others, who will cost you dear; but love and suffering can obtain anything. . . . Do not weary of them . . . it is for souls.' "

Our Lady disappeared, but her coming had been as the dawn announcing the luminous advent of Jesus, who Himself brought Josefa not His Crown, but the assurance, more precious still, that nothing was changed between them.

"On Tuesday, 25 th January, He came at the beginning of Mass. I asked Him if I had wounded His Heart. He knows only too well that nothing else matters to me. . . .

" 'No,' He answered tenderly, 'but it was as if you had put sand in these eyes that are looking at you. I love you with predilection and I was not able to see you at My ease . . . but you are forgiven.'

"Then He added: 'Ponder this word: "Gold is purified in the fire." So tribulation purifies and fortifies the soul, and the time of temptation is of great profit both to you and to souls.' "

Encouraged by so much compassion, she confided her greatest anxiety to Him: the most painful torment of the days of trial she had undergone. "The fear," she said, "that such struggles would end by putting my vocation in peril."

"Who could doubt of your vocation, Josefa, if you have been able to withstand such tribulations? . . . I allow them for two ends," He said, divining the thought that was in her mind. "First, to convince you that when alone you are incapable of anything, and that the graces I give you spring only from My goodness and the great love I bear you; and secondly, because I want to use your sufferings for the salvation of many souls.

"You will suffer to gain souls, because you are the chosen victim of My Heart, but you will come to no harm, for I will not allow it."

To this promise, in which she had perfect faith, she responded by a fresh offering of her whole being. The next day, 26th January, He again insisted on the necessity of suffering:

"During adoration He came close to me," she wrote. "He said nothing, but He made me listen to the beating of His Heart. I asked Him to keep me faithful, to teach me to love Him and never to allow me to cause any sorrow to His Heart. He seemed to like that prayer and said to me: 'The soul that loves wants to suffer, for suffering increases love. Love and suffering unite a soul closely to God and make her one with Him.' "

And when she reminded Him of her frailty: "Have no fear, I am strength itself When the weight of the Cross seems more than you can bear, have recourse to My Heart."

Then He told her where to look for His Heart: "Do you not know where I am to be found, and in complete security? . . . Accept the guidance you are given. My eyes are ever on you, fix yours on Me and abandon yourself."

Hidden Life in Fervour

27th January - 21st February 1921

"Tell Me what offerings you can give Me for souls?"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 20th February 1921)

LENT and the Quarant'ore were at hand, and everyone at Les Feuillants felt them to be an invitation to an increase in love and reparation. These latter were becoming more and more Josefa's habitual aim, for Our Lord unceasingly put before her the fact that she was the victim of His Heart; He was now about to give her proofs of it.

The First Friday of February was the anniversary of her arrival at Poitiers. From the time of her rising that day she felt great moral suffering and sharp physical pain, but though she had borne the latter for a considerable time, she had not on that account given up her usual housework. "After cleaning the kitchen," she said, "feeling exhausted, I went up to the dormitory. I knelt beside my bed and offered myself to Jesus to comfort Him."

No sooner had she begun her prayer than He appeared to her, and showing her His Heart all aglow. He said: "Every Friday, and especially on the first of the month, I will make you share in the bitterness of My Heart, and you shall endure the torments of My Passion in a special way."[1]

Josefa remained long annihilated in His Presence, and under the stress of pain that seemed to envelop her whole self.

" 'I will begin by making you a victim,' continued Our Lord, 'and later I will make you a saint.'

" 'In these days when hell opens to engulf so many I want you to offer yourself as a victim, so as to save the greatest possible number of souls.'

"He stayed a few minutes more, but in silence, and then vanished."

The Sunday of the Quarant'ore, 6th February, He renewed the same appeal to Josefa. From early morning she had offered herself to repair the offences of sinners, and at about three in the afternoon, Our Lord appeared to her in the chapel.

"What compassion I felt for Him," she wrote. "His face. His arms. His breast were covered with dust, and blood flowed from His head, but His Heart was shining and beautiful.

" 'It is the want of love that wounds Me thus,' He said, 'and the contempt of men who run like madmen to perdition.'

" 'Why then. Lord, is Thy Heart so lovely and so glowing, in spite of the sins of men?'

" 'My Heart is never wounded unless it be by My chosen souls.' "

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[1] "Todos los Viernes y con preferencia, el primero de cada mes te hare participar de la amargura de mi Corazon y sentiras de una manera especial los tormentos de mi Passion."

This answer touched Josefa deeply, and unveiled to her the most intimate of His sorrows; and often He was to ask her to share it and console Him. But to-day she was made responsible to God's Justice for the flighty and guilty world. She spent before the Blessed Sacrament which was exposed, every minute of leisure left her by her work, and the thought of so many offences against the Divine Majesty never left her mind. . . . Jesus, who had laid this weight upon her, came, however, to uphold her courage, and on the 8th of February, in the chapel at dusk, she saw Him as if weighed down by a heavy burden.

"The sins committed are so many and so grave," He said, "that the wrath of My Father would overflow were it not for the reparation and love of My consecrated brides. . . . How many souls are lost!"

Filled with dismay: "Is the number of sinners, then, so great. Lord?" she cried.

"Yes," He answered sorrowfully, "but one faithful soul can repair and obtain mercy for many ungrateful ones."

These words brought to Josefa's mind the expiatory mission to which from the first Love had invited her. But little by little another plan was to become apparent, first intimated to Josefa on Ash Wednesday, which fell on the 9th of February. Suddenly He came, and opening His Heart: "Come," He said, "you are exhausted; enter here and rest a while."

How could words express what this mysterious repose on the Heart of God meant to Josefa's tired soul! "All pain faded away . . . and I was immersed in God."

Then, for the first time, Jesus entrusted her with His full plan: "The love I bear for souls, especially for yours, is so great that I can no longer contain the flames of burning charity that consume Me, and so in spite of your unworthiness and helplessness, I mean to make use of you to accomplish My plans."[1]

The appeal, with its full implications of the gift of self and total surrender, was to become clear to Josefa only very gradually. But already the Master asked her consent; and a tangible sign was to seal her acquiescence.

" 'Will you give Me your heart?' He asked.

" 'Yes, gladly, and more than my heart. Lord.'

"Jesus took it from me and placed it close to His own. How small it looked beside His! Then He gave it back to me, all on fire.

"Since then I feel within me a consuming flame, and I have to make very great efforts to control myself, lest anything should appear outwardly."

Josefa decided to keep secret this signal grace which she so simply narrates, but Jesus would have no secrets, and on Thursday, 10th February, she wrote, addressing the Mother Assistant:

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[1] "El amor que tengo a las almas, y muy especialmente a la tuya, es tan grande que no puedo contener las llamas de mi ardiente caridad y a pesar de tu gran indignidad y miseria, Me servire de ti para realizar mis designios,"

"I felt a little remorseful for not having told you the whole truth. Mother, and when Our Lord came. He asked me: 'Tell Me what costs you most?'

" 'Lord, to have to tell those things, and write them just as they happen.'

" 'Now, listen, Josefa. I do not want you to hide anything from your Mother. She is right; you must tell her all.' "

Two days later He again impressed on her how much He held to her absolute dependence. "Tell your Mother everything," He insisted.

And as she feared even the shadow of hidden self-complaisance in relating such things . . . He interrupted her vehemently: "Listen, Josefa, it would be pride if you kept silence. Humility lies in simplicity and lowliness. Know for certain that if I ask you one thing and your Mother asks another, I prefer you to obey her rather than Me."

We find noted on 12th February a long parenthesis regarding her reaction at each of Our Lord's visits:

"In order to obey you, Mother, I will write down what I feel each time Jesus comes: First, an intense desire to humble myself. I always begin by asking His pardon for all my sins, for I see my soul all soiled and besmirched . . . and if it were not for an irresistible attraction that impels me forward, I should not dare approach or speak, when in His Divine Presence. I cannot say how it is that I am drawn . . . my soul is in peace . . . the more I try to humble myself, the better it seems to please Him. Sometimes, I am not able to utter a word, I am annihilated in adoration. At other times, it is like a torrent of consolation, even when He makes me suffer with Him. My heart as it were expands and loses itself in God. Again, at other times, I feel as if a furnace were kindled within me; Jesus burns me up in the fire of His Heart. At the same time, He makes me see my littleness so keenly that it passes my understanding how a God can love so lowly a creature as I, and my yearning to love Him grows and grows, and I want to gain souls for Him. I feel such a horror of myself that I cannot think what to do to root out my evil inclinations, and repair for my sins and ingratitude. It, so to speak, wrests my soul from earth and I find the greatest difficulty in settling down again to my daily occupations. I wish I could make you understand the agony of finding myself once more in my poor body, for often, when I am with Him, I think this union is going to last forever."

A little later, and still under obedience, she explained how she had accustomed herself to do everything with Our Lord, and to tell Him everything.

"On Monday, 14th February, I was serving in the refectory at midday, as I always do. There was not enough of the first course. I went to the kitchen, and there was no more. . . . I didn't know what to do . . . and as I am accustomed to talk over everything with Him, I said at once: 'My Jesus, there is nothing more to eat.' . . . On coming out of the refectory a second time, I suddenly caught sight of Him—O! so ravishingly beautiful. . . . He was near the taps in the

kitchen; He stretched out His arms and smiled as He said: 'Is it My fault, Josefa, that there is no more?' . . .

"He vanished at once, and I don't know how I ever went on serving, for He was so dear, so lovely . . . it was like heaven. . . .

"That is how I talk to Him of everything that happens. If I am sweeping and drop something: 'O my Jesus . . . what a noise. I shall wake Thee.' If I lose my things, I ask Him: 'Where did I leave it. Lord? . . . Let us go and look for it together.' When I am tired I tell Him. If I am late for my work, which often happens, for I have to go so many journeys because of all the things that I forget, then I say to Him: 'Come now, Lord! We must hurry to-day, for it is late and there is much to do', especially on Saturdays, when I have to distribute the bundles of clean linen and the shoes in the children's dormitories. In short, I tell Him all my fears. There are times when I do not see Him, but I talk to Him, knowing that He is there. Some days I tell Him everything that comes into my head. Sometimes I ask myself if I am not wanting in respect, but I don't think so, because I am so happy, and I find myself at it again in no time.

"Often, too, I call Our Blessed Lady, especially when I sit down to sew: 'Mother, do come and join us two,' I say. 'Jesus is here, so you ought to be here, too.'

"That is how I spend my days. I have explained everything, I think, as well as I can."

These heavenly exchanges did not prevent Josefa from leading the most simple and laborious life with the other novices.

After her Postulantship, during which she had been helping in the kitchen, she was assigned care of the school linen-room. Les Feuillants had not yet completely recovered after its use as an ambulance during the war, so there was little to facilitate the work to which she devoted most of her time and energy. She shared, too, in all the common labours of the house, without ever betraying God's special hold on her true life, which was concealed by her perfect self-forgetfulness.

We must therefore continue to follow her in the obscurity of common life and daily labour.

One little happening which occurred just about this time should not be left unrecorded.

"I was praying before the Tabernacle for my mother and sister. I was sad about them, and should have loved to be able to console them, and I thought of what I would do if I were at home, and I was not counting enough on my Jesus . . . when suddenly He came with His Heart glowing, and in a grave, solemn voice He said to me: 'What could you do alone for them?' and showing me His Heart: 'Fix your attention here', and He disappeared.

On Sunday, 20th February, she wrote: "During Mass, after the Consecration, Jesus came, so entrancingly beautiful (hermosisimo)." She is fond of this superlative, which is the least inadequate expression she can find.

" 'Tell Me what you have to offer Me for the souls I have confided to you. Put it all in the Wound of My Heart, so that your offering may acquire an infinite value.'

"I told Him that He could take everything, for all I do is for these souls.

'Tell it to Me in detail.'

"Then I began an enumeration of everything: my holy hour, my little mortifications and penances, the suffering of the Crown of Thorns, every breath I draw, my work, my fears, my weakness and nothingness, everything I do and think . . . 'It is all for love and for souls. Lord, and it is little indeed.' He was weaving a fairly thick golden thread into a skein as I spoke. Then He disappeared.

"At nine-o'clock Mass He came back, with His Heart aflame; He drew me near His Wound, and I saw two souls in Its depths.

" 'Look,' He said, 'these are the souls I was waiting for; they are safe now, deep in My Heart.'

"I did not dare look or say anything. He continued: 'Have no fear; there are souls that I call to a very intimate union with Myself, and when they do not correspond, but wander away, it grievously hurts Me. That is why I make use of abject little ones like you to win them to the degree of perfection that I expect of them.'"

The next day, after Communion, Jesus appeared to her, and gazing at her with unbounded love, He told her once again what He wanted of her: "I want you to be so forgetful of yourself and so abandoned to My Will that I shall be able to warn you of your slightest imperfections, for I will allow none in you. You must never lose sight, on the one hand, of your nothingness, and on the other, of My mercy. Never forget that it is from your nothingness that My treasures will be poured forth."

During the morning of Monday, while she was putting the dormitory in order and collecting the children's Sunday uniforms. Our Lord showed Himself to her with His Hands bound and His Sacred Head stained with blood from the Crown of Thorns.

" 'Do you love Me?' He asked her eagerly.

"I don't know what answer I gave . . . I said a hundred thousand things . . . He knows very well that I love Him . . .

" 'Listen, Josefa! I want your thirst for souls to grow and I want you to save many of them . . . and I want you to be burnt up with this longing.' "

Love's Designs

22nd February - 26th March 1921

" The world does not know the mercy of My Heart! I intend to make it known through you"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 24th February 1921)

THE time for a more solemn appeal had come, and on Thursday, 24th February, during her evening adoration, Josefa heard Our Lord say: "To-morrow you will offer My Father all your actions united to the Blood shed in My Passion. Try not to lose sight of the Divine Presence one single instant, and rejoice as far as possible at anything you have to suffer. Do not cease thinking of souls . . . of sinners. . . . O! how I thirst for souls!"

Already He had told her that He wanted each Friday to be a day of offering and of closer union with His Heart. This was a reminder.

"I offered myself to comfort Him and to win souls . . . but, O Lord, do not forget that I am the most ungrateful and miserable of them all.

" 'I know it,' He said, 'but I am training you.'

"He went away . . . I made an act of self-surrender, to do all lie wished, and I understood that He meant to take me at my word: 'O Jesus, I know that Thou wilt have pity on me, and that Thou wilt give me the strength I need . . .' In the evening, during Holy Hour, I was thinking of sinners and of how many there are . . . but also of how much greater His mercy is . . . suddenly He stood before me, and with a voice of great majesty, as might be a king's, He said to me: 'The world does not know how merciful I am; I am going to use you to make it known."[1]

Fear took hold of Josefa, and she cried out:

" 'But, dear Lord, do not forget how weak I am, and that the smallest obstacle makes me fall. . .'

"As if He had not heard, Jesus continued: 'I want you to be the apostle of My goodness and mercy. I will teach you what this means; forget yourself.'

"I implored Him to have compassion on me, and to leave me without these graces to which I am unable to correspond, and to choose other and more generous souls.

"Jesus only answered by these words: 'Do you forget, Josefa, that I am your God', and He vanished."

There was no offence to His Heart, however. He knew that in the very depths of her will she was all His, that her very fears were the expression of her humble distrust of self, and with this He was never displeased.

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[1] "El mundo no conoce la Misericordia de mi Corazon. Quiero valerme de ti para hacerla conocer."

The next day, Friday 25th February, He returned during Mass:

"He looked at me," she wrote, "and I begged to be left like all the other novices, without any extraordinary happenings, for I cannot exist as things are now.

" 'If you cannot, Josefa, I can.'

" 'But I do not want to,' she ventured to murmur timidly. 'I so want to be like everybody else.'

" 'But I will it to be so. Does that not suffice you?'

"Then He added firmly: 'Where is your love?' . . ."

Josefa always found this provocative question irresistible, and she plucked up her courage once more. "Yes, dear Lord, indeed I love Thee, but please stop these graces," she insisted. "I shall betray Thee, I shall lose them . . . and so many others would make good use of them."

"Love, and have no fear. I want what you do not want, but I can do what you cannot do. It is not for you to choose, but to surrender."

How many struggles this surrender was going to cost Josefa's soul. . . . God no doubt allowed them to prove the authenticity of His action with greater certainty, and to dispose of any doubts entertained by those around her. It can be truthfully said that Josefa never ceased dreading her mission, and the three years to come would be punctuated by the terrors that assailed her every time she was asked to surrender.

Two days after that memorable date of 25th February 1921 Jesus came while she was at prayer in the chapel and asked her to take a message to the Mother Assistant. Trembling, she drew back before so costly an act, and soon temptation played havoc again in her soul.

"He came back the next day," she said. "His face was grave.

" 'I love you with predilection, and have cast on you my loving gaze,' He said. 'I want to entrust your worthlessness and misery with treasure for yourself and for souls . . . and . . . you wound My Heart. . . .

"He vanished."

The measure of Josefa's sorrow after such a parting is not difficult to imagine. She tried at first to hide it. But the arch-fiend seized his chance of making capital out of the silence that now fell on her soul. He closed both her heart and her lips and persuaded her that it was all lost and that further efforts were useless. The word "martyrdom" which she used seems not too strong a term to fit the situation—that diabolic influence which God allowed the powers of darkness in that awful hour. "O! Mother, what a martyrdom!" she wrote a few days later. "I could bear no more . . . had I not been restrained by faith, I know not what I should have done. . . ."

Then in great detail she related her humiliating struggle and continued:

"The evening of 3rd March I went to ask you to forgive me, as I had already been to Jesus, and I began to see things differently. . . . I know that He will forgive me again, for I know His Heart. . . .

"During Holy Hour, for it was Thursday, I threw myself at His feet . . . I do not know what I said to Him, but I felt relieved, although my soul remained as cold and stony as ever and I felt at times as if repulsed by Him."

The next day, First Friday of March, peace and light began to return, though the devil made one last effort which he hoped would settle the matter. Josefa was in the garden, picking flowers for the chapel, of which she was sacristan, when suddenly she was given a violent push, and falling on a glass frame, it broke under her weight. A stream of blood flowed from her right arm, which was deeply lacerated. The hemorrhage yielded to the treatment instantly applied, but her arm remained useless for several days. During that time (ever faithful to obedience) she dictated the notes she was unable to write herself. They were as follows:

"In the middle of my adoration Our Lady came, so kind and so compassionate, with open arms, like a mother. I begged her pardon, and asked her if I should still be able to console Jesus and gain souls for Him." (This was always her first and greatest anxiety.)

" 'For, knowing His Heart, I have no doubt that He will forgive me.'

" 'Yes, daughter, you are forgiven—infernal fury will lay many more traps for you . . . but take courage, you will not fall into them.'

"And giving me her blessing, she disappeared."

This celestial visit was again renewed a couple of days later, nth March:

"I was praying to Our Lady and telling her how much I wished Jesus would forget the past, when suddenly she appeared. . . . She was all sweetness, her hands crossed on her breast. I knelt down and she said at once: 'Jesus loves you, daughter, just as much as before, and He wants you to gain souls for Him.'"

Then, in allusion to Josefa's wounded arm: "The devil would have killed you, if he had been able to do so, but he was not able."

Jesus Himself came very soon to reassure His child, and to tell her that nothing could change His love or His choice. Passiontide gave Josefa the chance she coveted of repairing and of participating in the sufferings of her Master.

The 14th of March, Monday in Passion Week, He came to her after Communion.

"His glance was penetrating, but full of pity. His way of looking at me made so great an impression on me and said so much. . . . He drew me to His Heart, which was O! so beautiful and glowing . . . and He let me listen to its throbbings.

" 'I cannot resist your misery any longer,' He said.

"Then, after a moment's silence: 'Do not forget that it is your nothingness and littleness that act as magnets to attract Me to you.'

"That same evening, when I was in the chapel and still under the impression of the look He had cast on me, He suddenly came.

"He had never looked on me like that before, and I think His eyes made me see in one instant all that He had done in me . . . and what I had done for Him, alas! so little, returning His love by ingratitude . . . but that glance also told me that nothing of it all mattered if I was determined to be faithful, for He was always ready to show me His love and give me fresh graces. All this was present to my mind and I never stopped asking His forgiveness and promising never to resist Him again."

It was the first time that Josefa had drawn special attention to the forceful glance of Our Lord.

" 'See, Josefa, I am still interceding for souls and forgiving them,' He said. His face was sad and His Heart seemed oppressed.

"He glanced at me for a moment with the same searching look as in the morning. It said so much, there was no need for words. Neither did I say anything. After a moment He spoke: 'Do you know all I have done for you?'

"Then I saw again all His graces and my ingratitude. I told Him of my determination to do not only all He asks, but all that I know He would like me to do, and this came from the bottom of my heart. As I spoke. His Heart changed entirely. It expanded, flames issued from the wound and His Face shone with bright effulgence. He drew near and I leant on His Heart. Then He said: 'I will make you taste the bitterness of My Passion and you will suffer in some degree the outrages inflicted on My Heart. You will offer yourself to My Father in union with Me to obtain pardon for many sinners.'

"He looked at me again, as if to give me courage, and departed."

It had become a real necessity for Josefa to implore forgiveness, after her recent failings, and she did so incessantly; Our Lord never resisted these appeals.

"On the 15th March, Feast of the Five Wounds, I was still asking Him to pardon me, when, after Communion, as a flash He passed before me, stopped one instant, and said only: 'Love blots out everything.'"

This lesson became more and more deeply imprinted on her mind. She lived on it during her work. That morning, being in the loft preparing linen for the laundry:

"As my one desire is reparation," she said, "I asked Our Lord to save as many souls as there were handkerchiefs to count. I offered my whole day for this object, uniting my sufferings to His Heart and to His merits.

"Towards nightfall, a little before my adoration, I went into the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, where Our Lord was exposed, and He appeared.

" 'If you concern yourself with My glory,' He said, 'I will look after you. I will establish My peace in you so that nothing will be able to trouble you; I will set up in your soul the reign of My love, and your joy none shall take from you.'

"He came close to me. His wound opened and He made me enter It. Then I saw a long line of souls prostrate in adoration, and I understood that all these were the souls I had begged of Him that morning. When I came out from within His wound, again He held me against His Heart and looked at me. . . . Then He left me in great peace."

The 17th March, Thursday in Passiontide, was the twentieth anniversary of Josefa's First Communion. This was a date she never allowed to pass unnoticed, and she wrote in her notes: "Twenty years to-day since Jesus chose me for Himself, and never have I been less worthy of His love."

Then she humbled herself at the thought of so many graces to which she had not corresponded enough, but she added at once:

"I decided that I must make a complete change, and while I was making this firm resolution Jesus, with open arms, appeared before me and in His most endearing voice said to me: 'Yes, Josefa, I did indeed call you that day, and since then I have never forsaken you. I have kept you inseparable from Myself How often you would have fallen had I not been your support. . . . To-day, I once more reiterate My choice: I want you to belong entirely to Me . . . to be faithful to Me . . . and to respond to My love. I shall, in exchange, become your Bridegroom and I shall love you as the privileged bride of My Heart. I take on Myself all the labour; you will have only to love and abandon yourself Your littleness is nothing to Me, and even your falls; My Blood wipes them all away. All you need do is to rely on My love and surrender yourself' "

But the divine predilection always brought Josefa back to one thought, that of the salvation of souls. On Monday in Holy Week, after Communion, she again saw Our Lord in that sorrowful guise that so filled her with compassion and which was to be constantly before her during the whole of Holy Week. The Crown of Thorns thrust deep into His head. His face bedewed with blood and covered with dust and bruises. His hands bound and lacerated. His Heart wide open and streaming with blood.

"He looked at me," she wrote, "but I was not able to say anything, for even in that state He had the very majesty of God. All that I could do was to humble myself before Him. His look seemed to ask what I thought at the sight. I implored Him to tell me what I could do to relieve Him in His agony, for His hands were full of little thorns, as fine as needle points, and must have

made Him suffer torture. He kept silence, only looking at me, and from time to time raising His eyes to Heaven. At last He said: 'Now, let us go and work; I will go with you.'

"I went out of the chapel and followed Him up to the third storey, where I had to do some sweeping in the dormitory. I was full of confusion at seeing Him there, and begged Him with great respect to go away for a while.

" 'Why do you want Me to go, Josefa? Do you think you are not pleasing to Me like this?'

"So I went on with my work to the end. From time to time I knelt down to adore Him and to beg His forgiveness for the sins of the world. I asked Him to untie His hands, in exchange for a small act of mortification which I did, and He consented. Then while I offered Him all my movements as so many acts of love, the thorns fell from His hands, till none remained. . . . He led me then to the oratory of the Noviceship, and there I saw Him resplendent in light and O! so beautiful. The Crown of Thorns had gone and so had the blood with which His sacred face had been covered. His look seemed to imply that my little acts h d given Him pleasure and He Himself placed His Crown on my head saying: 'Love and surrender.' "

The next day, 22nd March, Tuesday in Holy Week, after Communion, Jesus showed Himself to her, His arms extended. She took courage at what she termed "the immense kindness of her Master".

"I should like to ask Thee for many things, Lord," she said.

"Do you not know what is written in My holy Gospel? 'Ask and you shall receive.' "

Then she spoke to Him' of her mother and sisters, who always held the first place in her affections. She asked to be granted the grace of fidelity, confided her dear Society to Him . . . enumerating all she wanted for her mothers in religion, her sisters in the Noviceship, and their families, etc.

"I asked Him to let us soon take back our schools for the poor in France. He smiled and listened to me like the most indulgent of fathers. I grew bolder.

"I implored Him to have compassion on the whole world and to enkindle it with the fire of His own love."

" 'Ah! If only they knew My Heart . . . mankind is ignorant of Its mercy and goodness: that is My greatest sorrow.'

"Then I begged Him to set souls on fire with zeal for His glory, to increase the number of priests, and to call many into religious life. . . . I stopped at last . . . but in the silence that ensued I still whispered to Him how much His glance said to me . . . and what confidence it gave me. Afterwards He showed me His hands and made me kiss His wounds. Then He departed."

Such records suffice to show to what extent the burning zeal of the Heart of Jesus already consumed that of Josefa. Souls had become the aim of her life, and her converse with Our Lord in each of these divine visits was always about them. During meditation on Spy Wednesday, 23rd March, she asked Him in her prayer what exactly He meant by "saving souls".

"He came," she said, "and looked at me with great affection. He replied: 'There are some Christian souls and even very pious ones that are held back from perfection by some attachment. But when another offers Me her actions united to My infinite merits, she obtains grace for them to free themselves and make a fresh start.

