

SISTER HENRIETTE-THERESE BARRE: (1886-1942)

She was bedridden for eighteen years suffering from Pott's disease, tuberculosis of the vertebrae. She is an example of the crucified life. She left a collection of her letters, most of which are addressed to her sister.

When she was born, she was very weak. There was doubt she would survive. She was cured during a pilgrimage – Mary's miracle child. The little one loved to be in Church. When she was 3 or 4, her mother gave her a rosary. She put it in the holy water font to bless it. As a girl she slept on the floor. Her sister testified that "she said endless prayers."

She wanted to become a Carmelite but she was not accepted by the Carmel in Rennes due to her delicate health. She found a place in the "Adoration." She wanted to remain a lay sister but she was accepted as a choir sister. She tried to do the little things but she was not very practical, she broke vases etc. So she was put in the "art" department that organized and decorated for feasts and jubilees.

She was professed in 1913. Beginning in 1914 she worked exclusively for the "Enthronement" sending out material etc. At times the work was too hard for her. Several times she met Father Mateo, who dubbed her "the house treasure." She had serious health crises. "On June 22, 1924 she took to her bed and would never again get up." During the German invasion, she was moved from Picpus to Laval.

Her letters reveal a profound ss.cc. spirituality (even using the founders' vocabulary), a good sense of family and an interest for the political situation.

Extracts from a letter to her sister (May 20, 1940)

My dear little Louise,

...This year, Mary Mediatrix seems to invite us once again to go to the heart of her divine Son through her. We so need her powerful intercession! Isn't she the all powerful intercessor; if we go to her full of confidence, her prayer will obtain forgiveness and mercy for us from the heart of him who loves us so much. Jesus has the destiny of our poor homeland and those of the allies in his hands....He will see us in the heart of Mary; our heavenly Mama will cause torrents of graces to descend on us and hasten the hour of peace. The heart of Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He alone can give it to us...

We are so guilty but his mercy is so much greater than the greatest perversity in the world...Trust, Jesus will not abandon us; let us take heaven by force while our soldiers are fighting heroically; let us help them all day long with our prayer; they never cease fighting; let us never stop praying, even while working...

May 31 will be the anniversary of Daddy's death; his little ones will pray for him, we owe it to him in so many ways. How happy we can be, at this sad time, to have had a Christian upbringing.

The news this morning is so awful; all of our poor Belgian sisters who are refugees here were crying. Fifteen days ago fifteen sisters from Tongres along with Mother Marie Camille arrived after a five day journey. They walked more than 50 kilometers across fields, along roads and found themselves in the midst of more than 50 air raid warnings and bombardments. The Good God obviously protected them; they saw bombs fall all around them; parachutists landed by the hundred, shooting all around them; fires broke out everywhere. Some of them walked for 20 hours straight and you can imagine what state they were in when they arrived here.

The situation is so serious; if we would only fall on our knees and recognize that He alone is everything and can do everything, it seems to me that things would change; it is the hour of expiation...It seems that when we see the danger we draw closer to the Good God. Poor France, it is going through a very sad time along with everyone else.

I embrace you with all my love and place you in the Heart of Jesus with the Blessed Virgin.

Sr. Henriette-Thérèse