

MORE THAN THEIR LIFE!



The Picpus Vocation in a Time of Terror

Marcel Bocquet ssc

Congregation of the Sacred Hearts

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(David P. Reid ssc, Translator editor)

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Table of Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	V
<i>Preface</i>	IX
<i>Postscript</i>	XIX
<i>Introduction</i>	XXIV
Chapter I	THE PARIS COMMUNE..... 1
Chapter II	THE ARREST.....24
Chapter III	THE BROTHERS56
Chapter IV	FATHER LADISLAS RADIGUE 70
Chapter V	FATHER POLYCARPE TUFFIER..... 93
Chapter VI	FATHER MARCELLIN ROUCHOUZE.....109
Chapter VII	FATHER FRÉZAL TARDIEU129
Chapter VIII	THE CONCIERGERIE PRISON..... 148
Chapter IX	MAZAS PRISON156
Chapter X	SOLITARY CONFINEMENT164
Chapter XI	LA ROQUETTE PRISON185
Chapter XII	THE FIRST FRUITS OF BLOOD194
Chapter XIII	FIFTEEN ARE NEEDED201
Chapter XIV	THE ASCENT TO CALVARY210

FOREWORD

“For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well.” (Philippians 1:29)

Whoever reads this book will not come out unscathed. The execution of our four brothers Ladislav Radigue, Polycarpe Tuffier, Marcellin Rouchouze and Frézal Tardieu, on 26 May, 1871, in the final days of the Commune of Paris, confronts us with the risk that faith in Jesus entails. None of them were deceived in this respect. They knew this from the beginning and not just when they were taken to prison in the first days of April 1871, along with 84 sisters and 11 other brothers of the congregation, as well as men from other religious orders (Dominicans, Jesuits, religious of St. Vincent de Paul), diocesan priests and lay people. They knew this when they decided to follow Jesus, who reveals the depth of God's love in a vulnerable, defenceless and pierced heart. How could those who had consecrated their lives to the reparative love made visible in the hearts of Jesus and Mary not find themselves in the gaps that were opening up in society. How could they not, for the sake of justice and in fidelity to the indefatigable mercy of God place themselves alongside the many others who were being persecuted?

In their letters written in prison we become aware of the inner journey that each of these brothers made in order to respond to Jesus' call: “Follow me”, even in the darkest of hours.

Jesus warns those who follow him. They will discover a secret joy when persecuted and cursed for his name's sake. But to discover that blessing, one has to go through the present, with its at times luminous and at other times unreasonable and violent moments. This presupposes a certain courage and understanding in order to be able to question the most radical aspects of one's faith, especially when the person who has

faith is the one at risk of harm. The Church and its members are inserted into society. The malaise and tensions that pervade society can also affect the church. Moreover, at times it can be the church itself that channels or aggravates such tensions, or worse, provokes them. In their reflections from prison, the brothers, with varying lucidity, perceived that they were in prison because they were priests, members of the church. However, this hatred against religion, against the Catholic Church and its members was also an expression of a deep social malaise on the part of those excluded, of those who count for nothing, of those who feel they are superfluous. Those who are persecuted because they follow Jesus in the Church, yesterday and today, ask themselves: why is this hatred being unleashed against us? What is our responsibility in this?

To suffer persecution for Jesus is to be in a purifying crucible that allows us to question the way in which the Gospel of Jesus is proclaimed amidst the tensions and within the limits of our institutions and our history. It is also a time to recognise the institutional and personal wounds of the Church, those we are suffering from and those we are causing to others. Looking at these wounds, social, institutional and personal, being able to name them without embellishing them, is a first step in opening ourselves to the reparative power of the love of the pierced heart. Recognising ourselves as vulnerable and allowing ourselves to be touched by the wounds of others places us in the perspective of Jesus who opposes the other's violence by asking, 'openly': "Why do you strike me?"

Moreover, by recognising that we, too, are vulnerable and wounded, we unite ourselves with all the men and women who are wounded, beaten, tossed into the street, and who wait for the hands and generosity of a Good Samaritan.

When our confession of faith in Jesus takes place in a violent context - to which we are close, loving and wounded - so we draw

closer to the heart and sentiments of Jesus who acts through us. In this way, it becomes Jesus and not us who is at the centre.

To believe in Jesus and to suffer for him even to the giving of one's life is a grace, a grace that cannot be improvised. It is a grace asked of the Lord and nourished in the day to day living and loving of the brothers and sisters, who together undergo the trials of fraternity, and discover how to accept failure. All of this unites us more with Jesus each day in his self-giving that we celebrate in the Eucharist and contemplate in Adoration. It is the grace that Frézal Tardieu recognised in his life six years before it became a test of truth at the moment of his execution.

“Prostrate before You, O my God, and covered with the blood of Your Son, I offer and consecrate to You all that I have, all that I am, my thoughts, my words, my actions, my infirmities, my illnesses, my possessions, my reputation, my life. You have given me everything, I give everything back to You to be used for your glory and for the salvation of my neighbour.”