" 'Many others live in indifference and even in sin, but when helped in the same way, recover grace, and will eventually be saved.

" 'Others again, and these very numerous, are obstinate in wrongdoing and blinded by error. They would be damned if some faithful soul did not make supplication for them, thus obtaining grace to touch their hearts, but their weakness is so great that they run the risk of a relapse into their sinful life; these I take away into the next world without any delay, and that is how I save them.'

"I asked Him how I could save a great many.

" 'Unite all you do to My actions, whether you work or whether you rest. Unite your breathing to the beating of My Heart. How many souls you would be able to save that way.' "

So Josefa's day was spent in this close union, and to it she added all that was being done in the house: the labour, the prayers and the actions of each of her fellow novices. "Take them, O Lord, for all of them are done for Thee."

In the evening, having a little leisure, she went to the chapel.

"He was waiting for me there, so lovely, so gracious; His Heart seemed to be floating in flames.

" 'How great is the comfort My bride-souls have given Me,' He said." I think He was speaking of this house. . . . He continued: 'Your Sisters by their little acts have brought many souls to Me to-night. I am much loved here.' He disappeared."

The last days of Lent associated Josefa more intimately with the sufferings of Calvary. For the first time she followed her Master step by step through the Passion, and on Good Friday, 25th March, she was constantly brought back to His suffering Presence.

"When I had finished my sweeping I went upstairs to visit Our Lady in the Noviceship," she wrote. "I had hardly entered when Jesus came. His hands were bound, and His head crowned with thorns. His face all soiled with blood and bruises. He fixed His eyes on me with supreme sadness, and then vanished."

A little later she met Him again in the same state; it was in the basement, where her work happened to take her. All through the day He made her share the sorrows of His soul and the torments of His body.

"At three that afternoon," she wrote, "I saw Him again. He showed me the wound in His side and said: 'Behold the work of Love.' "

"His wound opened and He continued: 'It opens for mankind—for you . . . come . . . come nearer . . . and enter.'

"He made me enter, and feel something, I think, of the pain of the nails of His wounds, and His anguish. . . ."

The Mother of Sorrows put her seal on the graces of the day by one of those revealing words so peculiarly her own. At five that evening Josefa was in the oratory of the Noviceship:

"There, in wordless prayer, I sat at Our Lady's feet and in spirit went through all that I had seen and understood that day. Suddenly I became aware that she was present. Clothed in a very dark purple tunic and veil, she held in her hands the Crown of Thorns, all covered with blood; she showed it me, saying: 'On Calvary, Jesus gave me all men for my sons; come then, for you are my child. Have you not already realized to what an extent I am a mother to you?'

"I asked her leave to kiss the Crown of Thorns, and as she gave it to me, she put her hand on my shoulder and said: 'O how I love to think of Him as He bequeathed those souls to me.' "

With the morning of Holy Saturday, 26th March, this series of graces came to an end, closed by a heavenly favour that left an ineffaceable stamp on Josefa's soul. "Do you know why I give you these graces in such abundance?" Our Lord asked of her, appearing to her during her prayer, His wounds all glowing. He repeated what He had once said in almost identical terms to Saint Margaret Mary: "I want to make of your heart an altar on which the fire of My love will burn constantly. That is why I want it pure, and that nothing that can stain it should touch it."[1]

"He vanished," said Josefa, "and I went down to the chapel for Mass. After Communion I felt as if in heaven. I saw within me, as on a resplendent throne, three Persons clothed in white. They were all three exactly alike, and so beautiful! They held between them a great cross wreathed with thorns, on which they were dropping roses. My soul was in such delight that it was like fire which consumed without burning it, pure joy. Then all faded away."

This interior grace was renewed on the 5th of April following. A marvellous peace pervaded Josefa's whole being in the Presence of the Three Persons. She tried to explain, in terms of singular simplicity, what passed in her soul and apparently was ignorant of the import of so signal a grace.

"Ordinarily," she said, "I am enveloped in the Divine Presence, and even when I enter into the Heart of Jesus I am immersed in Him. But on these last two occasions at the moment of Communion it was more like an amazing feast being celebrated within my soul. Jesus entered

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[1] "Sabes el fin que tengo al darte mis gracias en tanta abundancia? Quiero de tu corazon hacer un altar en el cual arda continuamente el fuego de mi Amor. Por eso, quiero que se purifique y que nada lo toque que pueda mancharlo."

into me as if into His palace. I cannot explain it . . . and as I was most determined to surrender myself completely into His hands, to do exactly as He wished with me, it was like heaven."

It is not difficult to conceive how, after such contacts, Josefa had to do great violence to herself to attend immediately to the work that awaited her. This effort, so impossible to gauge, often gave a loophole to the arch-enemy, and he hastened to avail himself of it.

Opposition from the Devil

22nd February - 26th March 1921

"The devil will work assiduously to make you fall, but My grace is more powerful than his infernal malice"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 6th April 1921)

THE months that followed on the Lent of 1921 saw a recrudescence of the devil's attacks. Nothing extraordinary at first revealed his presence. Temptations cleverly exploited Josefa's attractions and repugnancies concerning the path into which little by little Jesus was leading her.

His incomparable fidelity and the sway that His Holy Mother held over her continued to protect, pardon, and direct her whenever she swerved from the right way, as undoubtedly she did more than once. But she learnt the searching lesson she was to pass on to us one day: that love knows how to use even our failings for the salvation of souls. Josefa bowed with difficulty to the influence of divine graces, coming as they did in the midst of her very laborious life which she loved so dearly; and on 27th March, Easter Sunday, she wrote:

"This morning at my prayer, I complained a little to Our Lord, because He keeps my mind so concentrated on Himself that I cannot apply myself to my work . . . and there is so much work to be got through! I wonder if I should not be more in my own sphere elsewhere."

She had hardly finished her plaint than Jesus appeared with a look of sadness on His face:

" 'Why do you complain, Josefa, after I have drawn you to so special a share in My Heart's work . . . If only you knew all that this Society means to Me.'

"He spoke these words very forcibly, and vanished."

She had to wait several days before she saw Him again, keeping, meanwhile, the memory of that sadness on the divine countenance which she knew she had caused.

"On Wednesday in Low Week, 6th of April, after Communion, He returned with outstretched arms, while I was telling Him how I want really to love Him. He listened in silence, as if He would like me to say it again. I begged Him to forgive me, saying: 'Dear Lord, I surrender myself wholly to Thee.' He looked at me very lovingly and said: 'A soul who truly surrenders herself to Me gives Me so much joy that in spite of her miseries and imperfections she becomes a very heaven of delight to Me and I take pleasure in abiding in her. I will tell you Myself what prevents Me from effecting in your soul the realization of My designs.'

Seeing the anxious look on her face, He added: "Yes, the devil will tempt you assiduously and try to make you fall, but My grace is more powerful than his infernal malice. Trust yourself

to My Mother, surrender yourself to Me, and always be very simple and humble with your Mother."

Josefa understood how opportune this recommendation was, for she had a presentiment that the devil was about to attack her; she prayed and renewed her offering:

"I begged Him," she wrote on Thursday, 7th April, "to teach me how to humble myself and how to surrender myself in a way that pleases Him. I think He likes this prayer, for suddenly He came:

" 'You can humble yourself in various ways,' He told me, 'first, by adoring the Divine Will, which, in spite of your worthlessness, uses you to make known God's Mercy. Secondly, by thanking Me for having placed you in the Society of My Heart, though you have done nothing to merit it. Never complain of this.'

"He impressed these words so deeply on my soul that I begged of Him no longer to remember my ingratitude, and I again told Him how much I wished to make amends for the pain I had given His adorable Heart.

" 'You will comfort Me, My Josefa, if you often repeat this prayer: "O Divine Heart—Heart of my Beloved—the most tender and sensitive of all hearts, I give Thee thanks that in spite of my unworthiness Thou hast deigned to choose me to spread the knowledge of Thy mercy on souls." '

"He looked at me again and vanished."

That evening, in Saint Madeleine Sophie's cell, where she had gone in the fullness of her heart to beg of her never to doubt her desire to be her true child, Jesus came unexpectedly, and opening His Heart made her enter therein, saying: "Here, you will obtain forgiveness."

Our Lady was watching with maternal solicitude over Josefa, on account of the latter's inexperience. Coming on Saturday, 9th of April, she said: "What I chiefly fear is that you may not be open enough with your Mother (Assistant) and that so you will fail to notice the toils of the evil one who tries to ensnare you. Do not relax, Josefa; watch over your thoughts, that temptation may have no hold on you. And should you feel any complacency in yourself, own it at once, humbling yourself. Be very simple with your Mother. This I again recommend to you; it is the only way of protecting you from the wiles of the devil."

Jesus Himself drove the lesson home a few days later. On Monday, the nth of April, she repeated the words Jesus had taught her on the preceding Thursday.

"At once He came, and I saw by His look that it pleased Him to hear me say that prayer, so I repeated it again.

" 'Every time you say those words I place them in My Heart, that they may become for you and for souls a new source of grace and mercy.'

"I asked Him, or rather I begged Him, to have compassion on me, for none is more in need of it than I.

" 'If through you, Josefa, I will to pour out the treasures of My mercy, do you think that I would not begin by yourself?'"

Then He, reminded her to hide nothing from the Mother to whom He had entrusted her.

"You must learn to own to her even what humiliates you most, and in the most costly way. If I had not willed to subject you to obedience,' He said with emphasis, "I should have left you in the world, but I led you to My Heart that there you might live only to obey."

Two days later, she was to experience how grace is always hidden in obedience.

"On Wednesday, 13th April, I received a letter from my sister, and the thought that she would very likely enter the Carmelites and leave my Mother all alone upset me. However, I never ceased telling Jesus that I would be faithful to Him. The following day the temptation was so strong that I went and told you all. Mother, because I knew it was from you that I should get light. You said one thing that struck me very forcibly: 'The Heart of Jesus loves your mother infinitely more than you do.' I reflected on this, and in consequence resolved to leave everything in God's hands.

"The next day, during my thanksgiving. He who knows my frailty came, full of kindness, and said to me:

" 'If you surrender all, you will find everything in My Heart.' "

It was by such a call to abandon all into His hands that Our Lord prepared her for the stormy days that were about to begin for her.

On Friday, 22nd April, we see in her notes how the devil tried to take away her peace of mind:

"My soul is tortured by frightful things suggested to my imagination by Satan. . . . I went up to the oratory of Our Lady in the Noviceship to implore her not to let me fall. She came, at once, very motherly and said:

" 'My daughter, I will give you a lesson of very great importance: the devil is like a mad dog, but he is chained, that is to say, his liberty is curtailed. He can, therefore, only seize and devour his prey if you venture too near him, and that is why his usual tactics are to make himself appear as a lamb. The soul does not realize this, and draws nearer and nearer, only to discover his malice when in his clutches. When he seems far away, do not relax your vigilance, child; his footsteps are padded and silent, that he may take you unawares.'

"She gave me her blessing and went away."

Temptation was, indeed, very close to her, and this time Josefa was to learn how strong the devil is, even when allowed only a measure of liberty by God.

"Two or three days later," wrote Josefa, "I was alone and feeling very desolate. The fury of the devil seemed to fall upon me and blind me and tear me from my vocation. I suffered much until Saturday, 7th of May, but I did not cease calling on Our Lord and Our Lady for help.

"That evening I went to make my adoration with the other novices, and to help myself I began to read the words spoken to me by Our Lord and which I had written in my little note-book. But instead of being a help, this reading increased my trouble, for I thought that all these graces would lead in the end to my perdition. I tried as well as I could to repeat my offering, but that instant a shower of blows fell upon me. Frightened, I left the chapel to put the note-book away and see if the Mother Assistant was in her cell, so as to tell her what had happened. But when I reached the cloister of Saint Bernard I was violently caught hold of by the arm and dragged to the kitchen, and the idea came to me to burn the note-book. I tried to do so, but was unable to lift the copper. A mother who was there told me to throw the book into the wood bin, and that it would then be burned at once."

Josefa crumpled it up in her hands, threw it into the bin, and went away much relieved in mind, and hardly realizing what she had done. She then went to resume her work in the ironing-room. Gradually, however, the gravity of the action she had been, as it were, forced into came home to her. What would happen if the note-book fell into strange hands and revealed the great undertaking of Love which Our Lord had so formally charged her to keep secret?

"In other circumstances, I should have been desperate," she continued, "but this time I prayed with all my faith to be delivered and above all to be forgiven. . . . I went back to the kitchen, hoping that the note-book would not have been burnt, for it was late. But I could not find it, and I implored Our Lady to take charge of it herself. . . ."

The next day, a Sunday, seemed an eternity to Josefa, who dared not own her fault to the Mother Assistant, and sought to avoid saying anything about it. But when evening came she was unable to bear alone the anxiety it caused her, and she confessed the whole story to the Mother Assistant.

"When I saw her fear of the consequences I implored Our Lady to restore the note-book to her. I hoped with full confidence that this would be done, not for myself, but for her."

Our Lady could not turn a deaf ear to so filial a prayer.

"On Monday, 9th May, I was sweeping the corridor of the cells, and could not take my mind off the thought of the notebook . . . but I had lost all hope of finding it again. . . ."

Suddenly Josefa heard the well-known voice of Our Lady:

" 'Go to the kitchen; there you will find it.'

"I did not pay any attention, and continued sweeping, thinking that I must be going out of my mind, but I heard the same words a second time, and so went up into the oratory of the Noviceship, where a third time the same voice repeated: 'Go to the kitchen; there you will find it.' "

Hastily Josefa ran downstairs, and on reaching the kitchen, there in the wood bin she saw her note-book . . . it was wrapped in a piece of very clean white paper, and laid on one side against the edge of the bin. Josefa seized it—with what excited feelings can be imagined.

She spent two or three days in gratitude, not unmixed with shame at so much indulgence. . . .

On the 13th May, during her adoration, Jesus appeared with arms extended:

"I begged His forgiveness, at once," she wrote. " 'Forget it all,' He said. 'My Heart has wiped it out. Do not be discouraged, for My mercy is best shown in your frailty.' "

Then she implored Him not to tire of her and of her frailty and falls.

"Never does My Heart refuse to forgive a soul that humbles itself," He answered, drawing near, "especially when it asks with confidence.

"Do you understand that, Josefa? I shall raise a great edifice on mere nothingness; that is to say, on your humility, surrender, and love."[1]

Our Lady was to have the last word in the closing stages of this trial.

Next day, Saturday, 14th May, she appeared to her child, who was just finishing the Stations of the Cross.

She was more beautiful than ever; her dress gleamed with silvery reflections and she smiled as she told her of the entry into Paradise of a soul for whom many prayers and sufferings had been asked.

"When she was about to go, I thanked her once more for the note-book.

" 'What did you want to do with it, my child?' she asked.

"In spite of my shame, I told her the truth: Alas! I meant to burn it. . . .

" 'It was I who prevented your doing that,' she said; 'when Jesus speaks, all heaven listens in admiration to His words.' "

Josefa, who now understood better than ever the value of words from the lips of Jesus, was speechless with sorrow at what she had done.

"I asked her forgiveness and thanked her for not allowing the note-book to be lost.

" 'When you threw it away, I saved it. . . . The words of My Son,' she said a few days later, 'I leave here below only for the good of souls, otherwise I take them back to heaven.' "

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[1] "Yo hare un gran edificio sobre la nada, es decir sobre tu humilidad tu abandono y tu amor."

Josefa never tired of thanking this compassionate Mother who had come to her rescue so mercifully.

"I thought," we read in her notes, "how very much she loves me and how wonderful is her tenderness for me.

" 'Ah! daughter, how should I not love you? . . . My Son shed His Blood for all men . . . all are my children. But when Jesus selects one soul in particular, my Heart rests in her.' "

This oneness of love of Mother and Son was further confirmed by Our Lord; Josefa wrote on the 18th of May:

"After Communion, my soul was filled with such peace that I could not help saying: 'O Jesus, I know Thou art here; I am certain of it . . .' Before I had finished whispering the words. He stood before me. His hands were extended, His face expressed the most loving tenderness, His Heart was escaping from His breast, and His whole Person shone with respendent light. It was as if a fire were burning within Him.

" 'Yes, Josefa, I am here. . . .'

"I was beside myself . . . but regained sufficient hold on myself to beg His pardon, and to bewail my failings, miseries, and fears.

" 'If you are an abyss of miseries, I am an abyss of mercy and goodness.'

"Then, stretching out His arms towards me. He said: 'My Heart is your refuge. . . "

Thus ended the incident of the note-book: on Our Lord's part a veritable effusion of mercy.

The devil tried many other ways of destroying the writings to which Our Lord attached so high a price. But he never succeeded.

The 25th of May, Feast of Saint Madeleine Sophie, who in 1921 was still only a Beata, Josefa recorded the first intervention of this holy Mother in her life. She had a very filial love for her, and notes in very simple words this favour which gave her new life and strength:

"To-day, the feast of our Blessed Mother, I went into her cell many times to whisper a little prayer to her, and once (I was in my blue working apron) I just stood for a moment and said: 'O Mother, once more I ask you to make me very humble, that I may be your true daughter!' There was no one in the room and this little invocation escaped me out loud. Suddenly I became aware of the presence of an unknown nun. She took my head in her two hands, and pressed it lovingly, saying: 'My child, commit all your frailties to the Heart of Jesus, love the Heart of Jesus, rest in the Heart of Jesus and be faithful to the Heart of Jesus.'

"I took her hand to kiss it, then with two fingers she made the sign of the Cross in blessing on my forehead, and disappeared."

This first meeting was followed by many others. Up and down the cloisters of Les Feuillants which her feet had so often trod, in her cell, in the shadow of the tabernacle where she had prayed, Saint Madeleine Sophie showed herself to her child, with the same vivacious and ardent expression of countenance she was known to have had on earth, but now stamped with the light of glory. Josefa spoke to her with the same confidence and simplicity with which she had recourse to her mothers on earth. She listened to her counsels, confided all her difficulties to her, and under such motherly guardianship she felt her vocation safe.

However, Our Lord was teaching her humility by the experience of many falls, and did not free her from the natural frailty of her nature. He seemed almost to take pleasure in seeing the little novice prostrate in shame at His feet, so that He might constantly remind her of the mercy of His Heart, and sometimes He made use of the simplest comparisons to bring home to her His favourite lessons. "I begged of Him," she wrote on the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament, Thursday, 26th May, "to give me strength to conquer myself, for I do not yet know how to humble myself as He would like."

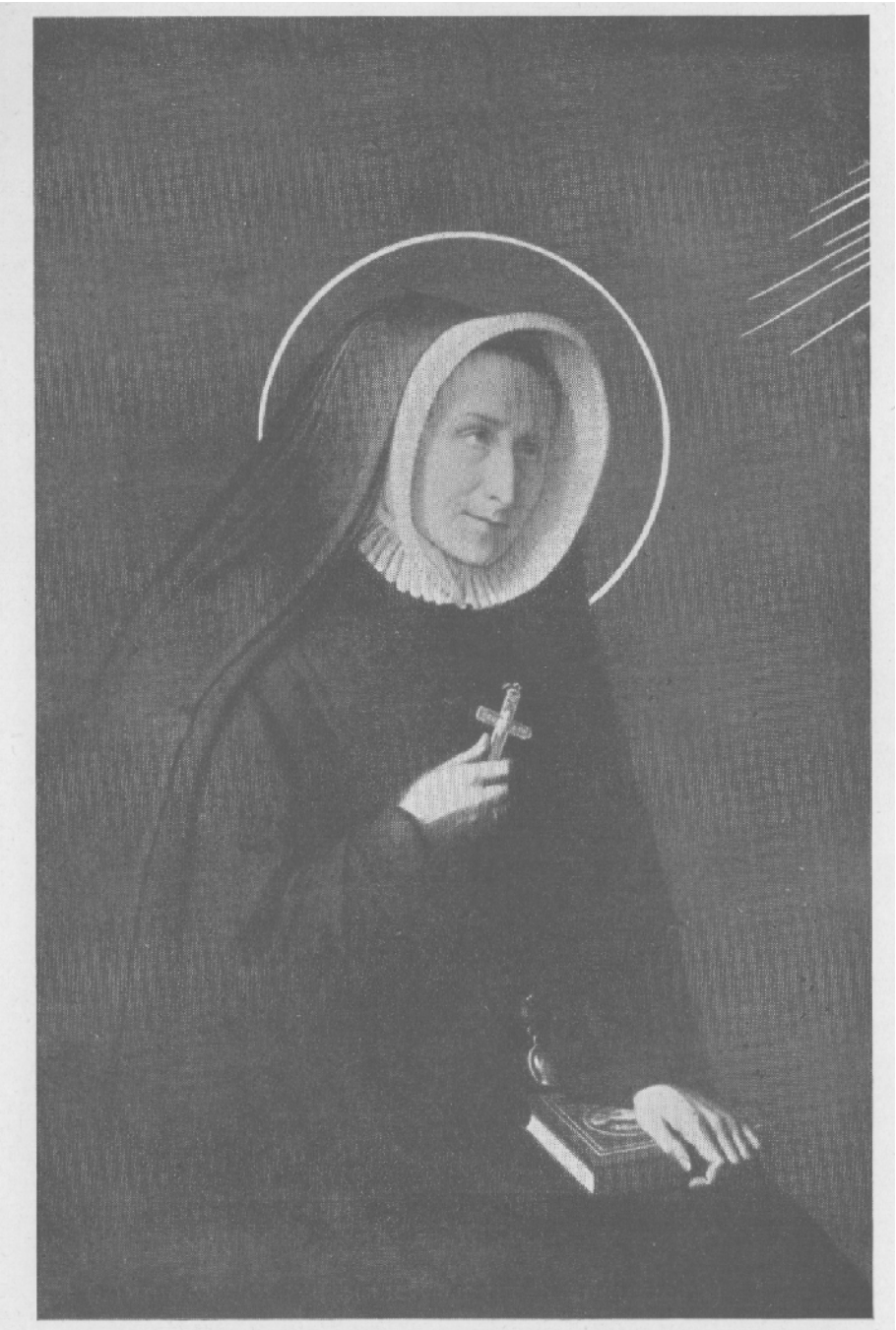
This was during her prayer, and at once Our Lord made Himself manifest. "Do not be anxious, Josefa," He said tenderly. "If you throw a grain of sand into a vase which is full to the very top, a little of the water will trickle out. If you throw in a second grain, more drops will come out. In the same way, in so far as I enter into your soul, you will become less and less occupied with yourself. But this will come about gradually and take time." Three days later, Sunday, 29th May, He amplified this thought and strengthened her for the labour which was to be long and costly.

" 'Why are you afraid? I know well what you are, but I say again: I do not mind your helplessness.

" 'When a little child toddles as it tries its first steps, his mother begins by holding his hand; later she lets go of him and urges him on to the effort of walking alone, but she stretches out protecting arms that he may not fall and hurt himself. Tell your Mother that the feebler a soul is the more it needs support, and is there anyone weaker than you?'

"Then He let me lean upon His Heart, and said in a voice more paternal than at any time before: 'My Heart takes comfort in forgiving. I have no greater desire, no greater joy, than when I can pardon a soul. When a soul returns to Me after a fall, the comfort she gives Me is a gain for her, for I regard her with very great love. Have no fear whatever. As you are nothing but wretchedness, I wish to make use of you. I will supply for all your deficiencies. Let me do it. . . . Let Me act in you.' "

This continual interchange of mercy on the one hand, and humble, generous love on the other, is repeated on every page of this life, and stands out as an essential lesson to be learned. But He who with such persevering longanimity gave it did not want Josefa to become absorbed in her failings, and everything was to become gain for souls.



SAINT MADELEINE SOPHIE BARAT
(Foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart)

CHAPTER IV

LOVE'S VENTURES

Concerning the Souls of Three Priests and a Sinner, And Two Chosen Souls

1st June - July 1921

"Do you want to be a comfort to Me?"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 14th June 1921)

"SOME time before the Feast of the Sacred Heart, I no longer remember the exact date," wrote Josefa, "I saw Our Lord; His Heart bore three fresh wounds, and from each there flowed much blood.

" 'See what I want for My feast.' "

And as she expressed her grief at His sorrow:

" 'There are three priests who are wounding My Heart . . . offer all you do for them.'

"I said how poor I was that He might supply what is wanting to me. He replied with much love and clemency: 'The greater your helplessness, the more My power will sustain you. I will make you rich with My gifts. If you are faithful to Me, I will take up My abode in you and will take refuge there, when sinners repulse Me. I shall rest in you, and you will have life in Me. Come to My Heart and there find all you need, even if it is what I have asked of you. Have confidence and love.' "

From that moment, suffering of both body and soul rarely left Josefa, till Friday the 3rd of June, Feast of the Sacred Heart, when the power of prayer and the mercy that responds to it were shown to her.

"During my prayer He opened His Heart for me to enter in: 'Come,' He said, 'enter in, and continue to confide to Me all I have asked of you.'

"He gave me sweet repose after all the anguish of the preceding days. Then He, O! so beautiful . . . stayed near me . . . as if unable to restrain His joy. I spoke to Him of the three priests. 'Pray to My Heart for them,' He said; 'they have not yet come back . . . but they are nearer.' "

Overjoyed at the sight of His beauty, Josefa alluded to the feast, which she thought would have given Him so much glory.

"His Heart glowed at these words; never before had I seen Him so.

" 'Yes, to-day is the feast of My love. Souls, those that I love so much . . . they delight My Heart, coming as they do to seek strength and remedy in My Heart which so ardently desires to enrich them; that is what glorifies and consoles Me most.'

"He stayed to the end of meditation and then followed me to Mass."

It is the custom in the Society on the Feast of the Sacred Heart for all the nuns to renew their vows before the Sacred Host at the moment of communion. Josefa could hardly contain herself as she listened to the renovation uttered so earnestly by each of the community in turn.

"O! how happy I am in my dear Society . . ." she wrote.

"Suddenly I saw His Heart . . . at first, alone, immersed in a blazing furnace; then, as if a few fleecy clouds parted, Jesus Himself appeared. O! what beauty! . . . I know not what I said. . . How can I thank Him for all He does for me?

" 'I will tell you how, Josefa. Take this Heart and offer It to your God. By It, you can pay all your debts. You know now what I wished to do when I attracted you to this house. I want you to fulfill My plans by the docility with which you allow yourself to be handled, and with which you surrender to My love, which only seeks to possess and consume you. Love will despoil you of self and allow you to think only of My glory and of souls.'