The grace of a life handed over, even unto death, is that of soberly and courageously facing one's own fears and the unleashed violence and deciding to unite oneself to the self-giving of Jesus for the sake of the men and women whom he loves. Jesus, the sun from on high, not only throws light on our fears and the shadows of violence in the depth of our societies but also shines on the good and the bad. Life in Christ no longer belongs to us; it becomes fruitful when it is given away just as he gave his away.

The spiritual testimony of Christian de Chergé, written two years before he was killed along with seven other Trappist monks in Algeria on 21st May, 1996, (he was beatified in Algeria on 8th December, 2018), reminds us of a rigorous evangelical consistency. Christian gave thanks to God for having lived to the end the grace of a life given up. He had received this grace earlier through the love of his family, his friends, his

brothers in community and the people of Algeria whom he learned to love as sons and daughters of the same and only Merciful God. It was a grace that even came to him, mysteriously, through the hand of the one who would assassinate him:

“And you also, the friend of my final moment, who would not be aware of what you were doing. Yes, for you also I wish this “THANK YOU”—and this ADIEU—to commend you to the God whose face I see in yours. And may we find each other, happy ‘good thieves,’ in Paradise, if it pleases God, the Father of us both. Amen.”

Reading this book how can one not think of the Christian communities who are persecuted today because of their faith and their service of the God of Jesus in worship and in their love of neighbour? How can one not think of the men and women who live their religion in a context which forbids diversity of opinion or critical debate? How can one not think of the deep social illnesses and injustices which pervade vast sections of our world and which take on a religious form when the name of God is invoked to justify violence and destruction?

May the reading of this book help us to live our consecration to the Sacred Hearts as a daily response to a life that does not actually belong to us. Our life is, in fact, a calling to give ourselves day by day to the service of our brothers and sisters and, if God should so will it, to embrace death as the ultimate testimony of our faith in his faithful love - given to the very end.

Alberto Toutin ssc
Superior General
Rome 19th March, 2020, Feast of Saint Joseph

PREFACE

Welcome to this essay on the persecution of the church in France in the time of the Commune of Paris 1871.¹ Reading the signs of the times, the universal call to holiness today is a call to martyrdom because the persecution of Christians is pervasive and widespread. If anyone is persecuted, we are all persecuted because of our oneness in Christ.

Persecution is a redefining moment for the Christian community, for while discrimination against persons who are religious ought to be rejected, the church always rejoices in those who die of a persecution which comes from the hateful rejection of those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Thus, the Church's mark as one and ecumenical is evident in a time of persecution. The issue is modern and painfully evident even as the Roman Catholic Church prepares to celebrate an anniversary of an epochal persecution which, being historical and human, is ambiguously interpreted.

Twenty/twenty is how we characterise good vision. For the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SSCC) the year

¹ The Paris Commune. According to some, the 10 most intense weeks in the history of Paris during which, in March 1871, a group of revolutionaries took control of Paris. On 28th May, the movement was crushed by the regular French army. Built on the principles of shared citizenship, the idea was to pose the rights of the ordinary person in opposition to the established order of the Monarchy and the Church, an echo of the French Revolution itself. But the real motivation was the anger over France's defeat in the war against Prussia, which ended in a humiliating armistice in January 1871. While France respected the terms of the engagement, the tax burden weighed heavily on each individual and in the long run on France's role in the world order. The defence of the Pope's states, for example, a long-standing commitment of France to the Pope, was abandoned with the unification of Italy and eventually the creation of the Vatican by the Lateran Treaty in 1929 with Benito Mussolini.

2020 offers us an opportunity to revisit our history and celebrate our vocation as we prepare to honour the 150th anniversary of the death of our confreres in the Commune of Paris (March - May 1871), a time of great maturation for us. The present work might aid that revisit.

A note is called for to explain the origin of this work and such would be the note of Marcel Bocquet, the author of this material. It is found at the end of the first of four articles in *Annales Congregationis Sacrorum Cordium* (ASSCC 1962-64) The first of the articles (in this book Chapter 4), concerned Fr. Ladislas Radigue who died in the Commune of Paris (1871). His companions, Polycarpe Tuffier, Marcellin Rouchouze and Frézal Tardieu are the subjects of Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively. In all, Bocquet's study furnished fourteen chapters.

He writes: *"These pages are taken from a study still in manuscript put together on the "Commune of Paris and the Community at Picpus."*²

They deliberately leave out any reference to arrest, imprisonment and death. They simply sketch the curve of the life of Fr. Ladislas. After a pious childhood, he

² Picpus. This word refers to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. Composed of brothers, sisters and secular members, the Congregation was born in Poitiers, France between 1792 and 1800. In 1805 it established its headquarters south-east of Paris in the district called Picpus. The name Picpus is said to have originated in the time of an epidemic when relief was given to the sick by pricking pus from their wounds. However, the establishment of the Congregation in this district is directly linked to a cemetery where nearly 1500 guillotined people were summarily buried in mass graves during the French Revolution. The care for the cemetery by the Congregation was one way of making reparation for the atrocities perpetrated at that time. The property was very extensive and included a convent of nuns, a community of brothers, school buildings, a farm and the aforementioned cemetery. The property and buildings were requisitioned by the French army during the Franco-Prussian war and again by the Communards who held captive in the buildings more than 100 members of the Community of the Sacred Hearts of Picpus. Today, 37 rue de Picpus remains the address of the most famous Congregation in Paris. It is also close to the new campus of the Sorbonne University.

survived a crisis of adolescence, marked by indolence and dissipation. When Ladislas found his true vocation, one can speak of a true conversion in the mode of Philo. From then on, he led an intense and hidden life, without, however, giving up on the development of certain skills. As master of novices, he quickly became a master of spirituality. If at first as a leader he had some difficulty in freeing himself from the long-held practice of working for and under others, he revealed himself under the pressure of exceptional circumstances (death of the Superior General and captivity), a true leader and a strong personality.

One can recall here the judgment of a historian of the Commune, Fr. Virieu. Speaking of Ladislas' letters, he said, "it was like reading an epistle found in the writings of Saint Ignatius of Antioch". This assessment is priceless. This note is based on those published by Fr. Benoit Perdereau, Superior of the Major Seminary of Versailles, in the "Martyrs of Picpus," and by Fr. Prospère Malige, Superior of the Major Seminary of Rouen, in "Picpus pendant la Commune", both of whom had known him personally. The evaluation is also based on unpublished notes that I found in a college in Flers in the course of giving a mission. Focussing on proving martyrdom – which is essential - this human dossier would seem imperfectly assembled and exploited. If martyrdom is a grace and escapes our analysis, it is no less true that the quality of the testimony is enhanced by the quality of the witness. The way is therefore open to more researchers."

This note is precious because in the course of discussing a remark about Ladislas Radigue it refers to sources upon which Bocquet built his work and reveals much about the author himself. He points to two stalwarts, Perdereau and Malige but he is not limited to them. During the time of Henri Systemans' mandate as Superior General (1958-1970), Marcel Bocquet, explored widely the Congregation's archives. In that period, he also researched the life of Fr. Mateo and published his findings in *Le Père Mateo ssc, l'amour présent au monde*, translated by Francis Larkin as *Jesus, King of Love* (Milwaukee Bruce 1956).

Marcel Bocquet (1903-1977) was a brother of the SSCC French Province, a teacher of rhetoric and a master at banter. For all of his

illnesses – long-term asthma – he was a lively character, engaged in the work of the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the Home. He knew the life and work of Fr. Mateo but at heart he was a teacher who liked to leave his students wanting for more. This point was made in the obituary note written by Xavier Riou, (*Horizons Blancs* #73, October 1977, p. 95) and also applies to these sketches published here.

The aforementioned study on Fr. Ladislav Radigue plus another on each of the other Servants of God (Polycarpe Tuffier, Marcellin Rouchouze and Frézal Tardieu) are but four of the fourteen essays by Bocquet collected here. As mentioned in his note he intended to publish them all, but they have been safely preserved in the Congregation's General Archives (Rome) except for the four biographical sketches published in the *JSSC Annals*. Notice is given of the many writings of the Servants by the Theological Commission that studied them. They range from letters to class notes, spiritual conferences to reports on missions and current popular devotions. It is clear that Bocquet is familiar with these writings. He is also aware of many other aspects that need to be shared to understand the times in which these men lived. If he leaves his reader wanting to know more, he does not hide his own viewpoint. On persons and events, he writes in a humanistic way, not with the typical exaggeration of his subjects' sanctity. In regard to the Communards, he views matters from a critical perspective but in terms of condemning the counter-revolutionary violence, his approach may be inadequate.

Marcel Bocquet as a member of the same Congregation as those about whom he writes is faithful to his task as a historian but is also an admirer of these gallant men whom he unabashedly thinks of as saints and martyrs. Referring to those who died in the Commune of Paris as martyrs was already common from the first months following their deaths. To replace the popular word for the sake of the technical word used in Church document causes much of the devotion of these

writings (e.g. Perdereau and Malige) to be lost and that would be a distortion because those who wrote were praising God for the gift of self-sacrifice given to the Congregation in its members. The major discernment that might end in officially assigning the title martyr (Beatification) is an immensely rich process of exploring the ways that God's holiness can make its claim upon us mere mortals. Bocquet's work justifies the statement that if it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a whole community to raise a saint.