Then with increasing animation, He added: " 'Now pray . . . ask all you want . . . tell Me your desires.'

"Then I prayed for all I most desire—first for the Society, as is only natural, and at the same time I offered Him all those fervent acts of renovation for the three priests. . . . All day long I never ceased praying for them . . . I cannot say how often I repeated: 'Lord, Thou hast told me that to-day souls give great joy to Thy Heart and gain many graces . . . cannot we gain those three priests? O! let Thy Heart be touched!' "

Towards three in the afternoon she went to the Novitiate, and as she passed the organ tribune she made another flying visit:

"To knock at the door of His Heart," she wrote, "in order that He might no longer resist our supplications. He came at once, and as if He had not heard. He said to me: 'What do you want? Tell Me.'

" 'But, my Jesus, Thou knowest . . . what of those three priests? . . . I implore Thee, since it is Thine own wish. . . . Thou alone canst do it."

Then with majestic solemnity and divine joy, pointing to His Heart, He said: "Josefa, they have returned to Me!" And, as if gripped by intense emotion, He continued: "If they had refused My grace, they would have been responsible for the loss of a great many souls." And, as prostrate at His feet, she was mute with the joy that filled her. He added: "You will repeat these words every day: 'O Jesus, by Thy most loving Heart, I implore Thee to inflame with zeal for

Thy love and glory all the priests of the world, all missionaries and those whose office it is to preach Thy word, that, on fire with holy zeal, they may snatch souls from the devil and lead them into the shelter of Thy Heart, where forever they may glorify Thee."

"Then I saw that the thorns had been replaced by a wreath of very red roses, and these encircled His Heart which was like a fiery furnace; His whole Person shone resplendently, and His face glowed with loving kindness."

Josefa never forgot that Feast of the Sacred Heart. She had witnessed the infinite joy of the Sacred Heart when His priests give Him all the love they owe Him. The prayer He had taught her became her daily petition and priestly souls the first and biggest intention of her consecrated life. A little secret note found only after her death proves that at this time Our Lord kept the thought of the missions constantly before her eyes.

"It was on the 11th of June (I was still afraid of betraying myself to those around me), when suddenly I saw Our Lord. I told Him of my fears, and with inexpressible tenderness He answered: 'Remember My words and trust in them. The one desire of My Heart is to imprison you in It, to possess you in My love, and to make of your frailty and littleness a channel of mercy for many souls who will be saved by your means. Later on, I will reveal to you the burning secrets of My Heart, and they will be for the good of many souls. I want you to write and to keep all I say to you. It will be read when you are in heaven. It is not for your merits that I use you, but that souls may see how My power makes use of weak and despicable instruments.'[1]

"I asked Him if I was to say even that," she wrote ingenuously.

"Write it; they will read it after you are dead."

Thus He gradually unveiled to her the great design of His love which was being prepared in the silence and labour of her working days. Of suffering there was to be enough, and Josefa, who advanced courageously towards humility, was not without frequent temptation. The devil tried to change into obstacles acts which she could have done so simply at another time; but Our Lady was there as always to enlighten, guide, and defend her.

"I used to tell her all that happened to me," she wrote on the 13th of June, "but I was not expecting to see her, when she came like a loving Mother, so kind.

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[1] "Recuerda mis palabras y ten fe. El deseo unico de mi Corazon es aprisionarte y ahogarte en mi amor, hacer de tu pequenez y flaqueza an canal de misericordia para muchas almas que se salvarin por tu medio. Mas tarde te descubrire los secretos mas amorosos de mi Coraz6n y esto servira para hacer bien a muchas almas. Deseo que escribas y guardes cuanto Yo te diga. Todo se leera cuando tu estes en el cielo, no es por tus meritos que quiero servirme de ti, es porque las almas vean que mi Poder se sirve de instrumentos debiles y miserables."

" 'Listen, daughter, do not pay any attention to what you feel. Believe me, the sharper your repugnance, the greater your merit in the eyes of your Master. Be on your guard about these three points by which the enemy of souls will endeavour to make you fall.

" 'First: Never give in to scruples which he suggests to you in order to make you give up Holy Communion.

" 'Second: When My Son asks anything of you—be it an act of humility or some other act, do it with great love, telling Him all the time: "Lord, Thou seest how much it costs me . . . but Thou first, and I afterwards."

" 'Third: Pay no attention to the artifice of the devil who tries to persuade you that the confidence you have in your Mother subtracts something from your tenderness for Jesus. If he is able to master you in this matter, he will have gained everything.

" 'Open your heart in all confidence, and love your Mother without fear; always tell her with great simplicity what you think, all that worries you. Jesus also willed to love on earth those who represented His Father, and He is pleased when you are open and simple with her. But on no account ever omit a communion: this I particularly recommend to you.' "

Who would not wonder at the thoughtful kindness of such motherly counsels! It was by following them implicitly that Josefa became in the hands of her Master the docile and supple instrument He was forging for His redemptive work.

"Tuesday, 14th of June, Jesus the all beautiful came," she wrote. "He bore in His hands the Crown of Thorns and He asked me with an expression of the most gracious mildness: 'Will you comfort Me?'

"Of course, I assented at once . . . and He continued: 'I want you to work at bringing back to Me a much-loved soul. Direct your attention and offer all you do for him. Often present My Blood to the Father. Kiss the ground in reparation for this outraged Blood trampled underfoot by the souls I so dearly love. If you obtain leave, I will tell you all you can do for him. I shall not infringe the Rule or any observance.' "

Our Lord's attention to the observance of the Rule kept Josefa ever on the straight path.

"Have you leave from the Mother Assistant?" He said to her after Communion the next day.

"Thou knowest, dear Lord, that her one wish is to please Thee."

"I know it, but you must first submit to the will of your Superior, even before you do what I Myself ask you."

Then He laid out a plan for days of oblation:

" 'When you awake, enter at once into My Heart, and when you are deep down in It, offer My Father all your actions united to the beating of My Heart. Unite all your actions to Mine, so that it will no longer be you, but I, that act in you.

" 'During Mass, present this soul that I want to save to My Father, so that He may pour over him the Blood of the Victim that is about to be immolated.

" 'When you go to Holy Communion, offer the divine wealth you then possess to pay that soul's debt.

" 'During your prayer, place yourself beside Me in Gethsemane, share My anguish, and offer yourself to My Father as a victim ready to endure all that your soul is able to bear.

" 'When you take your food, think that you are giving Me that alleviation and do the same whenever you take pleasure in anything whatsoever.

" 'Do not be separated from Me even for one instant. Often kiss the ground. Do not omit to make the Stations a single day. If I need you, I will tell you.

" 'Look solely to My will in all you do and accomplish it with the greatest submission.

" 'Humble yourself profoundly, but always joining confidence and love to your humility.

" 'Do everything out of love, and do not lose sight of what I suffered for souls.

" 'During the night you will rest in My Heart. Mine will hearken to the beats of yours which will stand as so many acts of love and desire. Thus you will bring back to Me that soul that so offends Me.'

"I asked Him to be indulgent with me, if one or other of these points is not done exactly as He wishes, for I am very weak.

"In the evening, during my adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, He came with bleeding hands and feet, and looking up to heaven. He said: 'Offer My Father the divine Victim and the Blood of My Heart for that soul.'

"He repeated the same words three times. I told Him of my desire to comfort Him and to carry out all He had explained to me.

" 'Do not be over-anxious; you possess My Heart for all I ask you to do.' "

Josefa was learning how great is the price of a soul's salvation. For many weeks to come she was associated with Christ's offering and redemptive sufferings, and step by step she followed the return of the wandering soul.

On Friday, the 17th of June, she asked Our Lord whether it would console Him if she did a certain secret little act which she confided to Him, and as He expressed His joy at it: "Why did you not tell me sooner, dear Lord?"

"Listen, Josefa, if your father is thirsty and asks you for a glass of water and you give him one, he is grateful. But supposing he asked for nothing, and that of yourself you thought of relieving his thirst, how pleased he would be to feel that his child was trying by all means to comfort him.

"I have already told you that whatever you do for love of Me, however small in itself, will give Me much pleasure, and will be of great price for yourself and for souls. Now give Me your heart, that I may there take My rest. When I need you, I will tell you. Now, say once more that you love Me for those who offend Me."

This love of Josefa was shown chiefly by her courage under suffering. For the last few days a violent pain in her left side had been added to the many sufferings that were wearing her down. At times she was hardly able to breathe. Efforts to relieve her were quite ineffectual and the doctor's diagnosis did not reveal anything abnormal. But in her heart she feared that this pain might be an obstacle to her religious life.

Again she turned to Mary and confided to her maternal Heart this anxiety, which far more than the pain oppressed her.

On Monday, 20th June, she was praying in the Noviceship oratory:

"Suddenly Our Lady came, and said sweetly to me: 'Do not be anxious, daughter . . . tell your Mother that there is nothing to be afraid of. That pain is a spark from my Son's Heart. When it is more intense, offer it up, for it signifies that at that moment a soul is offending Him grievously. Do not fear pain; it is a treasure both for you and for souls.'

"She gave me her blessing and was gone."

That same evening, in the refectory, faithful to her Master's injunction—

"I was offering up my food to Our Lord as He had taught me to do," she wrote, "when suddenly I saw Him, and He said sadly:

'Yes, give Me to eat, for I am hungry . . . give Me to drink, for I am thirsty. You know well what I am hungry and thirsty for . . . souls . . . the souls I love so much. *You* can give Me to drink.'

"He stayed all through the meal. Then He said: 'Come with Me ... do not leave Me alone.' "

He was planning for her to follow Him along a path of increased pain, and the next day He manifested Himself to her during her thanksgiving: "Offer everything to My Father in union with My sufferings. I will make you spend three hours every day in the dire distress and anguish of My Cross, and it will profit that soul exceedingly."

Josefa never hesitated to accept these missions of suffering. Though she dreaded the favours, the responsibility of which was ever present to her mind, she was ready to take on herself the Cross which was destined to save souls. This Our Lord knew, and He counted on her, and made further demands on her generosity.

On Thursday, 23rd June, at Holy Mass, He appeared again:

" 'Today, I want you to get leave to make a Holy Hour. You will offer that sinner to the Eternal Father, reminding Him that it was for him that I suffered the agonies of Gethsemane. You will offer Him My Heart and your sufferings united to Mine. . . . Tell your Mother that these pains are a trifle in comparison with the joy which will be Mine when that soul returns to Me.'

"That night," continued Josefa, "I awoke, as the pain was very severe, and soon after, Jesus came, crowned with thorns: 'I come that we may suffer together.'

"He joined His hands and remained long in prayer. If only you could see how beautiful He is, Mother! His eyes look heavenward, and there is such mournful sadness on His countenance . . . a luminous ray fell on His face, a sort of reflection of heaven."

Many days and nights passed. Josefa noted down visits from her Master, who told her again and again of His thirst for souls and of His hopes. She, so to speak, watched this pursuit of love which tracked the path of a soul in peril. But while He made her responsible before God, Jesus wanted her collaboration with Himself to be entirely disinterested. When she asked Him whether the sinner was nearer conversion, He answered her on Tuesday, 28th June, while she was busy working:

" 'Mark My words, Josefa: if you are really desirous of pleasing Me, do not concern yourself with anything else than suffering, while giving Me all I ask of you, without trying to know the "how" and the "when".'

"That night," her notes continued, "Wednesday, 29th June, as I was about to go to bed, I told Our Lord that I was, as always, at His beck and call. It was about eleven o'clock, I think, when I awoke, as has happened the last few nights. I felt myself plunged in fire. I cannot explain how, and I could find no relief for a great pain which increased in severity at every movement I made.

"At two in the morning, suddenly Our Lady came. She carried in her hands a white veil which she spread over my bed, and the pain vanished. She stood looking at me with an expression of deep sadness, and as she did not speak I said something about that soul and begged her to ask Jesus to remove from him the occasions of sin and to give him the grace and strength to cast sin away. Her eyes filled with tears and she replied: 'Oh, how low he has fallen . . . he let himself be deceived like a lamb . . . but take courage, do all My Son tells you, and ask Him to load on you the punishment that that sinner deserves. If you do this, divine justice will spare him. Do not shrink from suffering, Josefa, you will never lack the strength you need, and when you can bear it no longer, I myself will give you courage and relief. I am the Refuge of Sinners; that soul will not be lost.' "

The next day, Thursday, 30th June, Our Lord appeared to Josefa after communion and showed her the wounds in His hands and feet, and taught her to discover the invisible wound of love. "Look at My wounds," He said. "Adore them . . . kiss them . . . they were caused not by souls, but by love."

And as she was mute, not knowing what to say, He repeated: "Yes, they are caused by the love I have for souls ... a love of compassion for sinners. . . . Ah! did they but know . . ."

Then, in silence, Josefa let her Master stamp that invisible wound on her soul, so as to share it with Him, and relieve His pain. "The greatest reward I can give a soul," He continued, "is to make her a victim of My love and mercy, rendering her like Myself, who am the divine Victim for sinners."

"As during the last days, He seemed heavy and afflicted; but with a sadness that invested Him with a new beauty beyond my power to express . . . all about Him captivates! He raises His eyes to heaven, and when He lowers them to look at me they are wet with tears. I think these tears are more from love than from pain. His feet are pierced and so are His hands. He extends them towards me when He wants me to kiss them and this seems to comfort Him.

"Since He spoke to me of this sinner, neither He nor Our Lady have come near me . . . this is keen suffering, but for the last fifteen or twenty days my soul has a sort of attraction for suffering. It used to frighten me, and when Jesus told me He had chosen me as His victim, my whole being quivered. Now it is different. There are days, of course, when the pain is so great that unless He sustained me I could not bear it and survive, for not a single member of my body is spared . . . nevertheless my soul longs to bear more, were it possible, though not without resistance in my lower nature. When I begin to feel these pains coming on, I tremble, and instinctively recoil; but there is strength in my will that accepts, that wills and desires to suffer more, so that if at that moment I were given the choice of going to heaven or continuing to suffer, I should infinitely prefer to remain on earth, that I might console His Heart, although I am burning to go to Him. I know that it is Jesus who has effected this transformation in me and that He is tenderly concerned about me, and this makes me very happy and grateful."

On the first of July, Feast of the Precious Blood, and the First Friday of the month, Our Lady came to put her in mind of the redemptive value of His Blood, which she must make use of for the sinner.

"Adore the Precious Blood of my Son, daughter," she said to her, "and beg of Him to pour it on that soul, that he may be touched, forgiven, and purified . . . entrust him to his Angel Guardian from six to half-past six to-night and pray hard for him."

The next day, Saturday, 2nd July, towards evening, Jesus appeared to her; His hands and feet were still torn and wounded.

"How marvelously beautiful His face was," noted Josefa, "and especially His Heart . . . how much I feel not being able to approach Him . . . but to-day He did not even allow me to kiss His wounds. He merely said: 'Are you ready to comfort Me?'

"His look was indescribable . . . His eyes speak! Then He said: 'You slake My thirst, Josefa, you give Me to drink. . . . To-night, for three hours, I will make you share My agony. Offer yourself now to My Father, that He may discharge His wrath upon you.'

"When He had said this, He joined His hands and looked heavenwards; and after a moment of silence. He left me."

Thus, as day succeeded day, Josefa was kept face to face with her mission.

"Do not stop uniting your actions to Mine and offering My precious Blood to My Father. . ." "Never forget that you are the victim of My Heart."

But Our Lord was far from confining Josefa's horizon to one soul, and on Friday, the 8th of July, He entrusted to her two other souls of whom he said: "See how they pierce My Heart and rend My hands."

He returned again during her adoration: "Look at My Heart. It is all love and tenderness, but there are those who do not recognize this."

Before leaving, He added: "I shall often come back till those two souls are converted. When you are in pain, I rest, and My Heart rejoices in converse with you. Have no fear, for My visits will never harm you; you are in My hands and I will guard you, provided you refuse Me nothing."

We can easily conjecture the energy and generosity of effort that were required of Josefa to carry on this twofold life: on the one hand, days and nights passed in contact with the invisible, which entailed so great a sacrifice; on the other, the fidelity with which she kept to her work and to the Rule. With matchless kindness Our Lord allowed her to share in His joys as Saviour.

"He came during my adoration, so beautiful," she wrote on Saturday, 9th of July, "and He said to me: 'See, Josefa, one of those two souls has at last given Me what she had so long refused Me, but the other is very near being lost unless she succeeds in seeing her utter nothingness. . . "

Then, Josefa asked Him if He was referring to the sinner who had so long occupied His Heart. "No," answered the Master, "he is very near victory, and will soon cast the peril far from him, and that is how I draw good even from great falls."

The very next day, Sunday, 10th July, Our Lord came to urge her to further efforts. He showed Himself to her after communion and spoke of the second of the two who still resisted His loving invitations, and who, through pride, was in such grave danger of eternal loss.

"Yes, offer yourself to obtain her forgiveness. A soul will profit even after the greatest sins, if she humbles herself. It is pride that provokes My Father's wrath, and it is loathed by Him with infinite hatred."

"I am in search of those who will humble themselves to repair for this pride," He said again, the following evening nth July. "Try to make many acts of humility, Josefa, and do not count the cost. If you but knew how pleasing such acts are to Me."

Then, He left, with these parting words: "Do not forget that I want you to surrender everything to My Heart."

On Tuesday, 12th July, she wrote:

"At about four in the afternoon He returned. His face was so grave and beautiful, and there was a gaping wound in His Heart: 'Give Me your heart, Josefa, that I may fill it with the bitterness of My own; and offer yourself to repair the pride of that soul. Do not refuse Me anything; I am your strength.'

"He looked as though He were begging an alms, and what would I not have done to console Him! . . . I said many loving things to Him, and above all I asked for grace never to resist Him, and begged Him not to look at my wretched helplessness.

" 'What matter! Your helplessness will comfort Me. I ask only to be free to do as I please with you. I want nothing else of My chosen souls but surrender and love. . . . Yes, love for this Heart that burns with love.'

"Then glancing heavenwards, He said: 'Pride blinds her . . . she forgets that I am her God and that without Me she can do nothing. Why does she want to rise in this world? I want you often to fall down in adoration before My Father, and to offer Him the humility of My Heart. Do not forget that without Me a soul is nothing more than an abyss of wretchedness. . . . I will raise up the humble, and make little of their frailties, and even of their falls, provided they have humility and love.' "

Weeks went by without a moment's respite for Josefa. The pain in her side, the Crown of Thorns, her aching limbs, her soul burdened with the weight of divine anger . . . everything reminded her of the charge given her by Love.

Our Lady came to give her fresh courage. "For," she wrote, "I can bear no more."

"Daughter," said this compassionate mother, as she responded to Josefa's cry in the night of the 12th-13th of July, "you suffer to rest your Beloved. Surely this must give you courage. If only you knew how constantly He sustains you, never leaving you alone. Do not fear suffering."

And as the night dragged on: "Now it is four o'clock; sleep in Jesus' Heart, and in the arms of His Mother. I am with you; never fear."

So Josefa was to suffer even more; her agony increased during the ensuing days. The weakness to which she found herself reduced added to the pain she was enduring, that of not being able to keep abreast of her work. Then there was her fear of being noticed, which the devil took care to exploit, and he also tried to persuade her that all she suffered was unavailing, since those souls were not being saved. Days of obsession followed on nights of pain, humbling her and lowering her in her own eyes. Then as before, Mary came to the rescue:

"It was three in the morning," she wrote on the 22nd of July.

"Suddenly she came, and putting her two hands on my shoulders, she said: 'Child of my heart! I come to aid and assist you, for I am your mother. Nothing of what you endure is useless. You will have to go through another big trial to save that proud soul. As soon as you feel the approach of temptation, reveal it at once. Then obey, obey, obey . . .'

"I told her that these two things are what cost me most at present.

" 'Listen, Josefa; now is the time to submit your judgment to obedience, and so you will be expiating the pride of that soul. The devil has little influence over her while you struggle . . . you must suffer for souls, you must be tempted, for, mark you, the arch-fiend dreads your fidelity . . . but take courage.'

"She blessed me and disappeared."

In the early dawn, Our Lord Himself came to confirm His Mother's words. It was after her communion, purchased by such a hard fight.

"He was so beautiful," she wrote, "although He wore His Crown of Thorns and had many bleeding wounds.

" 'Look at My wounds and greet them with a kiss. Know you whence they come? Love. Know you who opened My Heart? Love. And who crowned Me with thorns? Love. If I have loved you so much as to refuse no suffering for your sake, cannot you, Josefa, suffer without refusing Me anything? . . . Abandon yourself to Me.' "

By such words, Josefa's will was linked more strongly than ever to that of her Lord. The next day, Saturday, 23rd July, He again manifested Himself to her after communion.

" 'If you but knew how many souls offend and sadden Me. That is why I am in search of victims who will comfort Me and suffer for love of Me. I have chosen you out . . . I am your God, and you belong to Me. You voluntarily made the act of surrender by which you henceforth can refuse Me nothing.'

"A little after midnight," she wrote on the same day, "when the anguish I was enduring had subsided, I knelt down, kissed my crucifix to tell Him how happy I was to have suffered for Him, and how grateful I was that once more He had sustained me. Suddenly He stood by me in all His beauty: 'The more generous you are with Me, the more so shall I be with you.' "

The divine generosity of Our Lord continued to be her support. It scattered the fears that assailed her when she found herself unable to do her work. "When you suffer, you are My comfort and repose; when you rest, I watch over you; I will allow none of all these things to be detrimental to you, for you are in My Heart."

The fruit of so much suffering had meanwhile ripened through the long weeks of oblations and struggles, as Josefa was soon to learn.

Our Lord asked her the same question as before, on the 25th July: "Are you ready to comfort Me? . . . are you prepared to suffer?"

He reminded her of their mutual promise of 5th August, 1920: "If you are faithful I will make the riches of My Heart known to you. You will indeed share My Cross, but I Myself will be your consolation, for you are My well-beloved."

Then He added significantly: "Never do I break My word."

That same evening news of the sinner came indirectly to Les Feuillants, and they were full of hope.

"I do not know how to thank enough," she wrote the next day, Tuesday the 26th of July, "all the more that I was still under the impression left on me by His words: 'Never do I break My word.'

"He came," she continued, "and said to me: 'The work is not yet completed; I shall show that soul still greater mercy. All I ask of you is to be faithful.' "

On Wednesday, 3rd of August, towards evening, Our Lord appeared radiant and said: "At last the sinner that has made Me suffer so much is in My Heart, Josefa."

The next day, it was of the soul whose pride wounded Him so grievously that He reminded Josefa: "I want that soul to return to Me as quickly as possible. Are you willing to suffer for her? . . . Offer everything you do to-day for that intention. I will return soon."

"That same evening, Jesus intimated His coming to me," she wrote, "and I went to the tribune of the Noviceship. Instantly He came. His Heart no longer bore the wound that for so long the proud soul He had told me of had inflicted on Him."

" 'Come', He said, 'draw near and rest. That soul is in My Heart . . . but she will live only long enough to purify herself from her faults, for she is so weak that she would fall again.'

"As I am more frail than anybody, I begged Him to give me the same grace, for if I am not to be faithful I prefer death a thousand times. While I was telling Him this. He kept me pressed against His Heart. I asked Him why He had been so anxious for the salvation of that particular soul?

" 'It is because she herself has been the cause of the salvation of many in the past, and they now glorify Me.' "

It was on the 14th of August that Our Lord definitely confirmed the salvation of those souls so dearly bought.

That evening Jesus said to Josefa: "That soul left by Me on earth to purify herself is now in heaven. As for the sinner, My Heart has completely won him. He will comfort Me from now on by responding to My love. And you? . . ." He continued. "Do you love Me? ... I have plans for you; plans of love . . . do not refuse Me anything."

A Religious Community

August 1921

"I wish to use you for a great undertaking"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 26th July 1921)

IN August 1921 a work of reparation in which Our Lord had invited Josefa to co-operate came to a successful end. In order to follow it from day to day, we must go back to Tuesday, 26th of July, when after communion Our Lord had asked her: "Are you prepared to follow Me faithfully?"

"I told Him my fears on account of my weakness," wrote Josefa, "but as regards my desires, He knows them well enough.

" 'I am about to make use of you for a great undertaking. You must bring back to My Heart a community that has wandered away from Me. I want these consecrated souls to come back here.'

"And He pointed to His Heart. I asked Him what I could do.

" 'Go on doing what I taught you to do for that sinner; offer all My Blood; its price is infinite.'

"He came back towards midday, bearing a heavy cross," continued Josefa.

" 'I come to bring you My Cross,' He said. 'I want to take it off My shoulders and lay it on yours.'

"Then He remained without a cross, and I was weighed down by such intense suffering that had He not given me special grace I could not have borne it.

" 'I have chosen nine souls for this work,' He went on. 'When I leave you, I will go to another, and so I shall always be comforted by one or other of My consecrated souls.'

"He remained in silence for a few minutes; then, as if speaking to Himself: 'It is true that many wound Me by their ingratitude, but there are more souls in whom I can rest and who are My delight.' "

Josefa, thus weighed down, went to her ordinary work. Her Master was still present and He said to her: "Let us work together."

As they were alone at the time, she occasionally knelt to adore Him and offer herself to His good pleasure.

" 'I want you not only to draw these souls closer to Me, but to pay their debt, so that they owe no further reparation to My Father,' He explained.

"It was four o'clock when He said to me: 'Now I am going, and I will come back when your turn comes round again.'

"He took His Cross and vanished . . . and all suffering left me.

Henceforward, these long hours of expiation recurred at fixed periods, Our Lord going from one to another of the souls He had chosen to carry His Cross. After communion on the 27th of July He appeared to Josefa: "I come to rest with you," He said. "I want you to forget yourself and to comfort Me, to think of Me so much and love Me so vehemently that I alone fill your mind and aspirations. Do not be afraid of suffering. . . . I am powerful enough to take care of you."

She at once spoke to Him of the work of love begun on the preceding day:

"And as if I had reminded Him of a great sorrow, He answered: 'It is a tepid and relaxed community . . .'

"Then, after a moment's silence, He resumed: 'But they will be Mine . . . They will return to My Heart. It is to bring them back that I have chosen nine victims. There is nothing of greater value than suffering, when united to My Heart. I shall bring you My Cross to-night. I shall come at midnight, for that is your hour when your turn comes round.' "

That same evening Our Lady came to entrust Josefa with a soul in peril:

" 'Till to-morrow I should like you to put all your enthusiasm into saving a child I dearly love,' she said. 'Jesus, casting His eyes upon her, had given her the treasure of a vocation; but she lost it by her want of correspondence. She will die to-morrow, and what pains me most is that she has thrown away her scapular. How much my heart would be comforted if this child could be saved.'