The death of the Servants of God (Frs. Ladislav Radigue, Polycarpe Tuffier, Marcellin Rouchouze and Frézal Tardieu) is to be seen in the context of an entire Congregation traumatized but reborn in persecutions which did not begin with the Commune nor end there. The Congregation lived the trauma of the Catholic Church in France after the French Revolution and its leadership would eventually be exiled from France in 1905. The story of those who died thus takes on the wider dimension of the story of the times in which they lived. And those times were the days of transition between the old order and the new order in which "God fulfils himself in many ways", to quote Tennyson. In that same poem, *Mort d'Arthur*, Arthur goes on to urge Sir Bedivere to pray "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." Through the gift of those called to die for the faith, the Congregation found anew its vocation to pray, asking God through perpetual adoration to repair the earth. Participation in community thanksgiving is, therefore, the ideal context to hear what Marcel Bocquet wants to share with us.

Marcel Bocquet's reconstruction of many conversations might not be every historian's cup of tea but the creative work begs a deeper question. Rather than ask the obvious question about the historical accuracy of the story he relates it might be better to appreciate the sense of solidarity and outrage that underpins a whole set of facts and assessments. The more one reads other authors and particularly the

official reports of the Commune, the more solid Bocquet's approach appears. If, on the one hand, he is sensitive to the critical situation which, in many respects, led to the Commune, on the other hand he cannot contain his rage in the face of the unbridled invasion of a house full of victims of the Commune.

The author is not insensitive to the cry of the poor that led some to trigger the Commune of Paris. Because of his sympathies, he is all the more critical of the misfit between the reforms needed and the inexperience of those who were the leaders of the Commune. The unyielding character of his criticism belies an intense outrage that a cause not unworthy in its need and inspiration should have been so betrayed by incompetence and haste. Objectively speaking, it is not hard to be outraged and grieved to see more than one hundred members of a religious community, brothers and sisters thrown into prison and their convents turned upside down from attic to cellar and four dead bodies to prove that it was not a nightmare.

The Picpus brothers were not the only ones to die. There were Archbishop Darboy and the priests of the Archdiocese, the Jesuits, Dominicans, Sulpicians and one who strode the new and old world every day on the streets of Paris, Fr. Henri Planchat.³ These deaths have also to be seen in the context of the staggering number of sixteen thousand people who were put to death by the incoming French army.

³ The Archbishop was killed on 24th May along with five diocesan priests and the Dominicans were killed on 25th May. Father Henri Planchat died on 26th May along with the four Picpusians, the Jesuits and thirty-six gendarmes and four so-called spies. Arrested after their escape on 27th May, three others were executed. The Cause of Father Henri Planchat, the first religious priest of the Congregation of Saint Vincent de Paul, was presented to the Holy See with the four religious of the Sacred Hearts Servants of God: "Henri Planchat, Ladislas Radigue and his companions".

On both sides there was much to be outraged about and much to be repaired.

Less the piling on of information than the observing of what was happening, Bocquet's booklet is a series of telegraphic-style essays, a single-handed attempt to come to peace with all that took place during the Paris Commune and to move forward.

Marcel Bocquet knows the story so well and the characters involved, that he fails at times to adequately introduce the neophyte to the story. This work is therefore an invitation to the reader to get interested and learn more.

Together with the death of Saint Damien de Veuster, the deaths of the four in the Commune precipitated an era of growth and enthusiasm in and for the Congregation under the leadership of Fr. Marcellin Bousquet who was elected Superior General in 1870 and served in times no less tumultuous than the first fifty years of the history of the Congregation. Fr. Bousquet served until the vigil of World War I when he died in Belgium, exiled from France. Expressing himself every bit as ready to die as to serve, he often alluded to the blessed state of the Congregation and its salient future. Marcel Bocquet, for his part, is writing on the crest of that wave that came in the 1960's when the Congregation had reached its largest membership and most extensive missionary outreach. That exuberance shapes Bouquet's assessment of the past. His scornful review of events is nonetheless hopeful and educative.

In making these essays available to a wider audience the intention is in no way to anticipate the discernment of the Catholic Christian community as to the official status as martyrs of those who died but to enrich the knowledge that brothers and sisters, religious and lay, have of their spiritual heritage.

It seemed appropriate to add in a few extra pieces in this collection. When Bocquet said that another chapter would be needed to speak of the sisters' plight in the time of the Commune, an older publication supplied the need and that is included as an appendix to Chapter 2, "The Arrest". The exquisite letter of Marcellin Rouchouze to his sister Anne in La Serena, Chile on the cusp of his death could not be left aside when it came to catching the character of narrator in the supposedly taciturn and hidden secretary, Marcellin Rouchouze. Ladislas Radigue's confession already comes as part of Bouquet's text. It seemed balanced to add Frézal Tardieu's prayer in which he asks for martyrdom long before the events of his actual death. To match all this eloquence with something from Polycarpe Tuffier seems at first sight a stretch. His cousin's biography with its large share of his letters, supplied the need. Which letter of Tuffier would Bocquet have chosen as typical? There is no one particular letter that would suffice for Tuffier was not an essayist. But he wrote profusely out of need in concrete circumstances and Bocquet visits those circumstantial letters in the chapter that treats of being held in solitary confinement, an experience that contextualised Tuffier's struggles.