"She gave me her blessing and disappeared.

"I was unable to sleep all night, for I was in great distress at the thought of this child so near her death. Besides, there was the pain in my side, the Crown of Thorns, and all the accumulated sufferings of each night. Towards midnight Jesus came with His Cross. He stayed beside me, but without the Cross, which I felt weighing on my body as a crushing load, while my soul was oppressed with unspeakable sadness."

The weight of this invisible cross pressed on Josefa's right shoulder, and doubled her in two, almost crushing her. Her breathing, already so painful on account of the pain in her side, became more and more laboured, and efforts to help her were quite ineffectual.

"Suffer with courage," Our Lord said to her, "that My religious may let themselves be pierced by this arrow of love.'

And from His Heart there issued a ray of fire.

"Kiss My hands and My feet, and repeat after Me: 'Father, is not the Blood of Thy Son of sufficient value? What more dost Thou require? His Heart, His Wounds, His Blood . . . He offers Thee all for the salvation of these souls.' "

"I repeated the words after Him," wrote Josefa next day. "There were long pauses of silence. I think He was praying, for His hands were clasped and He was looking up to heaven . . . At four in the morning He said: 'Now I leave you, for another of My beloved ones awaits Me. You know there are nine of you . . . all chosen by My Heart. . . . I will return to-morrow at one o'clock and will give you My Cross again. . . . Adieu, I was thirsty and you have slaked My thirst. I shall be your reward.' "

On Friday, 29th of July, at one in the afternoon, as He had said, Jesus returned with His Cross. "I have come," He said, "to make you share in the bitterness of My Heart, which is oppressed with sorrow."

He gave her His Cross, which at once plunged her whole being into the pain she had already experienced these last two days.

"Much blood poured from the wound in His Heart," she wrote.

" 'Repeat after Me,' He told her: ' "Eternal Father, look upon those souls reddened with the Blood of Thy Son Jesus Christ, the Victim which is unceasingly offered Thee. Will this Blood which purifies, burns and consumes, be powerful enough to touch these souls? . . .'"

"He remained in silence for a few minutes. I repeated the words several times; then He spoke with energy: 'Yes, I want them to return to Me. I want them to burn with love, while I am consumed for them with sorrowful love.'

"Then He added sadly: 'Ah, if souls only understood how ardently I desire to communicate Myself to them! But how few do understand . . . and how deeply this wounds My Heart.'

"I comforted Him as best I could, and begged Him to forget for a while the souls that grieved Him, and to think rather of those that love and console Him. His Heart seemed to expand at these words.

" 'I am the one joy of souls. Why do they go away from Me?'

" 'Dear Lord, all do not go away . . . and if we often fall, it is because of our frailty. . . . Thou knowest it well!'

" 'I would condone their falls . . . and I am not unmindful of their wretchedness, but what 1 want is that they should not remain deaf to My appeal and that they should not turn away from the arms outstretched to raise them up.'

"From one to four in the afternoon I spent in offering His Blood and all His merits to the Father, and in repeating the prayer He had taught me."

In the silence that surrounded her, Josefa resumed her work as soon as Jesus had taken away His Cross, but her soul still bore the dolorous impress of the secret imparted to her by Our Lady.

Her hour of guard recurred on the evening of Saturday, 30th of July:

"I was going up the school stairs, when I met Him with His Cross. He told me that He was waiting for me. After asking His leave to put away the work I was carrying," she continued, "I went to the room where I sleep, and found Him waiting."

Then, she spoke to Him of the soul that had been unfaithful to her vocation, and had been placed in her keeping by Our Lady.

Since the day before, when the fury of the devil had made her suffer much, she knew through Our Lady that this much-loved child had escaped the infernal assaults. But during the preceding night she had appeared to her in the pains of purgatory, begging her intercession that her sufferings might be shortened. Josefa was much affected by this first contact with purgatory, and she confided her fears to Our Lord: "Lord, if a person of the world can suffer such torments, what must not a religious endure? That is, if she does not use the graces she receives in such abundance. . . ."

"Quite true," was the reply.

Then with great tenderness He comforted her:

" 'When one of My religious falls, I am always there to raise her up, if she humbles herself lovingly. A soul's wretchedness matters little provided her one desire is to glorify and console Me. In her very lowliness she obtains many graces for others.

" 'I love humility . . . and it is pride that turns so many away from Me.

" 'I want your sacrifices and zeal to draw souls, especially consecrated ones, to My Heart. I want your desire to see Me loved and to gain souls to Me to consume you, and your love to comfort Me.'

"He then kept silence for a long time, and I said everything I could to comfort Him . . . and I spoke to Him of a soul that needs His help.

" 'If she does not look for strength in My Heart, where will she find it? Love gives strength, but self must be forgotten."

"Then I said: 'Lord, forgive us; we are so feeble.'

" 'When a soul ardently desires to be faithful to Me, Josefa, I uphold her in her weakness, and even her falls are a call on My mercy and clemency. But she must forget herself, and make efforts in all humility, not for her satisfaction, but for My glory.' "

This promise of mercy ever granted to human weakness was given to Josefa at the very moment when she was to experience her own frailty once more.

The long hours spent under the cross did not lessen her courage, but they did weigh on her longing to be at work and devote herself—longing that never left her. She complained of it, alas, to the Master. He vanished instantly and did not return at the hour He had indicated as her time on guard. She was heart broken, for she had not realized what the consequences of this impulse of nature were to be. But while He left her to her desolation, Our Lord, who well knew her love, did not lose sight of her, and before long He sent her His Mother.

"On Tuesday, the 2nd of August, at about seven o'clock in the evening, I went up to the oratory of Our Lady in the Noviceship, and asked her to obtain my forgiveness from Jesus . . . for one day without Him seems an age, when suddenly she came with all her wonted tenderness.

" 'Daughter, is it true that you do not want My Son's Cross any longer?'

" 'O! Mother, you know that I cannot live without Him.'

" 'Then go downstairs; He is waiting for you.'

"I went down at once; Jesus was there with His Cross. I do not know how I had the courage to ask Him for it. . . . He looked at me and said: 'Do you freely ask for My Cross?'

"I begged Him to have pity on me, and to restore my greatest treasure to me. . . . 'Lord! pay no attention to what I say when I am tempted, and do not forsake me. . . .'

" 'I left you to yourself, Josefa, that you might see how little you can do without Me . . . now do not think of it any more. Take My Cross, and let us go together to labour for souls. . . .'

"He gave me His Cross and Crown of Thorns, and remained in prayer to the end of the four hours."

We have now reached the 3rd of August, when Jesus, having conquered the sinner that had cost Josefa so much suffering, appeared, saying: "That sinner is now in My Heart."

That same evening, on going to the dormitory, as she drew back the curtain of her cubicle she found her Master with His Cross waiting for her there.

"Take My Cross," He said. "I come to rest in you. Ah, if religious souls but knew how great My love for them is and how they wound Me by their coldness and tepidity! These souls do not know the dangers they run by neglecting their faults. They begin by a small infidelity and end by relaxation. To-day, they grant themselves a slight indulgence; to-morrow, they are deaf to an inspiration of grace, and little by little without realizing it they allow their love to grow cold."

And to make Josefa realize where alone lie the safeguards of fidelity, He gave her this valuable lesson: "I will tell you now, Josefa, how to open your heart to your Mother in all simplicity and humility."

Then He went into details as to how the open-hearted avowals He insisted on were to be made: "I want you to be holy, very holy, and you will only become so by the path of humility and obedience. . . . I will show you all this by degrees. . . ."

Before leaving her, He concluded with these words: "I advise you always to keep before your eyes, and rooted in your heart these two important principles. First: God has specially cast His eyes on you, to manifest His power the better, by raising a great edifice on foundations of utter insufficiency. Second: If He wants to lead you to the right and you insist on going to the left, the loss of your soul is assured. Lastly, Josefa, let the result of all this be a deeper consciousness of your own powerlessness and a more complete surrender of yourself into the hands of your God."

This lesson of confidence and humility is so dear to the Heart of Jesus that He will come back upon it many a time yet.

The following counsels found in Josefa's notes and carefully preserved by her are enlightening.

"I wish to make known to you the most intimate attractions of My Heart. I have already told you with what simplicity you must confide in your Mother and open your soul to her without allowing yourself the smallest reservation in your avowals. To-day I wish to advise you never to lose an occasion of humbling yourself. When you are free to make or not make one of these costly acts, go and do it.

"I want you to give a fortnightly account to your Mother of the efforts you have made, and of the occasions you have either made use of or lost. The better you know what you are, the better you will know what I am.

"Never go to rest at night with the slightest shadow obscuring your soul. This I recommend to you with great insistence. When you commit a fault, repair it at once. I wish your soul to be as pure as crystal.

"Do not let your falls, however many, trouble you. It is trouble and worry that keep a soul from God. Beg pardon, and I say again, tell your Mother at once. . . .

"I want you to be very little and very humble, and always gay. Yes, I want you to live in joy, while endeavouring all the time to be something of an executioner to self. Often choose what costs you, but without loss of joy and gladness, for by serving Me in peace and happiness you will give the most glory to My Heart."

This very clear statement kept Josefa in the straight path and at the same time taught her that it was the only one in which, following their Master, the workers of His Redemption must tread.

Thus the "great undertaking"—for this was Our Lord's name for it—went on. Josefa continued to carry the cross which Jesus gave to the nine chosen souls in turn, so that the consecrated souls He was pursuing might be brought back to fervour. This work was, however, about to be completed.

During Mass on the 5th of August He came resplendent in beauty:

" 'I want you,' He said, 'to burn with love of Me. I have already made it clear to you that you will find happiness nowhere but in My Heart. I want you to love Me . . . I hunger for love . . . but I also want you to burn with desire to see Me loved, and this must be the one food of your soul.'

"I said many endearing things to Him, and Jesus continued: 'Every day after communion repeat with all the fervour of which you are capable: "Heart of Jesus, may the whole world be set on fire with Thy love."

It was in this kind of fiery fervour that she spent the day "full of ardent desires" as she herself noted.

Towards nightfall she went up to the dormitory. Jesus was waiting for her: "Take My Cross and let us go and suffer for souls."

After a moment's silence, He added: "If My consecrated souls have reflected that I am all love, and that My supreme desire is to be loved in return, why do they treat Me as they do?"

Then He explained to Josefa how love enhances the smallest acts:

" 'When a soul does a costly act out of self-interest or to please herself, but not out of love, she gains little merit. On the other hand, a very little thing offered with great love consoles My Heart so much that It inclines towards her, and forgets all her worthlessness.

" 'Yes,' He repeated, 'My one desire is to be loved. If souls but knew the excess of My love they would not disregard it . . . that is why I go seeking them out and spare nothing to get them to come back to Me.'

"He said all this in a very moving way; it was a veritable cry of love; then He remained long in silence, as if in prayer. At eleven o'clock. He left me, saying: 'Suffer with great love . . . never cease offering My Blood for souls. And now give Me back My Cross.'"

Three days passed during which besides the mysterious pains that associated Josefa with the Cross of Christ, a costly offering had been asked of the whole house: the changes usual in all religious congregations now demanded of Les Feuillants the sacrifice of their Superior. Josefa, with all her Mothers and Sisters, shared in this meritorious offering, and Our Lord used it to finish His work.

Monday, 8th August, was to be for Les Feuillants one of those days treasured by the Heart of Jesus when Mothers and Sisters, united in the fervent offering of a costly sacrifice, bid good-bye to one they love.

After communion Our Lord showed Himself to Josefa: "Those souls must come back to Me without further delay. Pray hard that they may allow grace to penetrate them. Although you can do no more than desire to see Me loved, this is already much. It relieves My Heart. For this longing is love. Those religious are soon going into retreat; offer yourself, that love may pierce them through and through."

That evening at seven o'clock, Jesus returned, this time without His Cross, His Heart and Wounds shining brightly. Josefa hardly dared believe in the hope, which she felt, at the sight of the radiance of His sacred face. She asked for the Cross.

"No," He answered, "these souls no longer wound My Heart. I accepted for their benefit the sacrifice made by this household to-day, for I found much love here. To-morrow that religious community will go into retreat, and soon will become for My Heart a refuge of much consolation."

Thus ended this tale of divine mercies. Josefa, too, was about to enter on a new phase of her life.

CHAPTER V

SEARCHING TRIALS

Fresh Trials

26th August-October 1921

"Do not be afraid of suffering. If you could but see how many souls have come back to the Heart of Jesus while you were tempted"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 24th October 1921)

OUR Lord's admirable plan for Josefa's life brought her to a new phase at this time:

At the end of August 1921 a more stringent dependence was imposed on her, and we see this reflected in her notes. She was told not to respond to the appeals of her Master outside the times of common prayer, without a special permission. Perhaps this order indicated a certain doubt about her state in the mind of those over her. . . . The new Superior of the house who, by the express wish of Our Lord, had been fully informed on her arrival of all that was taking place, felt it to be her duty to spare no pains to guarantee the authenticity of the mysterious path into which God was leading Josefa, and it seemed to her that prudence prescribed a wise delay and much circumspection. Josefa submitted with her whole heart to all the directions of obedience. She knew the Heart of Christ too well to allow a doubt to cross her mind or shake her confidence; she knew too the exacting fidelity her Master expected of her in connection with His great undertaking. No hesitation, therefore, troubled for a moment her supernatural and simple obedience to the decisions of her Superior. But great was the cost to herself, reserved as she was in this domain, to be obliged to speak, explain, answer questions, and henceforth submit all to the twofold control of both Mothers, and feel by the very fact that she was under stricter observation.

Nevertheless, all in Josefa's life was divinely linked together. In that very hour God's action appeared so evident that no lasting doubt about this child of His was found possible. God gave the authentic sign by her fidelity and detachment that nothing was able to impair. Then too the devil, to whom was given the dreaded power of sifting the precious wheat of these acts of divine love, found that Our Lord had surrounded His work with a rampart of protection, which in the event was able to resist all the attacks of the enemy.

Thus a new and unpredictable phase of her life opened for Josefa, which was to end in the happy day of her First Vows.

Les Feuillants was a big household, where children abounded, and there in the midst of a numerous community, although Josefa was the eldest member of the little Noviceship, she remained in complete effacement, laborious and devoted as ever. The Superior and the Mother Assistant alone were the guardians of the secret work accomplished under their eyes. But the sure and vigilant support of Rev. Father Boyer O.P., Prior of the Dominicans, who was

appointed by Our Lord Himself to cooperate in His designs, laid many anxious fears to rest, and unmasked the snares of the evil one.

So, enveloped by all these guarantees and safeguards, Josefa was led by Our Lord into the dark night of her greatest trial, one which would end only on the day of her religious consecration (July 1922). It was a baptism of pain which bound her to the redemptive work of which she was to be the witness and collaborator, before becoming its messenger.

The hour of the Prince of Darkness had struck, and Josefa entered the lists against him. She was now to meet him at every turn. But Our Lord fought in her, and was preparing the most humiliating of defeats for Satan. He would make him feel the limit of his efforts, the stupidity of his futile devices and the impotence of his guile. If at times He left the devil an appearance of facile triumph, if He abandoned Josefa to the wiles of an adversary who seemed to master her, if He allowed her descent into the bottomless pit. He nevertheless remained in possession of the soul which He had made His willing victim and sustained her by the fidelity of His love. Never was He more present within her than in the hours of her martyrdom, when alone the divine power could act as a counterpoise of trials and humiliations that escape ordinary human experience. By means of the frail instrument that Josefa was, we can see a combat between God and Satan, between charity and hatred, between merciful love yearning to make its affection known to mankind and the enemy of souls whose awareness of a heavenly scheme made him rage against it with satanic fury.

All the demon's efforts during that long period of nine months were centered and concentrated on the destruction of Josefa's religious vocation before it was too late. He spared nothing to bend her to his will: violent temptations, fear of a crushing responsibility by which he terrified her, perfidious falsehoods that alarmed her conscience, obsessions that, so to speak, endowed her with a dual personality, and made her think what she did not believe, and do what she did not want to do, without allowing her at the time to discern that she was under diabolic domination; deceptive and menacing appearances, blows, abductions, and burnings . . . all were hurled at the frail child, as a tornado, in which it would seem she must suffer shipwreck.

That she did resist with incredible energy, was surely a result of her habitual simplicity in the performance of duty, and still more of her loyalty and obedience in letting herself be guided. Above all, she was sustained by a divine strength which never forsook her, though it was veiled at times, and by the power of the Blessed Sacrament imparted to her by her daily communions.

During the last days of August occasional celestial visitations were granted to her, bracing her will for the struggle ahead.

On Friday, 26th of August, at nine in the morning Josefa, faithful to the instructions she had been given, knocked at her Superior's door. She was wrapt in recollection which gave the impression that she was accompanied by an invisible Presence. In a few words she asked leave to follow Our Lord for a few minutes.

"For," she said, "He is here."

Her lowered eyes, the expression of her face, her prayerful attitude, the effort those few words had cost her, spoke for themselves.

"As I left you, Reverend Mother," she wrote later, "I said to Our Lord: 'I have permission.' He was walking beside me and He led me to the tribune. I began by saying what you had told me to say: 'If Thou art really He whom I believe Thee to be, Lord, deign not to take offence if I am made to ask leave every time, before listening to Thee and following Thee.' He replied: 'I am not offended; on the contrary, I want you always to obey and I also will obey.'

"He looked like a poor man when He said this, then He added:

'Your Superiors please Me in ascertaining with so much earnestness whether or not it is I. Remain united to Me all day, and repair for many souls, Josefa.' "

With incomparable sweetness Our Lord consented to submit to the requirements which henceforth surrounded His visits. This fidelity of His Heart, fortifying that of His child, put the seal of divinity on His presence; moreover, during the months of August and September 1921, while bowing to the restrictions imposed, He changed nothing in His intercourse with Josefa and continued as before to ask her for the help of her offerings for souls.

"On Thursday, 1st September," wrote Josefa, "He came after communion. When He began to speak His voice was very sad.

" 'I want you to comfort Me,' He said. 'Great is the coldness of souls . . . and how many blindly throw themselves into hell. I should like to leave you My Cross as I used to do.'

"Afterwards, when I had asked leave, He led me to the oratory of Saint Stanislaus and there He said: 'If I were unable to find souls to solace Me and draw down mercy, justice could no longer be restrained.'

"A little later, He continued: 'My love for souls is so great that I am consumed with desire to save them. But O! how many are lost, and how numerous are those who are waiting for the sacrifices and sufferings that are to obtain for them the grace to forsake their evil ways. . . . However, I still have many souls who love Me and belong to Me. A single one of them can purchase pardon for a great many others who are cold and ungrateful.

" 'I want you to burn with desire to save souls. I want you to throw yourself into My Heart and to make My glory your sole occupation.

" 'I will return this evening, that you may slake My devouring thirst and I shall take My rest in you.'

"At the beginning of the Holy Hour, He returned, as He had said:

" 'Let us go and offer ourselves as victims to My Eternal Father. Let us prostrate ourselves in profoundest adoration in His Presence . . . and worship Him, offering Him our thirst for His glory. Make oblation and repair in union with the divine Victim.'

"He said all this very slowly, then a little before the end of the Holy Hour, He went away."

A few days later Our Blessed Lady appeared to Josefa; she came to encourage her, for Josefa was troubled by many secret conflicts.

" 'You little know how much I who am your Mother, Josefa, want you to be faithful, but not to grieve. All Jesus asks of you is surrender to His Will; He will do the rest.'

"I explained to her how much it cost me to have to tell all those things now, not only to the Mother Assistant, but to Reverend Mother as well.

" 'The more Jesus asks of you, the more you must rejoice, dear child,' answered Our Lady, and, as if to root her in humble distrust of self: 'When we look at a masterpiece, it is not the paint brush that excites our wonder, but the hand of the artist. So, Josefa, if it comes about that great things are wrought through you, do not for a moment attribute them to yourself, for Jesus alone does them—He who lives in you, it is He who uses you. Thank Him for so much goodness . . . be very faithful in little things as in great ones, without considering the cost. Obey Jesus, obey your Mothers and be humble and abandoned. Jesus is taking care of your littleness, and you know that I am your Mother!' "

On Thursday, 8th September, Our Lord allayed her fears, and gave her the secret of courage. "Let your sole occupation be to love Me; Love will give you strength."

But love, too, was to keep her ever busy about souls. "There is a soul that greatly wounds Me," He told her on Tuesday, 13th September, "and I come to get comfort from you. . . . Go and ask leave to stay with Me a little while; I will not keep you long- Do not fear if you feel utterly undone, for I want you to share the anguish of My Heart. . . . Ah! poor soul . . . she is on the brink of the abyss."

"For three hours of the night of the 14th-15th, He left me His Cross and His Crown."

The same thing happened on the following nights, and several days; Josefa thus co-operating towards the return of the erring soul. "There is more suffering for you," said Our Lord on the 22nd. "Offer all your actions bathed in My Blood, and spare yourself in nothing, for all you do will count for that soul."

Night succeeded night under the load of Christ's Cross, and as soon as she rose Josefa resumed her ordinary labour, never betraying her exhaustion.

Encouragement came to her from Our Blessed Mother Foundress. On Saturday, 24th September, she appeared to her "with a celestial smile", and after giving her one or two recommendations, concluded with:

" 'As for you, my child, great humility, obedience and love'—and putting her hand on my head," said Josefa, "she added: 'I love this house of Poitiers.' "

At the close of the night of the 24th-25th September, which was spent in terrible anguish and pain . . .

"Suddenly," Josefa wrote, "all suffering vanished. A sense of immense peace took possession of my soul. Jesus was there, resplendent in light; His raiment looked as if it were made of gold, and His Heart was ablaze.

" 'We have won that soul,' He said.

"I gave thanks and adored Him with deepest reverence, for all God's Majesty was in Him, and after asking forgiveness for my sinfulness, I begged Him to keep me faithful, for I am so weak. . . . However, He knows I have no other wish than to console and love Him.

" 'Do not worry about your miseries; My Heart is the Throne of Mercy and the most wretched are the best welcomed, as long as they come to lose themselves in the abyss of My love.

" 'My eyes are upon you because you are little and helpless. I am your strength, and now let us go and gain other souls . . . but first rest a while on My Heart.' "

This repose was not to be of long duration, and to gain other souls more than she had ever hitherto had to suffer was to be demanded of Josefa. On the same day, Sunday, 25th September, began the phase of terrifying temptations which at first remained in her silent soul, but which quickly acquired a strange influence on her mind. Writing her notes, she was at a loss to express the extent of her distress:

"I have in my imagination such horrible pictures that I don't know what to do or to think. And what makes it worse is that never before have I had this sort of temptation, nor ever in my life wanted anything else than to belong to Jesus."

"Several weeks passed in this manner and I was so disquieted that I no longer dared go to Holy Communion. Obedience helped me, and it is true to say that in the depths of my soul I could not resign myself to omit my communions."

Days and nights went by in indescribable anguish for so pure a soul, suddenly brought face to face with the sight of sin. Her greatest torment was the fear that she might be offending God, and when the Crown of Thorns which all along she had sensed on her forehead was withdrawn her anxiety increased.

"During my adoration," she wrote on Sunday, 2nd of October, "I no longer dared speak to Our Lord and I turned to His Mother to ask her to give me back the Crown which would calm me somewhat.

"She came, how good she was . . . and said: 'My daughter, it does not matter that you no longer have the Crown on your head, if you carry it in your heart. Be sure to tell your Mothers all the snares of the devil, for he will not leave you in peace, and there are still many struggles ahead of you.' "

This was true: it was a desperate fight. Under the most violent attacks of the devil, Josefa kept repeating: "I *will* be faithful or die." Soon, however, she imagined herself to be abandoned and repulsed by God.

Two or three times peace was instantly restored to her fevered mind when she remembered certain words of her Master. In these rare moments of truce her whole soul at once recaptured a love so ardent as to be inexpressible. Then, how evident her sincerity became, how well witnesses realized the martyrdom she was enduring and her attachment to the vocation which was costing her so dear and which she loved above all else in the world!

At other times her distress was so poignant that no human help was capable of releasing her spirit from the diabolic influence that held her. She was mute, crushed with sorrow. Her communions were bought at the price of a huge effort of faith and courage which at times triumphed only at the very last moment, for the devil sought desperately, though in vain, to deprive her of the Bread of Life for which her soul longed.

A month passed, and no outward sign betrayed the violence of the combat. In spite of the fact that her sufferings continued without a break, she never failed to carry out her duties and all the observances of religions life; and always she could be found, silent and courageous, at her allotted task. But the devil redoubled his attacks.

"I was desperate," she wrote on Monday, 17th October. "It was the feast of Saint Margaret Mary, and after communion I implored her to obtain for me the grace to be faithful and to die without ever being separated from Him. The whole day I continued a prey to that horrible temptation. During the night, as I was unable to sleep, I turned to Our Lady, asking her to give me light and strength, but I was suddenly seized with a sort of fury, and decided to leave all and go."

The next day she rose, still under the influence of this diabolic suggestion, the strength of which only those who witnessed it could gauge.

"At the hour of Mass I went to sweep the corridor of the cells," she wrote, "when suddenly in a flash I was encompassed with peace, and at the same time came the thought 'could I possibly do without Him?' At that moment all my temptations vanished as if they had never been. I ran to the chapel and was just in time to receive Holy Communion."

Often again in the midst of demoniacal assaults, Josefa was to be suddenly delivered, with a completeness that could be attributed only to heavenly intervention.

But not for long did the devil desist; he prowled around her, seeking to exploit any and every occasion on which her will might waver. On His side Our Lord, who knew what intense struggles still awaited her which she could not sustain unaided, urged upon her total and simple recourse to her guides, which had the effect of keeping her humble, while it doubled her power

of resistance. At the same time, He did not hide from her how great were the tribulations still awaiting her.

On Thursday, 20th October, He appeared to her with His Heart burning, and showing her a chalice which He held in His hand. He said: "Josefa, you have drunk only a small portion of it yet, but I am here to defend you."

The prospect of further heavy trials overwhelmed Josefa, and for a moment her courage wavered. How could she accept them? It was but a momentary weakening, yet how painful to her loving heart. She spent four days in very great disturbance of mind, and it was the visit of Our Lady which as usual brought her peace. "Poor child," she said, "how you suffer! Why do you not call on Jesus? Do not fear pain and suffering. I wish you could see how many souls have come back to Jesus while you were under temptation."

And the Master, ever compassionate and close to those in suffering, answered her call for pity the next day, 25th October: "I am here because I heard your call."

In the confusion of mind into which the devil threw her, Josefa, always fearful of having given in, asked piteously what she could do to repair. "There is one thing that you must do, Josefa: love, love, love!"

Love therefore remained the first and the last word of the battle in which she was about to be engaged.

Open Persecution

November 1921 – February 1922

“I will give you courage for anything I ask you to endure."

(Our Lord to Josefa, 29th November 1921)

FOR several weeks more Josefa continued faithfully drawing up the notes of all that happened to her. It was an effort of obedience all the more costly for its sincerity. Then, temptation took such a hold of her that she was no longer able to distinguish her degree of responsibility in the waverings of her will.

"From the 11th of November," she wrote, "I no longer enjoyed a single moment of peace, and both my nights and days were spent in extreme distress.'

It was at this time that the visible and sensible persecutions of the infernal spirits began. She found herself, for instance, suddenly beaten with a shower of blows, whilst praying or working; one day she was snatched from the Chapel by an invisible force, another day just as she was going in with the other novices she was forcibly prevented. Three times she tried to go forward, three times she was violently pushed aside, and only the power of obedience set her free. At the same time she was beset by temptations against purity, perseverance, and even faith, which left her prostrate and exhausted. Her love nevertheless protested and cried out courageously: "Lord! even if they kill me, I will still remain loyal to Thee."

"I was relieved," she wrote on Monday, 21st of November, "by the pact they have made me make with Our Lord, asking Him that each breath and every beat of my heart may be as so many acts of faith and love, which will speak to Him of my determination to be faithful unto death. This gave me great peace."

A heavenly ray of light pierced through her dark night. On the morning of Tuesday, 22nd November, she was, as usual, sweeping the rooms of which she had the charge, when:

"Two hands were gently pressed upon my shoulders. I turned and saw Our Lady, in all her loveliness and so motherly. My heart gave a bound of joy, and she said sweetly: 'My daughter, my poor, poor, child!'

"I begged her forgiveness and implored her to intercede with Jesus for me."

This was ever Josefa's first impulse, for the sensitiveness of her conscience always made her fear that when in tribulation she might have wounded the Heart of her Master, even without knowing it.

" 'Have no fear, Josefa,' Our Lady replied. 'Jesus has contracted an alliance of love and mercy with you. You are forgiven, and as I have already told you: I am your Mother.'

"I hardly know what I said, as I was overflowing with happiness; every time she comes I find her more motherly. I thanked her, and begged her to obtain for me from Jesus, the return of His Crown.

" 'Yes, He will give it back to you, and if He does not bring it Himself, I will do so.'

"That evening, during adoration, my beautiful Jesus came. He held the Crown of Thorns in His hands. As soon as I saw Him, I told Him how contrite I was, and added all the tenderest things I could think of, so that He would take pity on me.

"He came close to me and with loving graciousness placed the Crown of Thorns on my head.

" 'I want you to reflect deeply on the words of My Mother: "I have contracted an alliance of love and mercy with you." Does love ever grow weary or mercy come to an end?' "

Next day, 23rd of November, Our Lord reminded her that she could not rest when souls were in such distress. "I want you to snatch from the wolf's jaws a soul that is very dear to Me."

And as Josefa inquired how she was to do it: "By loving Me, humbling yourself, and letting others humble you. Look at My Heart; there alone souls can find happiness. How many turn away from Me!"

"Two days later, after communion, Jesus came in all the majesty of God," said Josefa on Friday, 25th November. "He showed me His Heart surrounded by flames, the Wound opened, and He said: 'See how My Heart is consumed with love for souls! You, too, must burn with desire for their salvation. I want you to go deep into this Heart to-day and to make reparation with It. Yes, we must repair,' He repeated. 'I am the great Victim, and you are a very little one, but if you are united to Me, My Father will listen to you.'

"After a moment or two He vanished."

On Saturday, 26th November, Josefa was working with her usual industry at the children's uniforms in the Noviceship workroom, when suddenly Jesus rejoined her.

"He was so beautiful, but He seemed sad.

" 'I want you to ask leave of your Mother that I may stay with you a few moments.'[1]

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[1] It may with reason surprise readers that on one or two occasions Our Lord, who is Master and Sovereign and needs no permission from anybody, was pleased to act with such deference towards those into whose charge He had committed Josefa. Was it not perhaps to teach her the humble submission she owed her Superiors? In any case He was only confirming His own words: "I too will obey." The lesson sank deep and bore fruit. Josefa was given it that she might transmit the message to other religious souls.

"I went at once to ask for it, then on to the Chapel of the Congregations, where He came with His Cross.'

" 'I have given you a little rest, Josefa; now let Me repose in you. I should like to give you My Cross for a few minutes. Are you willing?'

"Eagerly I answered that He could do what He liked with me, for is He not my God? And besides, I have no other wish than to love and console Him. Jesus with great kindness said to me, and His voice was so grave that it sank into the very depths of my soul: 'I have so many who forsake Me and are lost! And what wounds Me most is that they are souls whom I have chosen specially and overwhelmed with gifts. In return, they show Me only coldness and ingratitude. How few souls correspond with My love!' "

Our Lord then gave her His Cross and disappeared without another word, but the next day, Sunday, 27th, He returned at the end of Mass and said with burning eagerness: "Shall I tell you what I want? It is to envelop, consume, annihilate you that I may reign alone in you."

Then He made her rest upon His Heart:

" 'Where else could you experience the peace I give you? Yet you have not yet tasted real sweetness; you shall, when . . .'

"Then the bell rang, and Jesus went away, leaving the rest unsaid."

Monday 28th November, Josefa noted in a few laconic words the trial that henceforth was to leave her no respite. Fresh power had been granted to Satan, and for the first time she heard the raucous voice that was so often to pursue her, night or day, in the corridors, in the noviceship, in the workroom and dormitory: "You will be one of us ... we shall tire you out . . . we shall overcome you . . ." She was terrified by it, but bore up bravely.

That evening she wrote:

"During adoration Jesus came with His Cross. I asked Him to let me have it, and He answered: 'Yes, that is why I have come. Give Me rest, and make reparation for all that My souls refuse to give Me. How many are not what they ought to be!'

"He left me His Cross for an hour, and when He took it back He only said: 'I will soon return.'

"That night, I think it was nearly midnight when I awoke. He was there: 'I bring you My Cross, and we shall go together to make reparation.'"

She owned humbly that she felt faint under the weight that was crushing her.

"I begged Him to help me," she wrote, "for He knows very well how small I am.

" 'Do not regard your littleness, Josefa; look rather at the power of My Heart sustaining you. I am your strength and the repairer of your abjectness. I will give you courage for anything I ask you to endure.'

"Then He left me alone and returned about three o'clock; 'Give Me back My Cross, I will soon return to you.' "

At daybreak on Tuesday, 29th, He brought it back during meditation. It weighed on Josefa's shoulder, while Jesus went with her to her work and to Mass. After communion He reminded her of the secret of all true generosity: "Now you have life in Me; I am your strength. Courage, then, and carry My Cross."

"I went to work, still carrying His Cross," she said simply.

Soon the infernal cries of the devil and his blows overwhelmed her. Her strength seemed suddenly to forsake her and she felt she must fall; terrified, she called on Our Lord to help her. "I was at the ironing-table," she wrote, "when suddenly He appeared in all His beauty."

She felt secure in His company and she poured into His compassionate Heart the distress which oppressed hers. Jesus listened with kindness.

" 'When the enemy tries to make you fall, tell him that you have on your side One whose support is divine.'

"Since that day," she wrote, "I suffered many things from the devil."

So far Josefa had endured only the hail of blows that shook her whole body. There was no visible trace of them, however, but after the torture she was as one crushed; it continued day and night, while the infernal voice, now insinuating, now threatening, both troubled and obsessed her.

A new torment was added in the night of 4th December. Pulled violently from her bed, she was thrown to the ground, where limp and half dead under the impact of the fiendish blows, she was made to listen to abominable blasphemies against Our Lord and Our Lady. Long hours were so spent, and the torture renewed on the two following nights. After one such terrible night, she wrote on the morning of Tuesday, 6th December:

"Unable to bear any more, I knelt beside my bed, endeavouring to forget the horror of that malevolent voice insulting Our Lord and Our Lady. Suddenly I heard gnashing of teeth and a yell of rage. Then all vanished and before me stood Our Lady, all loveliness.

" 'Do not fear, my daughter; I am here.'

"I told her how terrified I was of the devil, who made me suffer so much.

" 'He may torment you, but he has no power to harm you. His fury is very great on account of the souls that escape him . . . souls are of such great worth . . . If you but knew the value of a soul. . . .'

"Giving me her blessing, she said: 'Do not fear.' I kissed her hand and she went away."

After this maternal reminder of the great worth of a soul, and of the great price that must be paid for it, the Mother and Son disappeared for a time from Josefa's dolorous path, and the devil alone remained on the scene. She wrote nothing more about her daily encounters, through which, by one torment after another, her generous love was ripening and being strengthened.

Although Josefa wrote nothing, the account of this phase of her life was noted day by day, as the facts were revealed. This allows us to glance back over events and endeavour to gauge the poignant reality of her sufferings.

On Tuesday, 6th December, as she was coming out of the Chapel where she had just been to confession, Josefa was suddenly faced, for the first time, with an infernal vision; a huge black dog, whose open jaws sent forth flames, barred her passage and tried to throw itself upon her. She did not draw back, but braved the oncoming beast, notwithstanding the terror that seized her; grasping her rosary, and stretching it out before her, she went her way.

From that day on the devil appeared visibly to her; sometimes a menacing hound that pursued her in the corridors, at others a serpent coiled up in front of her. Soon the apparition took on a human form, more to be dreaded than any other.

On Saturday, 18th December, surrounded by light partly dulled by smoke, he presented himself before her, to her extreme dismay, and an heroic struggle began. This hideous monster spared nothing to besmirch the purity of the frail child, whose strength lay in Him who had promised never to forsake her.

These encounters increased in number from day to day, without succeeding in modifying in any way her fidelity and devotedness; but God knows at what a price, and what courage she displayed!

The hour was about to strike when a more intense trial would call for still greater abandonment.

On Wednesday, 28th December, she was returning in the evening from the work she had been doing with the other novices, when she abruptly found herself face to face with the arch-enemy. With lightning-like rapidity and as though she had been a bit of straw, he carried her off and threw her down in a loft which was difficult of access and at the other end of the house. Josefa never had a moment's peace after that day. The devil seized her when and how he willed, scorning all supervision and baffling every attempt to guard her, with the one exception of God's care. These abductions became more numerous; under the very eyes of her Mothers, who tried not to lose sight of her, she suddenly disappeared, impossible to say how, for it all happened in a flash. After searching everywhere, they might find her in some remote corner of the house where the demon had carried her to persecute her. Often he rolled, pressed, almost crushed her under beams, in some loft, or under a bed, or in some inaccessible hole where she could never have managed to get alone. Sometimes it was not possible to find her in the big rambling house of Les Feuillants. Nights passed during which she had to be abandoned to the care of God only. But He who loved her so much was aware and watchful. He meant to show that He was the Master, and that He reserved this divine guardianship to Himself. When His hour struck He intervened to claim His rights. The devil was forced to unloose his hold, and with blasphemous execrations he

relinquished his victim—God's might had made the infernal attempt fail. Then Josefa stood up once more, worn out indeed, but conscious of all; her courage revived and she prayed and resumed her interrupted work. The enemy never succeeded in overcoming her unconquerable energy, and the frail creature, clothed with the strength of God, was sheltered by His love.

The fury of Satan increased tenfold in the face of this unexpected resistance. He tried to reveal to all eyes her sufferings which had hitherto remained secret, but in spite of his efforts no one ever became aware of Josefa's disappearances, and no one, except the two Mothers, ever found her in the holes or corners where sometimes she lay for long hours, persecuted by the evil one.

From time to time a bright interval lighted up her dark and murky way, then, out of obedience, Josefa resumed her notes:

"On the 1st of January 1922," she wrote, "a little after the Elevation, I heard the voice of a tiny child which filled me with delight: 'Josefa, dear little one, do you recognize me?'

"At once there stood before me Jesus; He seemed to be a child of a year old, perhaps slightly more, clothed in a white tunic rather shorter than usual. His little feet were bare, His flaxen hair shone like gold. . . . He was too lovely! I recognized Him at once and said: 'I should think I did know Thee. Thou art my Jesus, my Lord, but how little Thou art!'

"He smiled and replied: 'Yes, I am little, but My Heart is very big.'

"When He had said this He put His tiny hand on His breast, and I saw His Sacred Heart. How can I say all that I felt at such a sight. . . . O! my Lord, if Thou hadst not such a Heart, could I love Thee so much, but Thy Heart has ravished mine . . .

"That is why I wanted you to know It, Josefa," He said, with a tenderness quite impossible to render, 'and that is why I have hidden you deep down in It. . . .'

"I asked Him if all these sufferings-were at an end.

" 'No, there will be more for you to suffer. I need loving hearts and souls who will make reparation, and victims for immolation . . . but above all, souls that are entirely surrendered.' "

Then she told Him of her greatest concern, the fear that her soul had lost something of its purity, or at any rate of its former innocence. "Because I never knew anything about all those things with which the devil torments me."

Jesus replied: "Do not be afraid; your soul is steeped in My Blood, and nothing of all that can besmirch it."

Then alluding to the word which more than once in the preceding days had given her strength: "Your Mothers have found the word . . . abandonment. The devil has no power but what is given him from on high. Tell them that I am supreme."

One last word—a recommendation on the subject of humility— from the divine Child:

" 'You see how I have willed to make myself small, Josefa? It is in order to help you, too, to become very little. If I have humbled Myself to such an extent, it is only to teach you likewise to humble yourself.'

"With His little hand He blessed me, and then I saw Him no more."

Again Josefa's notes come to an abrupt end. That very night her ordeal began afresh, with greater violence than ever. Twelve days of molestation, abductions, blows, and outrages filled her soul with anguish, pain, and almost despair, yet her brave spirit remained unchanged.

On Wednesday, 11th January, her Director was sent for to listen to her and comfort her, but at that very moment the devil in triumph seized her. There was a bitter struggle, and in the end she escaped from his influence through the grace of the priestly blessing. The Father who witnessed all these tragic happenings then proposed to her to make a vow of virginity which would expire only on the day of her religious pledges. In an ecstasy of joy, Josefa knelt and promised fidelity to Our Lord until death. She offered this consecration in reparation for the insults heaped by Satan in her hearing on the immaculate purity of Our Lady.

This act, so spontaneously offered, filled her soul with peace, and that evening, endued with new strength, she faced attacks of the devil, who seemed about to take furious reprisals. But he had no strength "but that given from above" and Mary's pure foot was once more to trample on his head, as she said: "Thou shalt go no further."

"On the morning of Thursday, 12th January," Josefa noted, "just as the devil was tormenting me horribly, Our Blessed Lady appeared, and taking me by the hand, she raised me from the ground, saying: 'My daughter, there has been enough of this for the present, Jesus and I are here to defend you. Never will He abandon His beloved . . . so do not fear.'

"She blessed me and was gone."

A few minutes later, during her thanksgiving, Jesus Himself became manifest to her, and alluding to the vow taken the day before, said:

" 'Josefa, My bride, do you know what your Superiors have obtained by that vow? . . . They have constrained My Heart to have exceptional care of you. Tell them that it has given Me much glory.'

"I asked Him if the trial was over.

" 'I want you to surrender yourself either to suffer or to rejoice, and to be always ready to undergo the torments of the evil one, or receive My consolations, indifferently.' "

Thus was she kept by Our Lord to the path of abandonment, to go forward with closed eyes, confiding in Him. Father Boyer, who followed her up closely, likewise maintained her in faith and humility. "He recommended me to make myself very insignificant, placing myself at the feet of everyone, and to look on myself as the most unworthy of creatures." Our Lord Himself insisted on this same direction, so entirely in accordance with His Heart's wishes in her regard.

"Josefa," He said to her, "did you quite understand the advice given you by the Father? It is indeed My wish that you should be very, very little. I wish," He added forcibly, "that you should be humiliated and ground underfoot, that you should allow yourself to be made or unmade according to the plans of My Heart."

That same evening Our Lady for the first time gave her an intimation that her earthly life would not be of long duration.

Josefa had expressed the hope that she would never have to take back the sacrifice she had made of her country. Our Lady replied: "You will die in France, in this house of Poitiers, and that before ten years are out; and then . . . Heaven!"[1]

"I think," Josefa said a few days later, "that it was the 13th or 14th of January that the devil began once more to torture me. He tried to force me to abandon my vocation. In his increasing fury he even tried to ensnare me by taking on the appearance of Jesus Christ."

Here Josefa's notes again come to an end. From the 13th of the month Satan tried every kind of attack, though he did not succeed in shaking her, and witnesses heard her energetic protestation: "Well, then, kill me." Then, as she related, the devil transformed himself into an angel of light in order the better to seduce her, and appeared even under the lineaments of Our Lord. . . . At first she was nonplussed, but soon discovered the imposture. The words addressed to her no longer bore the impress of that lofty humility, of the strength and sweetness she was accustomed to hear from her Master's lips. Her soul recoiled before a vision that gave her no sense of security or peace.

More than once this particular trial was renewed. Josefa's humble self-distrust, her confidence in her guides, and her implicit obedience to the directions given her, saved her from this new peril. Her spiritual Director ordered her to renew her vow of virginity (until replaced by those of religion) at any and every appearance. The arch-enemy was not able to endure such acts of faith and love, and his crafty wiles failed in the face of them. He changed his attitude and aspect, became agitated and like an imposter caught in the act of deception he betrayed his guile by a sudden disappearance with blasphemous words. Later on, at the word of obedience, Josefa added to this renovation of her vow, the Divine Praises which she begged her heavenly visitants to repeat after her. Jesus Himself, His Immaculate Mother, and Saint Madeleine Sophie at once paraphrased them with incomparable ardour. The devil with his polluted lips was never able to utter such words of praise and benediction—"for he can no longer love". When unmasked thus, his furious violence was redoubled. At one time he poured out a stream of coarsest abuse, and when she refused to yield to his threats and consent to the sin to which he provoked her, nor promise forthwith to leave the convent, he revenged himself by taking possession of her mind by obsessions more dangerous still, which seemed to carry her to the very brink of despair.

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[1] On the 31st of July of this same year, encouraging Josefa to bear up in face of her great difficulties: "Before three years are out," she said, "you will already be in heaven. I tell you this to give you courage."

Notwithstanding all this, the spirit that guided her and the love that sustained her became more evident. In the midst of such a life of suffering and humiliation Josefa never exempted herself from the prescriptions of the Rule, of common life or of her allotted work. As soon as her prayer was over and she had heard Mass, she went to her sweeping and housework, and was punctually in her workroom, supervising the ironing, and in the little Auxiliary Chapel acting as sacristan; all her spare time was given to needlework and mending. Little works of supererogation, which abound in a big house like Poitiers, fell to her as of right, and in this devotedness she was of great assistance, being both active and intelligent, and still more, self-forgetful and devoted.

She made no change throughout those difficult months of December and January. As soon as the evil one loosened his hold of her, she quietly resumed her tasks with a courage that was nothing less than heroic.

Seeing her thus, ever even and unruffled, who could have imagined all she had just undergone, or what she might expect to happen at any moment? As a matter of fact, in spite of the efforts of the infernal spirits, nothing outwardly betrayed the dolorous road into which it had pleased God to direct her footsteps, and this safe custody in the hands of God was surely a sign of His presence and action.

As always, Our Blessed Lady's advent brought a gleam of peace into her dark night.

On the 3rd of February (First Friday) Father Boyer, in order to give greater stability to her vocation, at her request allowed her to add to her vow of virginity a second one, always to remain in the Society of the Sacred Heart, as long as Superiors were willing to keep her. This gave her new courage, and a still firmer determination to suffer as long as this pleased Our Lord.

On Sunday, 12th February, after a morning in which the devil had done his best to overcome her constancy, towards evening she had gone with all the novices to the Auxiliary Chapel, where Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was to be given. After the Blessing Our Lady appeared, surrounded by light and standing quite close to her. Josefa started at the unexpected joy, thrilled at the sight of her Mother . . . She had not seen her for such a long time . . . she trembled . . . hesitated . . . but peace was flooding her soul, and she heard the loved voice she knew so well: "Do not be afraid, daughter. I am the Immaculate Mother of Jesus Christ, the Mother of your Redeemer and your God."

Josefa's whole soul exulted, but faithful to the directions given, and in order to thwart any possible snare of the enemy, she said: "If you are the Mother of Jesus, allow me to renew before you the vow of virginity that I have made, until such time as I shall have the happiness of making my vows in the Society of the Sacred Heart. 1 renew also in your hands the vow to remain until death in the Society I so love, and to die rather than be unfaithful to my vocation."

Whilst speaking she was gazing spellbound on the sweet vision before her, which was regarding her with such tenderness. Our Lady placed her right hand on Josefa's head and said: "There is nothing to fear, daughter. Jesus is here to defend you and so am I."

Then, she made the sign of the cross on her forehead, gave her her hand to kiss and vanished. Josefa's troubled soul was filled with peace and joy, but her enemy was far from

disarmed. She spent the evening under a shower of blows from his malignity— yet did he not seem to know he was defeated? And though Josefa was shattered, the radiant mental picture of her Mother's smile and glance remained her comfort. For some days there was a cessation of her trials, and on the next day, Monday, 13th February, it was the voice of the Master that she heard calling:

"Come, there is no need to fear; it is I."

"Uncertain if it really were Our Lord . . ." her notes continue, "I went to tell the Mothers, and from there to the Tribune, where I found He was already waiting.

" 'Yes, Josefa,' He said, 'it is truly I, the Son of the Immaculate Virgin.' "

Never would the devil, in spite of his effrontery have dared to use such words.

" 'Lord, my only love,' I answered," wrote Josefa, " 'If it be Thou, deign to allow me to renew in Thy presence the vow I have taken for Thy sake.' He listened to me with pleasure, and when I had finished, He answered: 'Tell your Superiors that because you have been faithful to do My Will, I too will be faithful to you. Tell them that this trial is over . . . and O! what glory it has given My Heart . . . and you, Josefa' (and here He stretched out His arms and drew me close to His Heart), 'rest in Me in peace, as I reposed in your sufferings.' "

That evening Our Lord stated the conditions of that peace: "Leave Me perfectly free to act in you as I please."

Then with a gesture of indescribable love He drew her into His Heart: "Come, and take your rest here in My Heart."

"He plunged me into His Heart," said Josefa, "and the happiness I felt was surely Heaven itself . . . This lasted nearly an hour; then when about to leave me, He said: 'If you are faithful, you will live in My Heart and never leave it.' "

A Break after Trial—The Forty Hours

14th February – 3rd March 1922

"Do not think that I love you more now that I console you, than when I ask you to suffer."

(Our Lord to Josefa, 14th February 1922)

JOSEFA had now reached an oasis of peace, a break in a stormy sky, a respite between two storms; we may thus characterize the three weeks which elapsed from 12th February to 3rd March 1922.

Our Lord resumed His divine and cordial relations with Josefa, but she, who had shown herself so brave in the fight and so abandoned in pain, seemed hardly to come up to His expectations when faced with His appeals. He often stopped her in the midst of her work, and her marked attraction for common life seemed to grow each time she was called upon to sacrifice it. This ever remained the beginning of temptation, but no less the source of her humble contrition and of generous new efforts, by which the Sacred Heart of Our Lord intended to teach the world the riches of His pardons.

Josefa's notes were resumed from now on.

"On Tuesday, 14th February, I was preparing for Holy Communion during Mass," she wrote, "and hungering for His coming. A little after the Elevation, I saw Him and He said to me: 'If you are hungry to receive Me, I, too, hunger to be received by My souls. I come down to them with such joy.'

"After Communion He came, and extending His hands: 'Draw near, and kiss My Wounds.'

" 'O my Jesus, this is too great a joy!'

" 'All this sweetness is nothing to the balm your sufferings were to Me, your submission and abandonment to My will. Do not think that I love you more, now that I console you, than when I ask you to suffer.' Then after a brief silence: 'In any case I cannot leave you without suffering, but your soul must remain in peace, even in the midst of pain.' "

"That evening," she wrote humbly, "I was greatly tempted." The devil, who for a time at least had been beaten, still prowled round his victim. Josefa was very vulnerable. Her repugnance to the painful path before her revived; and she accused herself in detail of this weakness. She spent four days in hard struggle, till Jesus, full of compassion, gave her the light she needed, and with it His forgiveness.

"Poor Josefa," He said on the evening of Friday, 17th February, showing Himself to her, as in all humility she was deploring her frailty. "What would you do if you had not My Heart? . . . But the more feeble you are, the more tenderly I love you."

"I entreated Him again to give me a love true and strong," she wrote next day, "for I believe that if I really loved Him in the right way I should be better able to conquer myself. This was during my prayer, and Jesus came and said to me: 'Yes, Josefa, let your food be love and

humility. But do not forget that I want you to be always abandoned and happy, because My Heart cares for you tenderly.'

"Then I explained how sad I feel that I cannot conquer myself nor correspond to so much goodness."

" 'Never mind. Cast yourself into My Heart, and follow the guidance that is given you. That will suffice.' "

Next day, Sunday the 19th, after the Elevation at Mass, He showed her His wounds shining resplendently.

" 'This is where I attract My souls, to purify and make them burn in the tide of My love. Here they find true peace and it is from them that I expect real consolation.'

"I asked Him how we can console Him, since we are so full of miseries and weakness. He answered me by pointing to His Heart: 'I make little account of all that,' He said, 'provided souls come to Me with confidence and love. I Myself make up for all their frailty.'"

It was Carnival time, days in which so many sins are committed in the world; consequently the salvation of souls could not but be of first importance in Our Lord's daily appeals.

Thursday, 23rd February, Josefa was ironing with the other novices, when suddenly Our Lord appeared and said: "I want you to come with Me."

Always faithful, she begged to be allowed to ask leave. He followed her to the very door of her Superior's room.

"I knocked twice," she said, "but as there was no answer, I was about to go away, but He insisted: 'Knock once more.'