This work is meant to whet one's appetite for more. Were it to be properly annotated, it would be doubled in length. But some notes were deemed indispensable for understanding the story. There seems to be no limits on works dealing with the Commune but a paucity when one treats of SSCC and the Commune.

The best sources are the *SSCC Annals* which repeated material on anniversary dates and the documents submitted to the Congregation for the Cause of the Saints - much of which is testimony *de visu*, that is from those who knew the Servants of God through living with them. Occasionally Bocquet indicates his sources but seldom. His work was still a first draft. However, much can be verified on a closer examination of the General Archives. This is to say that Marcel

Bocquet did his research although his interim text is shy in showing it. However, as indicated his interpretive keys are his own and infuse the whole with zest and passion. That brings us anew to the relevance of this work.

The chronological anniversary is important but the special time (*kairos*) of persecution that is upon us as Christians in the world today promotes the work's relevance. Many have written of the future of the Christian movement as small, synodal, pilgrim and mystical. To those characteristics, we need add persecuted. The way of the Gospel of Jesus Christ appears more and more out of sync with the development of modern life which, despite its expressed intention of inclusion, tends to persecute those who do not fit in. The disaccord is as radical as the question of life in its beginning and ending and the vocation to be human is seriously under threat. The irony of the Christian life today is that for the sake of what human life is, they are willing to give their lives. This irony is captured in the writings of John the Evangelist but suffice it to recall the ironic words of the Apocalypse, (NAB, 1986) "love of life did not deter them from death." (12:11) Hence the title of the work *More than their Life!*⁴

Many assisted me in this work, and I thank all and especially André Mark ssc (former General Archivist), Luana Tarsi (secretary

⁴ In July 1871, Sister Blanche Lhopiteau ssc wrote to her parish priest, Father J. Hermet about Father Tuffier who had died two months earlier. He had twice been chaplain of the community of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Laval: from 1840 to 1847 and in 1862. Using the popular term "martyr", she wrote what is a living interpretation of the Book of Revelation: *we find our immense consolation in the certainty that our dearly departed now enjoy the fullness of heavenly gifts, the vision of their God whom they loved unconditionally, more than their freedom, more than their life, and who rewarded them for their love from this world with the halo of martyrdom henceforth attached to their memory.* (Source: Reine Tuffier. *Biographical note on the Reverend Father Polycarpe Tuffier* (Rome, SSCC General Archives, *Servants of God* 3 HI Cahiers 1 page 78, emphasis added).

of the Archives), Maria Centofanti (publishing manager), Mary Leahy (editorial assistant), Columban Crotty ssc (consultant/reader) and Alberto Toutin ssc Superior General for the foreword. Finally I offer special thanks to Derek Lavery ssc for overseeing the English edition.

David P. Reid ssc
June 2020

POSTSCRIPT

As Providence would have it, after I finished reading these pages, whose final outcome is tragic to say the least, I happened to hear the philosopher François Cheng on television. When asked about the meaning of death, he replied: “Death is what makes of life a gift.”⁵ This wise formula perfectly and explicitly offers the deep and unified logic of these pages and of these lives. Their ending is tragic by its violence. This contrasts painfully with the gentleness and quality of the services offered throughout their lives by these brothers, priests, sisters of Picpus. In their youth, they joined a congregation that appointed them to the works of education and evangelisation on the other side of the world. They lived the offering of their lives in the mystery of Christ, meditated day and night in Eucharistic adoration. They gave themselves to the Lord and to all humanity, and four priests among them – why they and not others, we might ask - died in a ‘popular’ massacre on the hill of Belleville. Their death was a supreme gift bringing us to the very heart of their vocation, and of any vocation we may add. Fr. Bocquet's work has the merit of revealing the integrity of their calling and helping us to know the itinerary that led them from their native homes to the community of Picpus. The Lord works in human hearts and prepares people to live the ups and downs of history in a humble, but assuredly beautiful way.

Therefore, my second reaction is to point out to our Picpucian family today that the publication of these pages is their duty; they have even waited too long (though part of the book comes from old articles already published)! Yes, there is a duty to remember but even more a duty to edify the people of God as a whole, beyond the limits

⁵*La grande librairie*: transmitted on 29th January, 2020 on *France 5*, (available on France 5 website).

of the Congregation. At the heart of these pages, so grim about our Parisian and national history, the light of charity and truth appears. By the remarkable clarity it brings, this book could and should revive not only the cause of the beatification of our four priests, but also that of the other victims of the Commune. The story of the cause of Bishop Georges Darboy is, we know, emblematic of the French hesitations and troubled conscience in the face of this dark period. The archbishops of Paris opened and closed this file several times, until a recent relaunch by Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger and a suspension by Cardinal André Vingt-Trois.⁶ Indeed, the account of the four lives of Frs. Radigue, Tuffier, Tardieu and Rouchouze clearly shows the climate of hatred of faith that prevailed in their execution, which reverberates on all the hostages and makes it possible to define more adroitly the notion of Christian martyrdom. How can we not be struck by the figure of the seminarian Seigneret helping the old missionary Tuffier to climb the streets of Belleville?