"When I had obtained permission, I went to the tribune, Jesus walking beside me all the way. I asked His pardon, while we walked, for having let slip so many little occasions of doing the small acts He loves. 'If you want more. Lord, tell me and I will do them.'

" 'Love, Josefa, love consoles Me. Love humbles itself. Everything lies in loving. . . . During these days when I am so sinned against I want you to be My Cyrenean; yes, you will help Me carry My Cross.'

" 'It is the Cross of love . . . the Cross of My love for souls . . . you will comfort Me and together we will suffer for them.'"

The next day Our Lady came to confirm her Son's appeal.

"I had spent the whole afternoon talking to her," wrote Josefa on the evening of Friday, 24th February. "During adoration I begged her to teach me to love Jesus. Though I desire nothing else, I am so weak that in spite of my resolves I fall so easily; it must be from want of love. I was telling her all this, when suddenly she showed herself to me, as always so motherly and lovely to behold. She seems to me more beautiful every time I see her, and she gives me more confidence

and peace every time, too; she spoke gently: 'Yes, dear child, if you are docile and generous, you will comfort His Heart and mine, and Jesus will be glorified in your wretchedness.'

"Then, laying a hand on my head, she went on to say: 'See how His Heart is outraged in the world. Do not lose any chance of making reparation these days; offer up everything for souls . . . and suffer with great love.' "

Hardly a day passed without the sins of the world being brought before Josefa's mind, through the grief of her Master.

On Saturday, 25th February, she was on her way to close the windows of the cloister of the cells, when she saw Jesus weighed down by His Cross in the oratory of Saint Stanislaus.

"I went in," she said, "and He said to me: 'Souls are crucifying Me anew; comfort Me, Josefa. My Heart is steeped in woe . . . sinners despise Me and trample Me under their feet . . . there is nothing of less value in their eyes than their Creator.'

"He left me His Cross and disappeared.

"That night, at about ten o'clock, He returned, a heavy Cross on His shoulders; He was crowned with thorns and His face was streaming with blood. 'See the state I am reduced to. . .'[1]

"At once I rose, and begged Him to take a little rest and to let me have a share in His sorrows.

" 'How many sins are committed,' He said, 'how many souls are lost . . . that is why I come to obtain relief from those who live only to comfort Me.'

"He remained a moment in silence and with joined hands. He looked so sad and at the same time so beautiful! His eyes spoke more than His lips.

"After a while, He said to me: 'Souls run to perdition, and My Blood is lost for them.'

"I offered Him all I could: the love, the acts, the sufferings of all the fervent members of the Society, of this house . . . the love of Our Lady; finally anything I thought might bring Him some alleviation.

" 'Sinners provoke the divine wrath,' He said, 'but souls that love Me are sacrificing and consuming themselves as victims of reparation, and they draw down God's mercy, and that is what saves the world.'

"After a short silence, He added: 'I am going now.'

"I begged Him to stay a little longer, since He finds repose here."

" 'I have other souls that console Me, but I will leave you a share of My sufferings.'

"He vanished. I think it must have been about one o'clock, and I kept His Cross till a little after four."

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[1] Our Lord showed Himself to Sister Josefa as actually clothed in sorrow for the sins of the present day. We know that His Sacred Humanity can no longer suffer. But He made it actual, as He had done for Saint Margaret Mary and other holy souls. Josefa made no mistake about this, and in the lucidity of her faith understood quite well how her participation in her Master's sufferings could bring alleviation to Him, to whose Heart everything was present at the time of His Passion.

The days of the Quarant'ore were beginning, always a time for very special reparation. On Sunday, 26th February, before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, the whole household was assembled in prayer: a loving Guard of Honour that longed to compensate Him for the outrages of the world. Josefa's inconspicuous figure was among them, sharing their desires and listening in their name to the secrets of her Master.

"During the nine-o'clock Mass," she wrote that Sunday, "Jesus came with a radiant Heart. . . . It might have been the sun.

" 'Behold the Heart that gives life to souls,' He said. 'The fire of this love is stronger than the indifference and ingratitude of men.

" 'Behold the Heart that bestows on the souls He has chosen a vehement desire to consume themselves, and if necessary, die to prove Me their love.'

"His words were so forcible that they went through and through my soul. Then, glancing at me, He continued: 'Sinners tear Me to pieces and fill My Heart with sorrow. . . . Will not you, My chosen little victim, repair all this ingratitude?'

"I asked Him what He would have me do, for He knows my helplessness well.

" 'My will is that you should enter deeply into My Heart to-day; there you will find strength to suffer. Do not reflect on your helplessness; My Heart is powerful enough to sustain you. It is yours; take from It all you need. Be consumed in It . . . offer this Heart and this Blood to the Eternal Father. . . . Cease to live except a life of love, reparation, and suffering.'

"That afternoon at about three o'clock He returned and said to me: 'I come to take refuge here, for My faithful souls are to Me as ramparts to a city: they defend and console Me.'

"During my adoration, He came again: 'The world is rushing headlong to ruin. I am in search of souls who will repair the many offences that are committed against the divine Majesty and I am consumed with desire to pardon. . . . Yes, to pardon these dear souls for whom I shed My Blood. . . . Poor souls, how many are lost . . . how many throw themselves headlong into hell.' "

Faced with this sorrowful eagerness, Josefa did not know how to put into words her own ardent wish to suffer and repair for sin.

" 'Do not torment yourself, Josefa; if only you do not part from Me, My strength will give you strength and My power will be yours.'

"He then vanished, leaving me His Cross."

On the Monday of the Quarant'ore and on the night which followed Josefa bore the Cross of Christ, and pain and anguish were her portion.

The following day, 28th February, she went as usual to her work in the laundry, "but after a few hours, the pain in my side was so excessive, that I could hardly breathe," she wrote. She took refuge in the little attic where her bed was, a place already consecrated by many sufferings and heavenly visits.

"Jesus came at once, beautiful as ever, and His Heart all burning.

" 'How great are the sins of men . . . but what distresses Me most is that they blindly fling themselves into hell. . . . Do you understand My grief, Josefa? To see those souls that have cost Me My life, lost forever. . . . It oppresses Me to think that for them My Blood was shed all in vain. Come with Me, and together we shall make reparation to My heavenly Father for all these outrages.'

"Then I united myself to His Heart and offered Him my pain."

She was particular to notice the humble, petitioning attitude of her Master: His hands clasped. His eyes raised to Heaven, His silence, all expressed His divine and constant offering to His Father.

" 'Tell the Mothers that this house is the garden of My delights,' He continued. 'I come here to seek consolation when sinners offend Me and make Me suffer. Tell them that I am indeed the Master of this dwelling, that it is a beloved refuge to Me and that My heart finds rest in it.

" 'I do not want or ask for great things. What I want and what is a consolation to Me is to find love that prompts good works, and that I find in this house.' "

That evening during Benediction Jesus again manifested Himself, and from His Heart there streamed light. "A little group of fervent souls can obtain mercy for many sinners," He said, "for My Heart cannot resist their prayers. . . . I sought for one to comfort Me and have found her."

The first days of Lent demanded still more redemptive sufferings from Josefa. March the 1st was Ash Wednesday, and at the hour of her adoration Jesus became visible to her. His face disfigured with blood:

" 'Is there on earth any creature so insulted and despised as I am? Poor souls . . . it is I who gave them life, and they seek to deal out death to Me. Not only are they oblivious of Me, those souls that have cost Me so dear, but they even make Me an object of contempt and mockery.'

"After a few minutes of silence He continued: 'Come near Me, Josefa, rest on My Heart and share Its grief So many fill It with sorrow, but your love will comfort Me.'

"As He drew me nearer to His Heart, mine was instantly drowned in inexpressible sorrow and bitterness. I knew that I could not assuage His grief, for I am so powerless . . . so I offered Him His own pain, to supply for the insufficiency of mine. . . . For a long while I stayed in silence, adoring, humbling myself and asking forgiveness for souls; Jesus then said: 'Repair, Josefa, for those who ought to but do not make reparation.'

"At this moment the bell rang for the end of adoration, and I left the Chapel. He walked beside me. 'Go, Josefa, and ask whether I may stay with you while you do your work.'

"When leave had been given me, I went to the tribune just for a moment, and then resumed my work in the linen-room, because I think this pleases Him most. He was still there and spoke now and again:

" 'Ask forgiveness for the sins of the world. O! how they sin . . . how many are lost . . . souls that once knew and loved Me . . . but now they prefer their own enjoyment and pleasure to My Heart. . . .

" 'O! why do they treat Me thus? . . . Have I not given them enough proofs of love? . . . And once they responded, but now they trample Me underfoot and ridicule Me, frustrating the designs of My love on them . . . where shall I find relief for My distress?'

"I said to Him: 'Why, here Lord, in this house, in our souls . . . there are still many everywhere who love Thee.'

" 'Yes, I know, but those are the souls I seek; I love them with a boundless love.'

"Again I offered myself to suffer for them, that they may repent. Jesus did not go away, and from time to time repeated:

" 'Gather up the blood I shed in My Passion.'

" 'Ask forgiveness for the whole world . . . for those that know Me and yet sin, and offer yourself in reparation.'

"He stayed till about eleven o'clock at night, and then left me His Cross, the pain in my side and grief in my soul. A little before three, I was relieved of all pain, and being exhausted, fell asleep."

Alas, temptation was close at hand. It would seem that Josefa could not yield after such intimacy with the Heart of the Master. Our Lord, however, left her to her inherent frailty. Apparently it was a clearly defined plan on His part, and the means chosen by His wisdom, to keep her safe amid the many graces she received and the dangers that threatened her, allowing her thus to plumb the very depths of her lowliness and nothingness. Already there were signs that the powers of darkness were coming back to the charge.

On the 2nd March we find in her notes a humble avowal that she inwardly resisted Our Lord's desire for comfort, because:

"I had not yet finished my work in the linen-room, having had to sweep the little Chapel.

" 'Go quickly and ask leave,' Our Lord insisted. 'I want victims to make reparation and to console Me, and where else can I go if I cannot find them here?'

"I went to ask leave, but Jesus did not return. Both the Cross and the Crown disappeared at the same time, and my soul was plunged in remorse . . . for truly I want to live only to be a comfort to Him, but my weakness is overpowering."

Josefa spent the whole day in an agony of distress. It was the First Friday of March; all day long she begged Our Lord and especially Our Lady to forgive her. "For," she wrote, "they know very well that it is my weakness and not ill will."

Our Lady could not resist her distress. She came and reassured her child, who at the time was just finishing the Way of the Cross.

"Do not be unhappy, my daughter; if you are willing, Jesus will go on drawing comfort from you. He wants it so much, but remember that your love is free."

Then she confessed what she ever afterwards characterized as the greatest sin of her life.

That same night Our Lord came, 'all-beautiful', but wearing a look of sadness: "Here are My Cross and My Crown, Josefa, take them. Give Me the rest I need, I am so sinned against . . . so many souls are lost . . . and I love them so!"

And in response to her petition for pardon and oblation of herself to all He might require of her: "Never refuse Me the comfort I look for from you," He said. "True, there are many who love Me and console Me, but none of them can take the place I have reserved for you, for I have cast a special glance of love on you."

At these words, Josefa, who deep down in her heart could not rid herself of the invincible fear she had of the extraordinary path mapped out for her, felt as if a huge wave of opposition arose in her. She was unable to overcome it; when later she gave an account of that dolorous incident, she characterized the inward recoil as "ingratitude". But Our Lord, to whom all hearts are open, knew well that she was dominated by fear, and that she would never entirely succeed in overcoming her apprehension. . . . His Heart was full of compassion for hers.

" 'If you knew what sins are committed against Me, you would not refuse My Cross,' He rejoined. 'Do you know what that Cross is? . . . It is the freedom you must grant Me to use and take you whenever I want you, without regard to the place, the occupation, or the time. It should suffice you to know that I want you to console Me, and that I shall be your shield against anything that anybody may think or say of you. Are you not Mine? If I am with you, what does it matter if the whole world is against you?'

"At this point," wrote Josefa in all sincerity, "I say it for my greater shame, I replied as if He had not every right over me, by entreating Him to spare me that path. He looked at me sadly and said: 'I cannot forsake you, for My love for you is boundless, but as such is your wish, be it done to you according to your desire. No one but yourself will be able to close the Wound inflicted on My Heart. . . .'

"He took back His Cross and His Crown and vanished."

A few days later Josefa wrote as follows:

"It is impossible to say all I have gone through since that day. It is a torture that nothing on this earth can equal. First: I know that I have wounded Him, and next, if He does not return, my life will be a martyrdom, for I myself have thwarted the designs of His love."

She had not yet sounded the depths of that Heart's mercy. . . . Notwithstanding her vacillations, nothing was changed in the design of His love. It would be gradually unfolded, but on a different plane, which His wisdom had already foreseen, so that on the 3rd of March a new phase in Josefa's destiny began.

The Bottomless Pit opens to Josefa

4th March-15th April 1922

"Remember, daughter, that nothing happens, unless it be in God's plan"

(Saint Madeleine Sophie to Josefa, 14th March 1922)

THIS new phase of Josefa's life was perhaps the most mysterious one of all. At first sight, it looked as if chastisement was being meted out to her as a result of her resistance to Christ's appeal; but it soon became apparent that the design that was being woven on the obscure loom of her destiny was a very different one, unveiling to our eyes Our Lord's divine predilection for Josefa, and disclosing how He took advantage of a momentary weakening of her will to further His great work by giant strides, still in and by her.

Greater power over her was being given to Satan, who opened before her the bottomless depths of hell itself. She was steeped in agonies never before experienced, and knew by sharp physical pain what the loss of a soul really meant, and how total was the immolation demanded of her for its redemption.

Whilst Our Lord allowed her to be thus crushed by sorrow, He sank her deep in humility and in a faith and abandonment that she could never have acquired by her own personal efforts. Our Lord kept the carrying out of this work in His own hands, and it was accomplished when and how He pleased, by means that defied human foresight.

In an admirable page of her autobiography, Saint Teresa describes the indelible impression left on her soul by a passage through hell. We have many notes written by Josefa under obedience, describing her long sojourns in the abyss of pain and despair. These records, striking in their very simplicity, take us back after four centuries to the classical narration of Saint Teresa. They sound the same note, one of pain and contrition, of redemptive love and burning zeal. The dogma of hell, often disputed, and more often ignored in incomplete spirituality, to the great detriment of souls, and even with danger to their salvation, is brought out with a clarity that admits of no doubt. Who, when reading these pages of what Josefa saw, heard and suffered, can question the existence of an infernal power attacking Christ and His Kingdom with desperate fury? Who can gauge the value of the long hours spent in that prison of fire? . . . Josefa, who believed herself shut up in it for ever, witnessed the fierce efforts of Satan to snatch souls from Jesus Christ, and felt the excruciating torment of no longer being able to love.

Some extracts from her writings will be useful to souls. They act as a cry of warning to those who have a rough path to re-climb, if they are to recover their friendship with God. Above all, are they not a call from Love to those who make up their minds that they will spare nothing in order to save souls who are in danger of eternal perdition?

It was in the night of Wednesday to Thursday, 16th March, that Josefa made her mysterious descent into hell for the first time.

From the 6th of March, soon after Our Lord's disappearance, infernal voices had several times caused her great fear and disturbance of mind. Damned souls, invisible to her eyes, came from the lowest depths, reproaching her for her want of generosity. She was greatly perturbed. . .

. She heard cries of despair like these: "I am there where love is banished . . . for ever . . . how brief was the enjoyment . . . and the punishment is eternal. . . . What have I gained? . . . hate, and that for ever . . . eternal hatred!"

"O!" she wrote, "to know that one soul is lost and to be able to do nothing for it! To know that for all eternity a soul will curse Our Lord and that there is no cure . . . even if I could suffer every torment in the world . . . what terrible sorrow. . . . It would be better to die a thousand times than be responsible for the loss of one soul."

On Sunday, 12th March, she wrote to her Superior, who was absent from Poitiers on a journey to Rome:

"If you knew, Reverend Mother, with what grief I write. I no longer have any of my jewels [as she calls the Crown of Thorns and the Cross], for I have once more wounded Jesus, who is so good to me. . . . I still hope that He will have compassion on me, but for the moment I am paying dearly for it, for since the night of the First Friday the greatest of sufferings has taken the place of His visits . . . when you return, Reverend Mother, you will know the full extent of my weakness."

And in order not to sadden her Superior, she added with the tact that never forsook her:

"How glad I am of the happy days you are having at the Mother- House; except for me, everybody here is, I think, trying to console Our Lord, and His Heart is receiving what He expects from 'His Garden of delights', as He calls this house. With me things go on as before: my efforts are directed to being kind and faithful, and telling everything to the Mother Assistant, and the rest you know.

"Pray, Reverend Mother, that Our Lady may lay her motherly hands on me and obtain my forgiveness."

This time Our Lord sent Saint Madeleine Sophie as His messenger.

On Tuesday, 14th March, she appeared to Josefa in her cell. After listening to her humble avowals, she gave her fresh courage, and heartened her with the words: "Remember, daughter, that nothing happens unless it is in God's designs."

Josefa told her of her overwhelming grief, and of the sorrow that weighed her down when she realized the consequences of her frailty, which she was convinced were beyond repair.

"But, my child, you can repair your fault," was the quick reply, "if from your fall you draw great humility and generosity."

"I asked her whether Jesus would ever again return. I call on Him, I want Him, for I cannot believe that through my fault I shall never see Him again . . . "

Then interrupting her with motherly impetuosity, our Holy Mother said: "But you must expect His return, my child; the longing and expectation of the bride are the glory of the Bridegroom."

This heavenly visit testified to a love that was unchanged and to forgiveness that never tired. Evidently Jesus meant Josefa, now at the beginning of the great trial she was to undergo, to feel that He was still there, and quite unchanged.

"In the night of 16th March towards ten o'clock," wrote Josefa, "I became aware, as on the preceding days, of a confused noise of cries and chains. I rose quickly and dressed, and trembling with fright, knelt down near my bed. The uproar was approaching, and not knowing what to do, I left the dormitory, and went to our Holy Mother's cell; then I came back to the dormitory. The same terrifying sounds were all round me; then all of a sudden I saw in front of me the devil himself.

" 'Tie her feet and bind her hands,' he cried. . . .

"Instantly I lost sight of where I was, and felt myself tightly bound and being dragged away. Other voices screamed: 'No good to bind her feet; it is her heart that you must bind.'

" 'It does not belong to me,' came the answer from the devil.

"Then I was dragged along a very dark and lengthy passage, and on all sides resounded terrible cries. On opposite sides of the walls of this narrow corridor were niches out of which poured smoke, though with very little flame, and which emitted an intolerable stench. From these recesses came blaspheming voices, uttering impure words. Some cursed their bodies, others their parents. Others, again reproached themselves with having refused grace, and not avoided what they knew to be sinful. It was a medley of confused screams of rage and despair. I was dragged through that kind of corridor, which seemed endless. Then I received a violent punch which doubled me in two, and forced me into one of the niches. I felt as if I were being pressed between two burning planks and pierced through and through with scorching needle points. Opposite and beside me souls were blaspheming and cursing me. What caused me most suffering . . . and with which no torture can be compared, was the anguish of my soul to find myself separated from God. . . .

"It seemed to me that I spent long years in that hell, yet it lasted only six or seven hours. . . . Suddenly I was violently pulled out of the niche, and I found myself in a dark place; after striking me, the devil disappeared and left me free. . . . How can I describe my feelings on realizing that I was still alive, and could still love God!

"I do not know what I am not ready to endure to avoid hell, in spite of my fear of pain. I see clearly that all the sufferings of earth are nothing in comparison with the horror of no longer being able to love, for in that place all breathes hatred and thirst to damn other souls."

From that day on Josefa frequently endured this mysterious martyrdom. All was mystery in those long, dark, and gloomy sessions beyond the pale. Each time she was warned of the oncoming of the fiends by the noise of chains and distant yells, but they came nearer and nearer

and finally surrounded and overwhelmed her. She tried to fly, to distract her mind by work, to escape the hail of blows which in the end overcame and threw her to the ground. She had just time to take refuge in her little cell before losing all consciousness of her surroundings. She began by finding herself in what she described as a dark hole, faced by the demon who triumphed over her, and appeared to think that she was definitely in his power for ever. He boisterously commanded her to be thrust into her fiery niche; and Josefa, tightly bound, would fall into the chaos of fire, the dolorous abode of rage and despair.

Her notes were written objectively, and in the simplest terms she told things just as she saw, heard, and experienced them.

To those watching only a slight tremor made known her mysterious abduction. Her body instantly became entirely soft and supple, like one whose soul had just departed. Head and members were no longer under her control, though her heart beat normally; she was as one alive, yet dead.

This state was prolonged more or less according to God's will, who thus delivered her over to the powers of darkness, but held her still in His very sure and strong hand.

At the moment decreed by Him there was a slight, almost imperceptible, tremor once more and her body came back to life.

She was not thereby wholly freed from infernal influence, and the devil still continued to buffet her. In the dark, where she saw only him, he outraged and threatened her, before she finally escaped from his clutches.

When at last he relinquished his hold on her she slowly returned to herself The hours spent in hell seemed long ages to her, and only by degrees was she able to resume contact with the places and people that surrounded her. "Where am I? . . . Who are you? . . . Am I still alive?" she asked; her poor eyes once again sought to make contact with a life which at the moment was so distant and remote. At times tears silently ran down her cheeks, and her face bore the impress of a sorrow difficult to describe. At last, and very gradually, she succeeded in realizing the actuality of sensible objects and persons; how could one depict the feelings of intense emotion that overwhelmed her when she suddenly became aware that she could still love God!

Josefa herself described this moment of transport in words of passionate fervour:

"On Sunday, 19th March 1922, which was the third Sunday of Lent, I once more went down into the abyss, and it seemed to me that I remained there for long years. I suffered much, but the greatest of my torments was in believing that I could no longer love Our Lord. When I come back to life I am simply mad with joy. I think my love has increased tenfold and I feel ready to endure for love of Him whatever He wishes. As to my vocation, I esteem and love it to folly!"

A few lines further on she said:

"What I have seen gives me great courage to suffer, and makes me understand the value of the smallest sacrifices; Jesus gathers them up and uses them to save souls. It is blindness to avoid

pain even in very small things, for not only is it of great worth to ourselves, but it serves to guard many from the torments of hell."

Josefa tried her best, under obedience, to recount the history of the descents into the bottomless pit, so frequently made at this time. Not everything can be printed, but a few pages which contain valuable lessons may act as a stimulus to those whose good will urges them to sacrifice self for the salvation of the unfortunate beings, who every day and at every hour stand on the brink of the chasm, and who run such terrible risks in the tragic fight between love and hatred, despair and mercy.

On Sunday, 26th March, she wrote again, "On reaching that abode of horror, I hear yells of rage and devilish exultation because another soul has fallen into everlasting torments. . . .

"At the moment I am not conscious of having previously gone down into hell; it always seems to me to be the first time. It seems, too, to be for ever, and what an agony that is, for I remember that I once knew and loved Our Lord . . . that I was a religious, that He conferred great graces on me, and many means by which to save my soul. What was it, then, that I did? How did I come to lose so many good things? . . . How could I have been so blind? . . . And now all hope is gone. . . . My communions, too, come back to my mind, and my noviceship. But the most crushing and overwhelming grief of all is the torturing memory that I once loved the Heart of Jesus so dearly. I knew Him and He was everything to me. . . . I lived for Him . . . and how can I now exist without Him . . . loveless and with blasphemies and deadly malice on every side?

"It is impossible to put into words the poignant distress to which my broken and oppressed soul is reduced. . . ."

Not infrequently she witnessed the efforts of the devil and his fierce satellites to snatch from divine mercy the souls that were on the point of becoming his prey. The agony endured by Josefa in those cruel moments seems to have been the ransom of those poor souls, who would owe the final victory to her pangs.

She wrote on Thursday, 30th March:

"The devil is more enraged than ever, for he is after three souls to drag them down to hell. In strident tones he yells furiously to the others: 'Don't let them escape . . . they are getting away . . . stand your ground . . steady, hold hard.'

"And from a long way off I heard vociferations and unspeakable clamour."

She was witness of the fight for these souls for two or three days in succession.

"I begged Our Lord to do with me whatever He willed, if only these three could be spared," she wrote on her return from the abyss, Saturday 1st April. "I appealed to Our Lady and she gave me great peace, for she left me determined to endure any thing, if only they could be saved, and I do not think that she will allow the devil to get the upper hand."

On Sunday, 2nd April, she again wrote:

"I could hear Satan's yells: 'Don't let go of them; be on your guard . . . plague them in any way you can . . . they must not escape . . . induce them to despair! . .

"It was a ferment of agitation, vociferation, blasphemies, when suddenly with a howl of passionate frenzy he cried: 'No matter . . . we shall get the other two . . . they must be made to despair.'

"By this I understood that one of them was safe for ever.

" 'Hurry . . . press on . . .' he roared. 'Those two must not escape . . . hold them, seize them . . . bring them to despair . . . they are escaping us. . . .'

"Then hell resounded with the grinding and gnashing of teeth, and in indescribable fury the devil howled: 'O! power and omnipotence of that God. . . . He is stronger than I. There is only one left and she shall not escape . . .' but by the medley of groans and blasphemous words I understood that all three were safe in the Heart of Jesus. How I rejoiced, though unable to make a single act of love in spite of the longing I felt to do so . . . but none of the feelings of hatred manifested by the unhappy souls around me affect me, and when I hear their curses and blasphemies, I feel ready to suffer anything rather than hear Him so outraged and offended. Shall I in time, I wonder, become as they are? What suffering such a thought occasions, for can I ever forget how I once loved Him and how good He was to me?

"I have endured much," she continued, "these last days. It is as if a stream of fire were being poured down my throat, passing right through my body, while at the same time I am pressed between the fiery planks, as I said before. The pain is intolerable, and beyond description; my eyes seem to be starting out of their sockets, wrenched out, my nerves strained, my body wracked and doubled in two, incapable of stirring, and over and around the nauseating and offensive stench, infecting the air.[1] Yet, what is all this in comparison with a soul who knows God's goodness and is forced to hate and revile Him? This suffering is all the greater in proportion to the love she formerly had for Him."

There were other mysteries beyond the pale that were revealed to Josefa during this period of Lent 1922.

Whilst day and night she bore the burden of these terrible persecutions, God put her in touch with another abyss of woe, that of purgatory. Many souls came to solicit her suffrages and sacrifices in terms of very great humility. At first she was frightened, but by degrees she became accustomed to their confidences. She listened to them, asked them their names, encouraged

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[1] This intolerable odour enveloped Josefa on her return from the bottomless pit, and it was the same, at the moment of her abductions and persecutions by the archenemy. It was of mingled sulphur and burning putrid flesh, and it clung to her, say the witnesses, for a quarter of an hour or so, even half an hour, but she herself was painfully aware of it for a much longer time.

them, and very humbly recommended herself to their intercession. The lessons they inculcated are worth remembering.

One of them came to announce her deliverance and said: "The important thing is not entrance into religion, but entrance into the next world." "If religious souls but realized the heavy price to be paid for concessions to the body . . ." said another, while asking for prayers. "My exile is at an end and I am going to my eternal home. . . ."

A priest-soul said to her: "How great is the mercy of God, when He deigns to make use of the sufferings of other souls to repair our infidelities; what a degree of glory I might have acquired had my life been different."

It was a nun who, on her entrance into heaven, confided to Josefa: "How different the things of earth appear when one passes into eternity. What are charges and offices in the sight of God? All He counts is the purity of our intention when exercising them, even in the smallest acts. How little is the earth and all it contains, and yet, how loved. . . . Ah! what comparison is there between life, however prolonged, and eternity. If only it were realized how in purgatory the soul is wearied and consumed with desire to see God."

There were also some poor souls, who having escaped through God's mercy from a still greater peril, came to beg Josefa to hasten their deliverance.

"I am here by God's great mercy," one of them said, "for my excessive pride had brought me to the gates of hell. I influenced a great number of other people, and now I would gladly throw myself at the feet of the most abject pauper.

"Have compassion on me and do acts of humility to make reparation for my pride, thus you will be able to deliver me from this abyss."

"I spent seven years in mortal sin," another confessed, "and three years ill in bed, and I always refused to go to confession. I was ripe for hell-fire and would have fallen into it if by your present sufferings you had not obtained for me the grace of repentance. I am now in purgatory, and I entreat you, since you were able to save me . . . draw me out of this dreary prison.'"

"I am in purgatory because of my infidelity, for I would not correspond with God's call," said another. "For twelve years I held out against my vocation and was in the greatest peril of damnation, because in order to stifle my conscience I gave myself up to a life of sin. Thanks to the divine goodness, which deigned to make use of your sufferings, I took courage to come back to God . . . and now, of your charity, get me out of this gloomy prison."

"Offer the Blood of Christ for us," said another who was just about to leave purgatory. "What would become of us, if there were no one to help us?"

The names of these holy souls, who were personally unknown to Josefa, having been carefully noted down with the date and place of their decease, were more than once verified. The assurance thereby gained of the truth of the facts she related remains as a precious testimony of her intercourse with purgatory.

Lent was drawing to a close while these successive alternations of pain and austere graces continued. Without the special intervention of God Josefa could not have endured such contacts

with the world invisible and at the same time lead her even life of devotedness and labour. Such, however, was the spectacle of heroic love she daily gave to the Heart of Him who sees in secret, whereas those about her could not but mistake the value of those externally monotonous days, spent in the plain accomplishment of duty.

Two facts relating to the last days of Holy Week stand out.

In the afternoon on Holy Thursday, 13th April 1922, she wrote:

"I was in the Chapel at about half-past three when I saw before me a personage clothed like Our Lord, rather taller, very beautiful and with a wonderful expression of peace on his face which was most attractive. His vesture was of a dark reddish purple. He held in his hand the Crown of Thorns just like the one Our Lord used to bring me long ago.

" 'I am the Disciple of the Lord,' he said, 'John the Evangelist, and I bring you one of the Master's most precious jewels.'

"He gave me the Crown and himself placed it on my head."

Josefa was at first rather startled at this unexpected apparition, but she gained assurance through the feeling of intense peace which took possession of her. She ventured to confide in the saintly visitor, telling him of the anguish the ill-treatment of the devil caused her.

" 'Have no fear,' was the reply. 'Your soul is a lily which is kept by Jesus in His Heart—I am sent to make you acquainted with some of the feelings that overwhelmed His Heart on this great day:

" 'Love was about to part Him from His disciples, after it had baptized Him in a baptism of blood. But love urged Him to remain with them, and it was love that made Him conceive the idea of the Blessed Sacrament.

" 'What a struggle then arose in His Heart. He thought of how He would rest in pure souls, but also how His Passion would be carried on in hearts sullied by sin.

" 'How His Heart thrilled at the thought of the moment, then approaching, when He would go to the Father, but it was crushed with sorrow at the sight of one of the Twelve, one specially chosen, who was to deliver Him up to death, and at the knowledge that for the first time His Blood was to prove useless to save a soul.

" 'How His Heart wore itself out in love! But the want of correspondence to grace of those so beloved plunged It into dire distress . . . and what of the indifference and coldness of so many chosen souls?'

"With these words he was gone."

This heavenly visitation upheld her courage for a time, as it brought so forcibly before her mind the call to reparation by which the Holy Eucharist appeals to consecrated souls.

But this apparition of peace was but an interval in the storm. That very evening the Crown disappeared, leaving her in great perplexity. The enemy was at pains to sow anxiety and trouble in the soul of his victim.

The old anguished question returned: Was she not being played upon by illusion and deception? . . . All those things to do with the invisible world, were they not a mirage of her imagination, caused by an unbalanced mind or unconscious suggestion?

These questions were not confined to herself alone. Yet there was nothing in her that could morally or physically give support to this doubt. But the prudence with which she was surrounded was on the watch, and seeking for an authentic sign that what was taking place was due to the direct intervention of the devil. God was about to give that sign and so remove all hesitation and doubt.

On Holy Saturday, 15th April, Josefa, having spent the last two days in terrible contests, heard the sounds that usually were a premonition of the approach of the evil spirits. She was engaged in needlework; and supported by obedience she resisted with all her might the approach of Satan, but he ended by casting her to the ground. Then, as on former occasions, her body seemed to become lifeless.

Kneeling beside her, the Mothers prayed earnestly, begging Our Lord to remove all doubt concerning the mystery enacted under their eyes.

Presently the usual slight tremor which preceded Josefa's return to life was noticed. The expression on her face betrayed the horrors she had witnessed and endured. Suddenly she clutched at her chest and cried: "Who is burning me?" There was no light or flame anywhere near, and her religious habit was apparently untouched. With a rapid movement she tore open the front of her dress, and at once the cell was filled with the acrid smell and fetid fumes of smoke, and her inner garment was seen to be on fire. An extensive burn remained "near the heart", as she said, attesting the truth of this—the first attempt of the kind made by Satan. Josefa was terrified: "I prefer to go," she wrote in that first moment of shock, "rather than continue to be the devil's sport."

God's fidelity, in thus tangibly manifesting the power of the infernal agents, was hereafter of notable comfort and reassurance in the months that followed.

Ten times in all Josefa was thus set on fire. She saw the devil vomit on her flames of which visible traces were seen not on her clothes only, but on her person. Painful wounds which took long to heal left on her body scars which she carried to the grave. Many of those scorched garments have been kept, and are witnesses to the devil's rage, and to the heroic courage of Josefa, who endured these assaults in order to be faithful to Love's enterprise.

A Short Truce

16th April-8th July 1922

“I shall he the light of jour soul"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 17th April 1922)

EASTER fell this year, 1922, on the 16th April, and Our Lord granted Josefa a brief truce, His risen Body crushing in its victory Satan's power.

Early that morning Josefa saw Him during Mass. It was for the first time since 3rd March—a day which remained in her mind as one of sorrow and contrition, though she never doubted of Our Lord's forgiveness nor His love.

"His whole Person was resplendent in light and beauty," she wrote, "but I told Him I had no leave to speak to Him.

" 'You have no leave, Josefa?' He answered gently. 'May you look at Me?'

"I did not know what to say. . . .

" 'Look at Me,' He continued, 'and let Me look at you. That is enough.'

"I looked at Him, and He also fixed His eyes on me with such love that I am at a loss to say all I felt. . . . After a moment He said: 'When Reverend Mother sends for you, ask her leave to speak to Me.'

"Then He vanished."

Although Josefa met her Superior a few minutes later, she obeyed Our Lord literally and waited to be sent for.

"Reverend Mother sent for me towards half-past eleven," Josefa noted, "and gave me the desired permission. I went to the Chapel and Jesus came at once.

" 'Here I am, Josefa! . . . Why did you want Me to come back, even if it were but once?'

" 'O! dear Lord, that I might entreat Thee to forgive me, for I do so want it!'

"Then I told Him the whole story of all my miseries and weakness, and with affection simply indescribable He answered: 'He who never needs forgiveness is not the most happy, but rather he who has humbled himself many times.' "

Then Josefa let her whole soul pour out its tale of woe into the compassionate Heart of her Lord—all the obscurities and troubles of the past weeks; and she did not omit her anxiety about the Crown of Thorns: was it really He who sent it to her on Holy Thursday, and then took it away so unaccountably?

Jesus reassured her:

" 'Yes, it was I who entrusted you with that precious treasure. But it was too much consolation for you, and you comforted Me more by accepting the uncertainty than by wearing My Crown on your head.'

"Then I spoke to Him of the burning last Saturday, and told Him how it disturbs me to be thus the devil's sport. He answered strongly, almost sternly: 'Where is your faith? If I allowed you to be the devil's sport, know that I did it solely to give an unimpeachable proof of the plans of My Heart for you.' "

This Paschal dawn lasted a few days longer:

As once long ago Jesus appeared to His disturbed Apostles to speak words of comfort and reassurance after His Passion, so now—on Monday, 17th, she wrote:

"The Gospel of to-day was that of the apparition to the Disciples of Emmaus; as I was saying the words: 'Stay with me, Lord, for the day is far spent,' He suddenly made Himself manifest to me.

" 'Yes, I will stay with you, and will be the light of your soul. Yes, indeed, the day is far spent . . . what would you do without Me?'"

On Friday, 21st April, after a night during which the return of the enemy and the torments of hell had disappointed her hopes that they were over, we find in her notes: "This morning during Mass Our Lord came. I had thought all these torments were at an end, and I asked Him if He would not leave me enough freedom to do a little work."

The answer came in a tone of authority: "Josefa, I have told you already that I want to make use of you as an instrument of My mercy for souls; but unless you surrender yourself completely into My hands, what am I to do? . . . There are so many souls that need pardon, and My Heart would like to use victims that will aid in repairing the insults of the world and in spreading My mercies. What does the rest matter to you, if I sustain you? Never do I forsake you. What more do you want?"

Thus the Paschal week ended on a note of warning that many sufferings still lay ahead of her. The devil prowled around her path; the souls in purgatory continued to beg her prayers and the help of her suffrages. But Our Lord, ever faithful, remained by her side and became, as He said, "the light of her life". "On Saturday, 22nd April," we read in her notes, 'He came during Mass . . . so gracious. I renewed my vows, and I think that pleased Him, for His Heart blazed ardently."

She expressed her anxieties concerning the souls in purgatory who came to ask her prayers. Our Lord reassured her with His usual kindness, and gave her to understand how great were the graces obtained at the price of her pain. "If I tell you all these things," He said, "it is that you may not recoil, whatever the cost. Be convinced: the greater your sufferings, and the more acute they are, the more are you comforting Me, and it is when you least think it that you are drawing the greatest number of souls to Me."

And when she told Him how worn out she was by the weeks of pain she had gone through: "I have no need of your strength, but I do need your surrender," He answered tenderly. "True

strength is in My Heart. Remain in peace, and do not forget that mercy and love are at work in you."

It was, therefore, from the Sacred Heart that she would draw the fortitude demanded by the path of total abandonment which was increasingly to be hers.

"For some days past," she wrote on Monday, 24th April, "the devil has dragged me down to hell at the same hour, and keeps me there for about the same length of time. This worries me, and I wonder if I am responsible for this in any way." When next Our Lord appeared to her after her communion this was the first thing she asked Him.

" 'Do not be anxious,' He replied, 'there is a soul that we must snatch from the devil's grasp, and that particular hour is one of peril for her, but we shall succeed by dint of suffering. There are so many souls exposed to the danger of perdition . . . but there are, too, many who comfort Me, and many who come back to My Heart.'

"Then," she said, "I asked Him what we could do to obtain the conversion of a sinner who had been recommended to our prayers, and who is a cause of great scandal.

" 'You must put My Heart between that sinner and My Father, Josefa. My Heart will appease His wrath and incline divine compassion towards that soul. Adieu, console Me by your abandonment and love.' "

Days of trial succeeded those of grace, for the devil did all he could to reawaken in her a whole flood of repugnances, and at the same time he tormented her with every sort of torture; she met him anywhere, he hit her, burnt her, dragged her down to the infernal regions . . . and Friday, 29th April, in sheer terror of his threats, she dared not go to communion, although the thought of one communion lost was an immense sorrow to her.

These days of great distress brought back many souls, though she was unaware of this encouraging fact.

Tuesday, 2nd May, as she was sweeping the Auxiliary Chapel, suddenly she saw Our Lord in all the beauty of His glory.

"He was standing in between the benches," she said.

" 'Josefa, shall I come? . . . I will not hinder your work.'

"I renewed my vows and told Him I must first ask leave.

" 'Yes, go.'

"He disappeared, and I went at once to tell Reverend Mother. When I came back I saw Him through the open door. He was still in the same place, as if waiting for me . . . so full of sweetness . . . the tenderness of a Father which no words can render.

" 'I want so much to come to you, Josefa. Are you going to shut Me out?' "

This question like an arrow pierced her through. She acknowledged her fear of the devil, who was doing all he could to prevent her from going to Holy Communion.

" 'Do you not know that he can torment you, but that he cannot harm you? Which of the two is stronger, he or I?'

"I promised to be generous; then I spoke to Him of the intentions the nuns were praying about, for He knows very well how heavy their anxieties and difficulties are.

" 'My Heart is theirs entirely,' He replied gently, 'and I am taking care of My work. . . . I am guarding My Society.'

"He repeated this twice, with much ardour and affection. Then He drew me close to His Heart and made me listen to Its beating . . . Towards the end I talked to Him about Our Lady. . . . I have not seen her for such a long time. . . . I do so long for her. . . .

" 'Call her,' He said, and He vanished.

"I have not stopped calling her ever since, and I keep on telling my dearest Mother that Jesus Himself told me to do so, for O! how I need her!

"During my adoration she came, and opening her arms, she said: 'My daughter, what do you want?' "

Then Josefa told her all her troubles and how frightened she was of the attacks of the devil.

" 'Look, dear child, you must abandon yourself as would a little child in the arms of your God.'

" 'True, Mother, but I am so frightened not only of the devil, but also of myself.'

" 'What is there to be afraid of, since we are both there to defend you?'

"I told her how pleased I should be if I had at least the Crown of Thorns, but I don't know if Jesus will let me have it.

" 'No, child, He will not give it to you at present, because you are making another crown for Him. If you could see how many souls there are in it!

" 'The eyes of Jesus are upon you, and in spite of your deficiencies, and even ingratitude, He will not turn them away from you.'

"Then she blessed me and went away."

The visits of the Mother were often forerunners of those of the Son, and on Wednesday, 3rd May, after communion, He came:

" 'Josefa!'

"I asked His leave to renew my vows; and then each time He comes I want to tell Him all my faults. . . .

" 'You cannot know how My Heart exults in forgiving faults that are of pure frailty. Have no fear . . . it is just because of your wretchedness that I have fixed My eyes on you.' "

This gracious indulgence encouraged Josefa to tell Him of her great desire: she so wanted the devil to be prevented from hindering her fidelity to community exercises . . . for he was for ever threatening her.

"Let Me use you as I will," answered Our Lord. "Are you not My very own? So that I have every right over you? To whom do you think common life gives the greater satisfaction? To you or to Me? I take you when I need you, but especially you must learn to give in to My Will."

Thus did the Master of abandonment continue the training of Josefa's soul through all the vicissitudes of her troubled life. A truce was called from time to time, and her notes still contained a few glowing passages:

"That evening during my adoration, whilst *0 Crux Ave,* was being sung—for it was the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross—I was seized with an ardent desire of embracing the Sacred Wounds. I kissed my crucifix and begged Our Lady to do it for me.

"She came unexpectedly; her hands were crossed on her breast, and she said very gently to me: 'Daughter, what is it you want?'

" 'O! Mother, I want to kiss the hands and feet of Jesus, and if you will allow me'—here I hesitated a little—'I want to kiss your hand as well.'

" 'You want to kiss my hand? Then do so . . .' and giving me her hand, she added: 'And you would like to kiss the Wounds of Jesus; . . .'

"Before I had time to answer, there stood Jesus Himself, beautiful, and with glowing Wounds.

" 'What do you want, Josefa?'

" 'To kiss Thy Sacred Wounds, dear Lord!'

" 'Yes, kiss them.'

"He Himself showed me His feet, as if to say: Begin by them . . . I kissed them, then His hands. And then He extended His right arm and drew me to His Heart: 'That Wound is yours; it belongs to you.'

"How can I possibly describe the feelings of my soul? . . .

" 'See how I refuse you nothing, and would you refuse Me anything?'

"I told Him that He knew my desires, but that my infirmity is greater than my will."

In this way she tried to express the contrast she felt at certain times between her will and her actions.

"That accounts for the way in which I so often promise to refuse Him nothing, but fail to keep the promise when occasion arises. . . . These failures are followed by feelings of deep contrition at having wounded One who is so good to me.

" 'My Heart indeed loves you, and takes pleasure in your helplessness. Do you know how to comfort Me? Love Me and suffer for souls and never refuse Me anything.' "

These graces of predilection always proved to be the prelude of increased suffering, and Satan, who had not lost his freedom in her regard, made her feel his power more acutely than ever in the days that followed. But before giving her into his clutches again, Jesus wished to confirm His plans of love for her.

"I had told Him how intensely I longed for His coming in Holy Communion," she wrote on the nth May, "for I hunger for Him, and the more wretched I see myself to be, the more I beg of Him to bring me Himself the remedy for so much misery. After communion He came with outstretched arms, and gently drew me to His Heart. . . . I rested there a few minutes, lost in bliss."

After she had renewed her vows of virginity and perseverance in the Society, she reminded Our Lord that soon she would be uniting herself to Him by the vows of religion.

" 'For Thou knowest, dear Lord, that there are only two months more. How I long for the day! What joy to be Thine for ever!'

" 'I, too, am longing to imprison you in My Heart, for My affection for you has no measure. In spite of your failings and weakness, I shall use you to make My love known to many souls. There are so many who do not know how much I love them. . . . My great wish is to see these beloved ones bury themselves in the abyss of My Heart.' "

This was the second time that her coming mission was revealed to her, and as He read in the depths of her soul what she dared not express, He added for her comfort: "When you feel how vulnerable you are, and that fear oppresses you, come here for strength."

"Lord, I do not always see Thee, and there are moments when I cannot suffer alone. . . ."

"Do you not know where to find Me, Josefa? . . . One of the visible proofs of My love is that I have given you two Mothers to love and help you. Seek Me in them. There you will always find Me. Adieu."

This adieu introduces us to the last phase before Josefa's vows. Our Lord no longer showed Himself, but Satan entered in triumph. All the torments of the past months were renewed in order to shake her faith, her virtue, and her fidelity. No efforts were spared by the evil one to destroy a vocation he saw to be so fruitful for the salvation of souls. Josefa had become his personal enemy, and for two months the unloosed powers of hell fought in single combat with this frail creature, so weak in herself, but so strong in the strength of God.

Days and nights were spent, almost without halt or respite, in a desperate conflict, the violence of which was worse than anything she had yet gone through. It was astonishing that her strength did not fail, that she kept up her usual work without interruption, and that no single human eye was allowed to pierce the mystery of this extraordinary trial-

Moral torture became her portion, as her pure soul witnessed with unspeakable distaste sin in all its deformity and felt her will waver. Agony reached its paroxysm when, obsessed and

dominated, she felt that she was about to be overcome. She even went through moments of despair, and the very bottom of the abyss of hell opened under her feet—a suffering so agonizingly acute that the Mother of Dolours alone was able to appease it. The prayer of Our Lady of Sorrows, who was so dear to Saint Madeleine Sophie, more than once triumphed over the demon. Whilst those around her were imploring the Mother of Sorrows to intervene on her child's behalf, Josefa, hitherto impassive under diabolic influence, would suddenly throw herself on her knees. The veil had fallen from her eyes, and now, liberated and humbled, but confident, she protested her love of God which each time emerged stronger and more generous from the crucible of suffering.

Jesus and His Mother kept watch over her during these waves of tempest, which at the hour decreed by God broke and dispersed.

Friday, 19th May, the canonical examination for admission to the vows took place in tranquillity; the devil did not put in an appearance that day, and Josefa was able to testify, in the joy of her heart, to her determination to follow Our Lord and to be faithful to Him till death. This, of course, increased the infernal fury.

From the 25th May, Feast of the Ascension, to Pentecost on 4th June the days went by without a single ray of light to relieve the tempest. On Sunday, the 11th, the post brought the glad news from the Mother House that Josefa was admitted to her First Vows. She received the news of this grace of all graces with immense joy, and could scarcely believe it to be true. The letter bore the date 5th June, a remarkable coincidence, for it was on that day two years before that Our Lord had first made Himself manifest to her.

These graces seemed to exasperate the devil, whose rage was intensified, and he never stopped attacking her, throwing her to the ground, burning and striking her, while with disturbing tenacity he repeated again and again: "That day will never dawn. . . . I will wear you out. . . . I will torture you. . . . I will snatch you away from this place."

The Feast of the Blessed Sacrament, 15th June, and the Feast of the Sacred Heart, with its privileged Octave, brought no relief to poor Josefa's tormented soul.

The month of July began in the midst of these relentless fights. The 16th, Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, had been selected for the ceremony of her vows, and on Friday, the 7th, First Friday of the month, she began her preparatory retreat. That very day she was seized by an overpowering obsession, which threw her into a state bordering on despair, the most terrible she had yet experienced. . . . She afterwards acknowledged that never had she felt so near losing her soul.

These hours of unspeakable agony did not, however, succeed in wrenching from the depths of her soul her yearning for God. It was the Mother of Sorrows who again ruined Satan's plans.

The culminating point of diabolic striving for her soul was reached on the evening of the First Friday and during Saturday, 8th July.

It was five o'clock in the evening. Josefa, worn out, was seated in her little cell, where she had spent the whole of that terrible day. She did not seem to hear the *Aves* whispered beside her, appealing to the Virgin Mother, through her Sorrows, to come to the aid of her child. Suddenly

there came a change over the convulsed face . . . its expression relaxed, her lips parted, and gradually she joined in the prayers. Then in the calm which began to steal over her the Mothers tried reading to her a few words which had formerly been uttered to her by Our Lady, and which she had carefully treasured. When they read: "Daughter, you will never abandon my Son, will you?" she cried out vehemently: "No, Mother, never."

She threw herself on her knees, her face lit up, and before her liberated soul stood Our Lady herself, the Immaculate. With a transport of love difficult to describe, Josefa repeated the words again and again.

"No, no, Mother, never."

It was a startling moment when the devil's power crumbled and vanished before the sovereign intervention of the Queen of Heaven.

By an unlooked for coincidence, which had surely been arranged by Our Blessed Lord Himself, Father Boyer O.P., her Director, was announced at that very moment. So Josefa was able to see him, and his words of encouragement and confidence restored her once more to the arms of God.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

Retreat for First Vows

8th – 16th July 1922

" Never will I be separated from Thee, but I will follow wheresoever Thou leadest"

(From Josefa's notes of retreat)

WE have followed Josefa into the silence of her retreat, of which no single day has been exempt from the attacks of the devil. Her struggles can be followed in the notes of her retreat, in which her rooted love of God's Will stands out, in spite of the fact that it runs so counter to her own attractions, and demands of her such costly immolation.

"Lord," she wrote on the 8th of July, which had been a day of dire distress, "Thou seest what I am . . . but rather than give Thee up and be unfaithful to the call Thou hast given me, I prefer suffering a thousand times over.

"I begin this retreat devoid of any longings, yet do with me whatever Thou wilt; all I ask is that Thou wouldst so bind me to Thy Holy Will that I may never swerve from carrying out what I know to be Thy good pleasure.

"There was a time when I hailed this day with enthusiasm. It has come at last, but it finds me cold, without strength or love . . . but what would become of me had I not my Jesus! I love Him without measure, though this love is unfelt. . . . I will therefore allow myself to be led; I make the retreat solely because it is His Will, and I know that in spite of the darkness He is preparing my soul to unite it to Himself."

The first three days of the retreat passed in relative peace. The evil one, who constantly made his presence felt, tried in vain to torment her in every possible way. Nevertheless, she faithfully noted down the result of her meditations. These notes, which were not intended for any eye but her own, witness to her simplicity, uprightness and mental equilibrium.

"Jesus has given me my being, my vocation, and the means of serving Him according to His own plans," she wrote. "He has every right over me, and I must surrender with entire submission to His Will. It matters little if the path chosen is a very costly one to myself . . . the measure of my abandonment will one day be that of my happiness, and true peace will always be mine if I do His will completely, putting self out of count. . . .

"The meditation on death has given me strength to endure, for what a consolation it will be in the end to have suffered for God. . . . Thou knowest, O Lord, that I long to be united to Thee, and never to be separated from Thee, so it is not death that I fear, but life. . . . Yet my trust is in Thee; I know that Thou wilt never forsake me, and if suffering is what Thou requirest of me, I

am content, provided it comforts Thee. . . . May my life be loyal and true, that in death I may find only beatitude.

"With the Prodigal I long to throw myself into Thy Heart, and there leave all my miseries. ... I am sure of my welcome, for however great my sins, much greater is Thy mercy and the tenderness of Thy Heart."

When she listened to the Master's call, during the meditation on the "Kingdom of Christ", anguish and darkness had possession of Josefa's soul:

"Master! Thou seest my distress. Yet who can contemplate Thee leading the vanguard, and not want to follow? ... I will not be kept back by fear, but will joyfully tread in Thy footsteps. Do with me according to Thy will for Thou art my King. . . . I surrender all to find all . . . and once more repeat that never will I be separated from Thee, but will follow wheresoever Thou leadest.

"I drew fresh courage from the meditation on the Incarnation. There I see Jesus humble Himself to do the will of His Father; in the same way I must humbly submit to His will, whatever it may be . . . loving that dependence and subjection. My soul ought to be in the habitual disposition to do all, to suffer all, and to sacrifice everything to God's will. May I lead a life of absolute poverty in all things, that so He may carry out His holy will in me."