The two prefaces to the book warn that Fr. Marcel Bocquet's tone about the Communards can be vindictive. In fact, it is fairly measured and yields facts, and rather few judgments. There is no hiding the face of the anticlerical violence of the “communards” and that of the “versillais”! On the other hand, we must question the deep roots of those attitudes on both sides. Why does Adolphe Thiers refuse any negotiation for an exchange between Louis Auguste Blanqui and the hostages, when the “bloody week” is already planned and its result assured? Why so much hatred on the part of Parisians at the end of the Second Empire, which appears throughout to have been a favourable

⁶ Charles Chauvin, *Mgr Darboy, Archbishop of Paris, hostage of the Commune* (1813-1871), Paris, DDB, 2011, p. 170-172. Jacques-Olivier Boudon, “Episcopate and holiness, the vagaries of the cause of Darboy”, in *La Sainteté*, acts of the 7th Summer School of religious history convened by Gérard Cholvy, July 1998, p. 133-148. Jacques-Olivier Boudon, *Monseigneur Darboy (1813-1871) Archbishop of Paris between Pius IX and Napoleon III*, Paris, Cerf, 2011.

period of reconstruction and mission for the Catholics? In some ways, it was a happy period, even carefree, but ending in a tragic war that would lead in its wake to two other world conflicts and so many victims. The deaths of the Commune - a French-on-French civil war, with the Prussians at the backdoor – are, as it were, the first offerings of so many innocent victims of an entire century: one thinks not only of the deaths resulting from world conflicts but also those deaths resulting from totalitarianisms that were stemming from communism then in gestation.

When the Church examines her conscience, she must question herself about her mission in a society that saw the growth of social inequalities and the exploitation of some by others. This fissure worried the young Frédéric Ozanam (1813-1853) as early as 1836; the Church in the form of the young members of the society of St. Vincent de Paul wanted to avoid this bloody war in the future. Allow me to give a long quotation:

“... there is need today for charity, giving, patience, to heal the sufferings of these poor people, poorer than ever because they were refused food for their souls just when they came to lack material food. The problem which divides people today is not a political problem, it is a social one. It is a matter of knowing which will get the upper hand, the spirit of selfishness or the spirit of sacrifice; whether society will go for ever increasing enjoyment and profit, or for everyone devoting themselves to the general good, and above all to the defence of the weakest. Many people have too much and want still more. Others do not have enough, or do not have anything at all, and they want to take by force what is not being given to them. A war is threatening between these two groups and it looks like being a terrible one. On one side the power of wealth, on the other the force of desperation. We must get in between these two groups, at least to reduce the impact if we cannot stop it. Because we are

young, because we are not wealthy, we can more easily fill the role of mediators, which, as Christians, we should consider obligatory.”⁷

The author of these lines is twenty-three years old and of the same generation of our martyrs; sickness will mean that he will never know the end of the story... This quotation reveals how much the Christian actors involved in this story were not blind to the drama that was being played out. They were probably not planning to die as martyrs in Paris, no more than their predecessors in September 1792. But they were engaged in the work of ‘charity in truth’ at the service of society as it was. It was not a glorious moment for the Commune to have set fire to the city in revenge and to have massacred priests (Given the present circumstances a little known fact can be pointed out: the Commune set fire to Notre-Dame Cathedral, but the residents of the Hôtel-Dieu rushed to put out the burning chairs before it spread). Nor was it a glorious moment for the nascent Third Republic to have caused so many deaths. In this double error a schizophrenic memory was to take root which would lead to 1905 and to many other things from which we have not completely recovered, even if positive secularism brings with it many advantages.

To return to Picpus, the graves of the last victims of the Terror are to be found at the rear of the garden where the brothers and sisters prayed. Among them are the Blessed Carmelites of Compiègne. These sisters had vowed to give their lives for the cessation of France's misfortunes and the Montagnard Convention ended ten days after their execution. I do not know exactly whether our dead in 1871 were aware of this detail of the Carmelite spiritual history. We are entitled, however, to wish, to dream, to pray ... that the cause of those who died between 24th and 26th May, 1871 culminate in the truth not for

⁷ Letter No. 137 to Louis Janmot, Lyon, 13 November 1836. *Letters of Frédéric Ozanam*, Volume I, Paris, 1961, pp. 242-245.

any kind of vengeful memory, but for one that brings peace and reconciliation. May Our Lady of Peace watch over the process from our chapel in Picpus!

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the preface is to tell how this book came about and offer an insight into the author's viewpoint, sources and method. For an introduction to the work, which indicates the subject of the discussion, Bocquet's first three chapters serve well. His focus will be the story of the four brothers who died but he wants to set that story in the context of the religious life of both brothers and sisters during the Commune. The four who died were not alone in preparing for death; the extraordinary aspect of this period of history for SSCC was that at one point one hundred plus ssc were imprisoned: some eighty-four sisters, twelve priests and more than ten lay brothers.