The contemplation of the Nativity revived in her memories of past Christmas joys:

"Jesus, my life, when I see Thee thus in complete destitution, could I desire to possess anything whatsoever? My little Jesus, how beautiful Thou art! I draw near the crib where Thou art lying on straw, and kiss Thy little feet and hands . . . deign to glance at me with Thy entrancing eyes and let me hear from Thy lips 'Have no fear', for Thou art my Saviour and lovest me with an infinite love, and hast said: 'My daughter, I want you to belong entirely to Me.' Am I not already Thine, Lord—and for ever?"

When, on Wednesday, 12th July, Satan's somber figure cast a heavy shadow across Josefa's path, suffering and desolation invaded her soul. That night during a prolonged descent into hell-fire, he placed her in front of the empty niches, destined for the souls she had snatched from him, and there tortured her in revenge. She returned to consciousness crushed and worn out, but ready to suffer anything for the salvation of souls. Such an offering is never made in vain, and Josefa's soul again re-entered shadowy darkness.

Of all her sad days, Thursday, 13th July, was one of the hardest. Her notes bear the impress of the successive waves of overpowering desolation which seemed to engulf her spirit. "Jesus," she wrote, "come to my aid; see the night in which I am sinking . . . do not leave me in the hands of my enemies . . ."

After the meditation on the Two Standards:

"Thou, O Lord, knowest that for years past I have longed « only to belong to Thee, to live for Thee, and to love Thee . . . now I am on the verge of giving way. O! look on me, and all will be well. O! do look on me, Lord! There are only two more days. If I cannot find peace in Thee, where am I to seek it?"

How sad were the words which expressed the memory of her heart's longings!

"Thou knowest how I longed for this retreat for my vows . . . and see, my days are spent in terror, in dismay, in trouble and pain. . . . O! why is so much freedom granted to the devil?"

But thoughts of faith soon replaced these reflections—

"Lord, I await everything from Thy Heart, I wish to belong entirely to Thee, and I affirm it again at the very height of my distress, the worst agony I have ever known, as well Thou knowest!"

And as if to give herself courage in reaffirming her resolution to be loyal to the end, she jotted down broken words like the following:

"Lord, whither can I go, to whom can I give myself, if not to Thee? . . . I no longer hope or desire anything, but I will not fail in loyalty. . . . I am ready to do whatever Thou wiliest . . . to suffer as much as Thou wiliest, and to follow Thee anywhere, giving myself to Thee with entire generosity, for Thou art my Saviour and my God and hast chosen me. . . . O! Heart full of mercy and love, have compassion on me ... do not let me fall, give me strength to resist, constancy to persevere, and love to suffer."

Such a cry of distress and love could not but reach heaven. On the evening of the 13th Josefa began her Holy Hour, kneeling in the oratory of Saint Madeleine Sophie. She was in a state of mind difficult to describe, when suddenly—in a flash—her soul became immersed in the profoundest peace. Once more Jesus had manifested His power. In the ineffable joy of that recovery, Josefa, delivered, transformed, and radiant, renewed the vows that in advance had bound her for eternity to the Heart of Jesus and to His Society. The devil was in flight, and in the expansiveness of her new-found happiness Josefa wrote next day: "Jesus, I thank Thee for having restored me to light and peace. I am ready to do Thy will in everything."

Then as if speaking to herself, she added: "I have loved Thee all my life, Thee alone my God, but no one knew I belonged to Thee. Now the heavens and the earth will know that we love each other and are espoused for all eternity! . . ."

During the last two days of her retreat this deep peace continued; she could hardly believe in her joy, but nevertheless she did not relax in the serious pursuit of perfection, and to the very end the devil tried to deprive her of her happiness.

"Jesus, in the desert, was tempted," she wrote. "The devil was allowed to attack God, to give me courage and to teach me that temptation is the crucible of all true virtue.

"I do not know if Jesus was ever tempted during His Hidden Life, but He willed to experience this trial at the moment when He was preparing for His Public Life.

"When God deigns to make use of a soul He acts in the same way: He first of all keeps her hidden, to strengthen her interior life, but when the time comes to carry out His designs. He exposes her to temptation, in order to build her up, to preserve her from self-love and make her more useful to others by the experience she has gained.

"I must trust the Heart that watches over me; and the measure of my suffering, as He has many times told me, is the future measure of my consolation."

The sight of Our Lord in His Agony, braced and stimulated her will:

"How many lessons Thou givest me, Lord. In temptation and desolation, I must have recourse to prayer if I want relief, but especially to obtain strength to carry out Thy will.
"How hard would be my heart, if at the sight of His Passion I hesitated to walk in the path He points out: a path of humiliation, denial, and absolute surrender of self."

That Friday evening, after the contemplation of the Crucifixion, she wrote:

"Lord, Thou art on the Cross about to die for me and Thy Heart will be opened for me. Heart of Jesus, show me the way in, then draw me down into Its depth.

"There is my dwelling; there shall I stay hidden—there shall I labour and suffer and lose myself . . . the lowlier I am the more I shall be able to sink into Its deepest depths . . . what a joy to know that Heart and to be His bride. . . ."

A little further on she renewed her promises with intense spiritual fervour:

"I am not capable of much, Lord, but I promise to follow where Thou leadest me. If I fail (and it will not be once only), I will not be discouraged, but will love Thee still more because of Thy tenderness for me who lovest me as though I had never sinned . . . even if I do fall, I will rise again and fly to Thy Heart."

Saturday, 15th July, eve of her vows, Josefa spent in glad expectation. Her joy was at the same time so fresh and so grave that it must have ravished the Heart of Him who delights in the simplicity and spontaneity of love.

"Day of great peace, while waiting for the hour that is to unite me to Him," she wrote. "When He comes He must not find anything that might be displeasing to Him or hinder His

entrance. . . . I must purify the dwelling of my heart. I am about to become the bride of a King who will bring with Him an abundance of all good things. I must lay aside my poor judgment; I must adopt His thoughts and His will, and subject myself in everything to His tastes. . . ."

Towards midday the enemy made a final assault, but in vain . . . He was not visible to her eyes, but she heard his raucous voice: "It's not too late, if you want to be happy, go away, or else I will burn you."

But this nefarious cloud cast no shadow over her quiet joy. That evening she noted down in detail all her intentions and hopes:

"So numerous," she said, "that I shall not have time to tell them all to Our Lord to-morrow, so I will put this letter on my heart, and He will read it during my thanksgiving. I shall have just made my vows and He will not be able to refuse me anything."

This paper has been preserved. It bears testimony to Josefa's pure affection for everyone she knew. She noted down name after name of all those dear to her (her writing getting smaller and smaller), running through all her intentions with a charity that extended to the uttermost borders of the earth and took in Holy Church, France, and Spain and the whole universe. She felt that in that most solemn hour of her life she was powerful over the Heart of Jesus, and shared more than ever His unfathomable thirst for souls. She concluded:

"As for me, I give myself up body and soul to Thee, and I have no other desire than the glory of Thy Heart which I so love. May the whole world know Thee. . . . May those consecrated to Thee love Thee ever more and more. . . . Nothing will ever separate us, neither life nor death. Enkindle me with Thy love, and give me no other consolation than that of consoling Thy Heart. . . .

"Receive this missive through the hands of Our Lady. For time and for eternity, I am henceforward Thine.

"MARIA-JOSEFA MENILNDEZ OF JESUS."

The day ended in the full glow of the presence of Jesus who was near, and the night was spent in desires.

All was ready for the offering that was about to be accomplished.

The Offering

16th July-7th August 19222

“See, have I not been faithful to you? Now My work is about to begin"

(Our Lord to Josefa, 16th July 1922)

IT was a truly heavenly day for Les Feuillants. In the house, where ceremonies of Clothing and First Vows were frequent, there was in the air a renewal of fervour and gladness, which never failed to surround the privileged few who were about to kneel before the altar and make their offering. The whole family joined in the festive joy of the day, and never does the motto of the Society 'Corunum et anima una in Corde Jesu' take on a more living reality than on such occasions.

On the morning of Sunday, 16th July, no one foresaw the marvels that were about to become realities in the life of the little novice, Josefa Menendez. How jealously God had kept her in the shadow of His Face! He had elaborated His plan, formed her and wrought in her, crushed and ground her, till the pattern He designed had been fashioned and molded. He had led her through chosen paths, and confounded Satan's devices. His mercy had triumphed in her wretchedness and His power in her weakness. To-day He Himself was about to lead her to the accomplishment of His great plans. The alliance was about to be sealed before heaven and earth; and she would become His consecrated bride, not to enjoy Him indeed, but to aid in Love's enterprise which would consummate the union between them.

She was the only novice to make her vows that day. The Chapel, bright with flowers, was filled by the children, and by her Mothers and Sisters in religion, when at eight o'clock Josefa entered with an air of recollected joy which was not of this earth. Her beloved mother and her sister Angela had come from Madrid. She knew they were there, and "these two loves of her heart", as she called them, were part of the offering she was about to make. Her other sister, Mercedes, a religious of the Sacred Heart, was united to them in spirit, in her far-off convent of Las Palmas in the Canary Islands.

Nothing either in her attitude or face, so calm and radiant, betrayed the mysterious approach of heavenly visitants.

In the silence of prayer, which the liturgical chant interrupted from time to time, the usual ritual of the ceremony proceeded. After a short discourse by the celebrant who alluded to the austere joys of religious consecration, Josefa advanced to the altar rails, and with a firm voice answered the questions:

"Is it of your own free will that you renounce the world and all worldly hopes and expectations? And do you take JESUS CHRIST for your Spouse with all your heart?"

Her whole soul exulted in the words: "Yes, Father, with all my heart!"

She then received the crucifix on which is nailed the figure of "Him who must henceforth be your Model and the sole object of your love", and the black veil about which the following is said: "Receive the yoke of the Lord, for His yoke is sweet and His burden light."

Holy Mass began. When the solemn moment of communion arrived, Josefa, all alone at the altar rails, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament held before her by the celebrant, slowly with all the will and love of her heart, pronounced the vows which would unite her for ever to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was a moving moment to those who knew at what a price the favour had been bought, through what tempests her little bark had reached port, and what miracles of love had opened for her the Heart of Him who had been captivated by her littleness.

Human eyes saw only the simple offering, but another, and this a heavenly, scene was being enacted.

A few hours later Josefa, still deep in glad recollection, noted, so that she might never forget it, what Our Lord had been pleased to do for her.

"After the sermon, I went up to the altar rails to receive my crucifix of vows and black veil. Then suddenly I saw Our Lady present, O! so ravishingly lovely, all bathed in light. She held a veil in her hands, and when I returned to my priedieu, she herself put it on my head. All round her and framing her person were a number of radiant little faces which looked like those of tiny children, lit up with joy. With ineffable sweetness she said to me: 'While you, beloved daughter, were suffering, these souls were weaving this veil for you. All those you prayed for have left purgatory and are safe in heaven for all eternity. There they will protect you.'

"It was an entrancing sight: Our Lady looked like a queen with her beautiful countenance all purity and tenderness, her golden raiment and her exquisitely moulded hands . . . and then the souls . . . so many little heads—O! it was wonderful to see, and I cannot describe how profoundly it affected me. Besides, I was wrapped in the veil, and had my crucifix. I did not know what to say . . . I let the flood of happiness just roll over me . . . what else could I do?

"When Our Lady finished speaking, the little faces disappeared, one after the other. She gave me her blessing and disappeared, too. I thought myself in Heaven.

"Then came the moment—how brimming with emotion and joy—to read the formula of my vows and receive Holy Communion . . . and then, Jesus Himself came. His Heart was flooded with effulgent light, the Wound open wide, and from It issued a force that drew me into It, and I found myself deep down in Its depths.

" 'Now, I am satisfied,' He said, 'for I hold you prisoner in My Heart. From all eternity I have been yours; now, you are Mine for ever. You will work for Me, and I will work for you. Your interests will be Mine, and Mine yours. I have been faithful to you, have I not, Josefa? And now My great work will begin.' And saying this He vanished."

A few hours later Josefa, whose heart was overflowing, wrote in her notes of retreat:

"Jesus has come; we are one . . . does He know what a miserable creature I am, and that in spite of my longing to please Him and love Him, I shall disappoint Him more than once, perhaps? . . . Yes, He knows it better than I do, but He loves me all the same, and He does not mind. He is ready beforehand to repair all my faults; that is why He has given me His Heart! . ."

Then she tried to find words which would express in detail the vows that bound her to this Sacred Heart:

"O Jesus, I thank Thee for the incomparable grace of my vows. What does my vow of Poverty mean to me? . . . I know that, henceforward, I have no right to anything: everything I use is given me as an alms. I have given up, too, all that I most cherish, my mother, my sister, my home, my country, to possess only Jesus Christ. But above all I must be despoiled of myself. Jesus will be all in all to me and I shall have no other wish or ambition than for Him. He is my strength and my peace; I want nothing but Him, and nothing except what leads me to Him.

"What of my vow of Chastity? Ah! how happy I am in my religious life and none can deprive me of this treasure. The world no longer exists for me, and I am in a closed garden full of every variety of flower, and in this enclosure, and in the midst of these flowers I shall spend my life, for they are all set apart for the heavenly Husbandman. He cultivates me and I give Him pleasure. He loves me and I love Him! . . . What else matters? O most pure Jesus, Bridegroom of virgin souls, I love Thee, for Thou art purity itself; that is what has attracted me from infancy. Jesus is the Spouse of Virgins! such were the words that attracted me as a child and made me relish the charms Thou reservest for consecrated souls, and ever since my soul has been the little flower that sheds its perfume for Thee, O Jesus! Never allow me to lose the spotlessness of grace or the love of virginity.

"And Obedience? It binds me to all legitimate authority, in which I see Thee and through whom Thou speakest to me and makest known to me Thy will. But love must go further still; I must not only obey all authority, but listen to the interior voice to which I am sometimes deaf, because I find it too costly to follow its behests, or transmit what it tells me to transmit. . . . No, Lord, I will obey for love of Thee and will ask for no reasons, nor will I hesitate or complain, for it is not my will but Thine that must henceforth live in me, and all I do must be for Thee.

"All day," she concluded, "I was so lighthearted that I did not know what to say to Jesus and His Mother!"

She seemed in very truth to be wrapped in heavenly peace, and sunk in God, but ever the same, kindly, simple, full of consideration for others. She spent the day giving joy to all around her. She paid visits to the infirm and sick, so as to give them the kiss of peace that she had been unable to give them in the Chapel. Her coming was a ray of sunshine and an expression of charity. All the time she could spare was spent with her mother and sister, for her supernatural tenderness as daughter and sister had suffered no change.

When evening came, in the much-desired silence of a prolonged adoration before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, she repeated her consecration to His Heart.

The following days only strengthened her gift of self, until the time when it was Our Lord's intention openly to discover to her the plans of His Heart, thus realizing the words she had heard on the morning of her vows: *"Now, My great work will begin."*

"On Tuesday, 18th July," she wrote, "when the last bell rang, I left my mother and sister to go to the Chapel As I went, I asked Jesus not to mind if I did not speak direct to Him quite so often these days, but to take as spoken to Himself all I shall say to them, for He knows I do it for love of Him."

As she entered the oratory of Saint Madeleine Sophie, Our Lord became visible to her. "Josefa, My bride," He said, "have no misgivings on this head. I am as much consoled as if you were with Me. See Me in them, and live in peace."

On Saturday, 22nd July, at the beginning of Mass, He again appeared—"most beautiful to behold," she wrote. "In one hand He held His Heart and with the other He beckoned to me: "Behold the prison I have prepared for you from all eternity," He said, "In My Heart you will henceforth live lost and hidden for ever."

After communion, He again spoke: "Josefa, My bride, let Me rejoice in you. My greatness will make your littleness disappear; from now on we shall labour together and as one: I shall live in you and you will live for souls."

And when she timidly reminded Him of her frailty: "Let yourself be guided. . . . My Heart will do all that is needful, My mercy will be active, My love will annihilate your whole being."
"Yesterday," says a further note, "Our Lady came in the course of the morning."

This peerless Mother seemed anxious lest Josefa should forget the dangers with which her path was beset:

" 'Be in peace, daughter,' she said to me. 'Have no reserves, and be wholly occupied with the present moment. Jesus will lead both you and your Superiors. Keep close to them, remain faithful and submissive to the will of My Son, especially in difficult moments.'

Then after a few recommendations: " 'My divine Son intends to use this little instrument for His glory and that notwithstanding all the machinations of the enemy.' "

So from Mary's own lips she gathered that the devil had not been quelled for long, for though unable to snatch her vocation from her, he would never cease trying to frustrate the plan he saw divinely inscribed on every page of Josefa's life. She was at first disconcerted to find herself still weak in spite of the grace of her vows, when painful temptations again assailed her.

"On Wednesday, 26th July, I was telling Our Lady of this great disappointment," she wrote, "asking her to obtain forgiveness for me from Jesus, to tell Him the joy it is to me to belong to Him, and how it is my one desire to love Him, but also would He deign to remember my lowliness; and as I was speaking to her so frankly and pouring out my troubles, Jesus Himself appeared. He came close to me and said: 'Why fear? I am your Saviour and Bridegroom. If only souls understood all these two words imply. . . . That is the work I intend to do by your means. The most ardent longing of My Heart is that souls should be saved, and I want My consecrated ones, especially those of My Heart, to know how easily they can give Me souls. By you, I will

let them know what treasures go to waste by their not sufficiently understanding these two words: SAVIOUR and SPOUSE.'

"Then He let me rest on His Heart, and after a few moments, He Himself raised my face so that I could look at Him. How can I express the wealth of love in those speaking eyes?

" 'So have no fears, for your shortcomings are repaired by My Heart and so are those of all souls. But the one thing that I ask is that they should not fail in trust, since I am their Saviour and their Spouse. Keep My peace, for you are beloved of My Heart and I am not distressed at your littleness. Is it not because of this very lowliness that I love you with the folly of a God?' "

Our Blessed Lady re-echoed the same lesson of trust, when on the 27th she showed herself to Josefa during night prayers. "My dearest child, do not grieve overmuch at your failings, which will occur again, but love will always be there to raise you up, for you are sustained by a Bridegroom who loves you and who is your God."

A few days later she came with a message from Jesus, who was going to bring her His Cross:

" This night He will bring you His Cross,' and resting her hand on my shoulder," said Josefa, "she added: 'Do not regard your wretchedness, but look at the treasure that is yours, for if you are all His, He is all yours.' "

A few hours later, during the night, Jesus appeared bathed in radiant light and brought her the Cross which she had not carried for a long time.

" 'Josefa, will you share the Cross of your Beloved?' and He laid it on my right shoulder.

" 'Receive it with joy, and bear it with love, for you do this for the souls I love so much. Is it not lighter than before? That is because now we are united for ever, and nothing will ever part us.' "

The faithful Friend who allowed her the day to do her work, chose the hours of the night when no one else wanted her, and when He knew she would be ever ready to console Him.

During the night of August 6th:

"I was already asleep when I heard His voice: 'Josefa, My bride!'

"There He stood, so surpassingly beautiful, bearing His Cross, and all encircled with light. I rose at once.

" 'I come to bring you My Cross.'

"And He unburdened Himself of it, laying it across my shoulder. I told Him what a joy it was to me to relieve Him of it in spite of my weakness.

" 'I bring it to you at night, for during the day I give it to other religious.'"

Then Josefa spoke to Him at once about souls and especially those of sinners, for this was a preoccupation that never left her.

" 'Yes, there are many who offend Me and many who are lost,' He answered sadly, 'but those who wound My Heart most are the much-loved ones who always keep something back, and do

not give themselves wholly to Me. Yet, do I not show them clearly enough how dearly I love them? Do I not give them My whole Heart?'

"I begged His forgiveness for them and for myself who so often keep back something," she continued humbly, "and I begged Him to accept as reparation the acts and the love of those who want to console Him. He answered gently: 'That is My intention . . . to repair the faults of some by the acts of others.' "

That night spent under the Cross was a fitting and immediate preparation for Sunday, 6th August 1922, a memorable date in Josefa's history, for it opened out new prospects of the great work that awaited her. But the divine Master who can work only through the nothingness of His instruments, wished first of all to emphasize once more this need of His Heart. She wrote:

"After communion Our Lord came in all His beauty; His Heart was wounded and open wide and He began by looking at me; then with great compassion He said: 'Misery! Nothingness! Such you are . . . Little still implies some being, but, Josefa, you are less than that, you are nothingness personified.'

"He said this so lovingly that my heart was unlocked, and I simply poured it out: 'Yes, my Master, how true. . . . I am nothing and would like to be less than nothing, for nothingness never resists or offends Thee, since it does not exist, while I *do* resist and *do* offend Thee.'

"He came back during the second Mass and drawing me close to His Heart, He said: 'Are you, then, quite convinced of your nothingness? From now on, none of the words I say to you will ever be blotted out.'

"I told Him that the thought of His putting His work of love into my unworthy hands causes me great alarm, for in spite of my good will, I have a tremendous capacity for evil.

"From His Heart there sprang a flame that burnt me.

" 'Abject little one so loved of My Heart,' He said lovingly, 'begin My work, but holding on tight to My Mother's hand the while. . . . Will not that give you courage?' "[1]

Josefa's heart bounded at these words, for nothing gave her greater security than to be in the hands of Mary whom she so loved. "Yes, Lord," she answered spontaneously, "great courage and great confidence. Tell me what I can do to obtain from this dear Mother that she should never let me fail Thee in Thy work, but keep me always faithful to Thy plans, and protect me, and that Thy Heart should sustain me; I desire nothing else."

There was a moment of impressive silence, after which Jesus spoke slowly and reflectingly words of extreme importance.

"As My Heart wishes to use abject instruments to carry out this work, the greatest of My Love, this is what you must do as a beginning during the days that precede My Mother's Assumption. You must ponder on and realize the nothingness of the instruments used. Trust

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[1] "Agarrada"—clutching, clinging to, a word which does not translate easily.

wholly to the mercy of My Heart, and promise most solemnly never to resist or refuse Me what I ask of you, however crucifying it may seem.

"On Thursday you will make a Holy Hour to comfort Me for the resistance I meet with from souls consecrated to Me.

"On Friday, I ask of you an act of reparation for the offences and sorrows inflicted on Me by these same souls."

That night when writing down Our Lord's words, Josefa was deeply struck at the memory of the grave solemnity with which He had spoken. She dared not go on writing lest she should record them inaccurately, and distort her Master's meaning. He deigned to appear and dictate to her what follows:

" 'It is of no consequence! When you write I will tell you what you have to say. None of My words will be lost. Nothing that I tell you will ever be blotted out. It signifies little that you are so worthless and wretched, for it is I who will do all.

" 'I will make it known that My work rests on nothingness and misery—such is the first link in the chain of love that I have prepared for souls from all eternity. I will use you to show that I love misery, littleness and absolute nothingness.

" 'I will reveal to souls the excess of My love and how far I will go in forgiveness, and how even their faults will be used by Me with blind indulgence . . . yes, write . . . with *blind indulgence.* I see the very depths of souls, I see how they would please, console and glorify Me, and the act of humility they are obliged to make when they see themselves so feeble, is solace and glory to My Heart. What does their helplessness matter? Cannot I supply all their deficiencies? I will show how My Heart uses their very weakness to give life to many souls that have lost it.

" 'I will make known that the measure of My love and mercy for fallen souls is limitless. I want to forgive them. It rests Me to forgive. I am ever there, waiting, with boundless love till souls come to Me. Let them come, nor be discouraged. Let them fearlessly throw themselves into My arms! I am their Father.

" 'Many of My religious do not understand all they can do to draw those steeped in ignorance to My Heart. They do not know how I yearn to draw them to Myself and give them life . . . true life.

" 'Yes, Josefa, I will teach you the secrets of My love, and you will be a living example of My mercy, for if I have such love and predilection for you who are of no account whatever, what am I not ready to do for others more generous than you?'

"He allowed me to kiss His feet, and then He went away."

From this time on, whenever Josefa had to transmit a message from the Heart of Jesus to the world, He would be there. . . . He would speak with all the expansiveness of the most burning love, and Josefa would write at His dictation these appeals, one by one, as they fell from His sacred lips.

In the note-books, these passages are underlined in red ink to make them stand out as exceptionally important.

"On Monday, 7th August, after communion," she said, "Our Lord appeared, beautiful as ever.

" 'What is it you want to tell Me, Josefa?'

" 'Lord, may I renew my vows, so that I may be obedient?'

[It will be remembered that many months ago this order had been given her, that the snares laid for her by the infernal enemy might be discovered.]

"Whilst I was renewing them, He smiled a little—He was so wonderfully beautiful, and looked at me with such tenderness and compassion! Then He opened His arms, and drawing me to His Heart, said: 'Come, since you are nothing, enter My Heart. How easy it is for a mere nothing to lose itself in that abyss of love.' "

"Then He made me enter His Heart . . ." wrote Josefa, but she could not comment on so mysterious a favour.

When at last she emerged from the unfathomable depths of Love's home, He said:

" 'That is how I will consume your littleness and nothingness.

" 'I will act through you, speak through you, and make Myself known through you. How many will find life in My words! How many will take new courage as they understand the fruit to be drawn from their efforts! A little act of generosity, of patience, of poverty . . . may become treasure that will win a great number of souls to My Heart . . . You, Josefa, will soon pass out of sight, but My words will remain.'[1]

"Then I ventured to tell Him how faint-hearted I feel, for I am always afraid of not being faithful; He looked at me with eyes of unimaginable beauty and clemency, and said: 'Fear not! I will mould and use you as seems best for My glory and for the profit of souls. Give yourself over to love, let yourself be guided by love and live lost in love.' "[2]

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[1] "Asi ire consumiendo tu pequenez y tu miseria. Yo abrare en ti. Yo hablare por ti . . . Me bare conocer por ti. Cuantas almas encontraran la vida en mis palabras! Como cobraran animo viendo el fruto de sus trabajos . . . Un actito pequeno de generosidad, de paciencia, de pobreza, etc. . . . puede ser un tesoro que de a mi Corazon gran numero de almas Pronto, tu no existiras, pues mis palabras viviran siempre. . . ."

[2] Josefa noted down a few days later words which at the time she did not dare tell Reverend Mother; "You will die soon. I will warn you a little beforehand, so that your Mother can tell the Bishop everything. But do not be alarmed, for not many days after you will be with Me in Heaven."