A point made by Ladislav Radigue was that if this had not happened, the Congregation might wonder if she was a part of the real world to which she belonged. The Founder, Fr. Coudrin had left an indicator by which the community could know if the brothers and sisters fitted into any one historical moment. "Are you useful to the church?" The presence of the Catholic Christian was contested on all sides. The Church's continuance might seem a foregone conclusion, but the Church is no older than the celebration of the Eucharist. It is born of the Spirit, of the one action of Jesus, dying and being raised to the glory of the Father and sending us the Holy Spirit. The reverential remembering of the death of Jesus is lived now in the dying and rising of the Body of Christ every day and in every life situation. Remembering the dead and the resurrected in the community is profoundly missionary. In 1870, three quarters of a century after the founding of the Congregation, living the paschal mystery far away in mission fields was the ideal of the Congregation although there was always a need for rebuilding on the home front as much as anywhere else. An internal schism which had shaken the young Congregation in the years immediately preceding the Commune, played its own part in the conditioning of the

Congregation to accept such bold self-offerings: for unless the seed die...

With the background duly sketched, Bocquet undertakes to write the four chapters dedicated to the four who died. His aim is to show that they were prepared, each in his own way. Whereas they seem to have much in common and they do, they are in fact distinct human characters. The good preparation they received for religious life stood them well for when the time of temptation drew near. Being subjected to solitary confinement was used by them to see everything in context. Bocquet dedicates a lot of energy in presenting Polycarpe Tuffier, perhaps the most compelling of the Servants of God, because it took him all his time in prison to accept his vocation to die. Although prison was utterly antithetical to his whole being, he used his time in a truly transformative manner. He remained the gruff caregiver to the end, dying as he threw his body about a younger man to protect him. Fr. Ladislav remained the attentive superior, probing his own conscience as to how best to inspire and lead. He seemed to see Eucharistic beauty in the giving of self whether one lived or died. The feel for drama which he had from his youth did not leave him in his final days for he wanted to be dressed for death as if he were going to the altar. Polycarpe Tuffier his faithful vicar also saw himself, if not dressed for Mass, at least in touch with the words of Psalm 42: *"I will go to the altar of God who gives joy to my youth"* the words with which the priest began Mass in those days.

After many years of serving both the poor and the Congregation in Belgium, Frézal Tardieu returned to the life of an academic, spiritual director and a pastoral companion to people wanting to grow in holiness. He showed breath-taking humility and was truly appreciative of the care offered to his brothers by the former prison guards who were so different from the young headstrong Communards who were trying to command the situation. Fr. Frézal was a brave man who spoke his mind clearly and without fear of

reprisals. With all his experience, he was well chosen to serve on the General Council. He employed his skills as a spiritual director to keep himself well focused. Similarly, Marcellin Rouchouze used his talents as a shrewd observer who, although hidden in the service of his brother Fr. Euthyme, (the Superior General), did not miss many details. The complete text of his letter to his sister in La Serena, Chile written in March 1871 is given in Chapter 6. Both in what he chooses to talk about and in the detail that he provides to those outside of a besieged Paris, Marcellin is like the wise one in the Bible who praises God in the use of his skills.

Having presented the citizens of the Commune and especially the four who would die, Marcel Bocquet moves rapidly and with much detail through the scenes ranging from their arrest and multiple imprisonments (Conciergerie, Mazas, Roquette) to the final and ignominious Rue Haxo. These chapters, from eight to fourteen, are sketches - although Bocquet does succeed in presenting some of the traits of the abductors.

On the fiftieth anniversary (1921), the whole story was told in a school play at Fauquemont, Holland, (*ASSCC* July-August 1921, pp 96-100) and was considered quite successful. One would think that Bocquet's text, although written much later, would have served this purpose. The chapters are vignettes and as noted earlier serve Bocquet's purpose to stimulate imagination and reflection. But what looked like a script for a play, becomes a passion play in which Bocquet moves from scene to scene: the sights, the places, the schedules, the times, the crowd responses - all speak to him of the Passion of Jesus. There is even an apocalyptic atmosphere as the music of the Prussian army both engages the crowd but also reminds all who are gathered that the massacre of the fifty on 26th May, 1871 is taking place on the last piece of land in all of Paris to be liberated by the invading French army. Bocquet must have thought long and

hard about the abrupt ending to the Gospel of Mark, for such is his ending.

The reader is left to pick up the pieces while a gang is marshalled to pick up the bodies of the victims, emptying their pockets before throwing them into a pit where they would remain until the following morning when families, including SSCC brothers, came to claim the remains and pick up the pieces ... which we still do.

Chapter I

THE PARIS COMMUNE

Few historical events of such short duration and total failure have had such resonance in France or in the world.

While Karl Marx and Engels, the fathers of Marxism, made the most severe judgements on the Commune, fearing that it might compromise long-term their cause for a universal revolution, their disciples today, by way of a complete reversal, greet it as a glorious and outstanding episode of the struggle of the proletariat for its emancipation. Soviet Russia proclaimed the anniversary as an official holiday and gave the name 'Paris Commune' to one of its cruisers. In France, left-wing parties gather every year at the "Mur des Fédérés" (Wall of the Communards), in the Père Lachaise cemetery, and in their struggle and sacrifice they salute the promises of a better future.

In quite another spirit, Catholics make their way to the Chapelle des Otages (Chapel of the Hostages), Rue Haxo, Paris. They regard those who died there and elsewhere as martyrs, and they await with confidence the judgment of the Church. The twenty-three priests and eight lay people executed by the Commune in hatred of the faith and of the priesthood, seem to them to be one of the more remarkable episodes of this eternal persecution which from century to century had always given martyrs to the church. Perhaps never before, has there been seen grouped around the bishop - forming as it were a crown - various representatives of the secular clergy, religious Orders and the laity.

Here is the list: Monsignor George Darboy, Archbishop of Paris, Monsignor Surat, vicar general, Fr. Deguerry, parish priest of the Madeleine, Fr. Bécourt, parish priest of Bonne-Nouvelle, Fr. Sabattier, the second vicar of Notre Dame de Lorette; Fr. Allard, director of

works, Paul Seigneret, a tonsured seminarian. Then there were the Jesuit priests: Fr. Olivain, superior of the community in Rue de Sèvres; Fr. Ducoudray, rector of Saint Geneviève; Frs. Clerc, Caubert, de Bengy; Fr. Planchat of the Brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul - director of the patronage; Fr. Houillin - Foreign Missions of Paris, 10 years in Tibet; the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts (Picpus): Frs. Radigue, Tuffier, Rouchouze, Tardieu who are the subject of this book; the Dominican Fathers: Frs. Captier, Bourard, Cotrault, Delhomme, and brother deacon Chatagneret, of the college of Arcueil. Finally, the laity who worked with the Dominicans: Gauquelin - teacher, Voland - warden, Marcé, Gros, Dentreoz, Cathala, workers. A *résumé* of the Church...

Faced with such divergent interpretations of the same historical event, where is the truth?

Was the Paris Commune a heroic epic of workers sacrificing themselves to free their brothers from misery? If so, the anti-religious upsurge would have been only a negligible episode, and a deplorable one at that, to be credited to a small minority of fanatics and the rabble, as is the case in any revolution.

The Commune is too complex to handle in a single chapter. However, for an intelligent overview of the presentation, after a brief recall of events and their causes, it is necessary to say something on at least two points too often neglected: Why and how was the myth of the Commune born? What were the religious politics of the Commune such as it appears in its official acts, in the opinions of its own journals and clubs and in the conduct of its educated leaders?

The appearance of the industrial age changed the conditions of work. It knew how to make wealth but not how to share it. It organised production but was little concerned for the well-being of the worker. The excessive hours of work, the insecurity of employment and famine wages created the proletariat. There was agitation throughout the working class as it became more conscious of its power. Its only hope

resided in revolution and the taking of power. Then it exploded and governments fell, Charles X in 1830 and Louis-Philippe in 1848.

Nowhere as in Paris were the conditions so favourable for creating a most active cultural broth: an excessive accumulation of workers, which had been further reinforced by the recent annexation of the inner suburbs; a display of luxury, pleasures, and speculation in a capital where a country and a continent in full expansion were pouring in, a powerful movement of ideas among both workers and intellectuals to build a fairer, more fraternal world. And then suddenly, the collapse of the empire and the economic crisis precipitated events.

The defeat and the surrender of the army had exposed the deceit of the brilliant facade, which was the Empire. The misery of a 136 day siege (September 1870 - January 1871), famine and the strike exasperated the population. Some badly conceived economic measures (payment of rent arrears) and suppression of the pay of the National Guard, (for many the thirty sous had been their only source) made people a lot worse off and were regarded as a bullying tactic. The victorious entry of the Prussians was an indignant and thus intolerable affront. The transfer of the Government to Versailles smelt of treason.

A provocative declaration was uttered: "The army has been defeated without a fight. But Paris will save France." Paris boasted more of its urban army than the national army, which possessed a formidable pile of weapons. "In the event that the seat of Government had to be moved elsewhere, the city of Paris would have to constitute itself as an independent republic."

The country, however, did not follow the Capital. It was for peace and monarchy, while Paris dreamt of war and a republic. The republican party, certain of being outvoted, tried to delay the elections.⁸

⁸ The elections were held on 26th March, 1871.

The right succeeded in pushing its way through: 400 monarchists were elected against 200 republicans.

Understanding the danger posed by the National Guard, the government ordered the regular troops to take back the 171 guns stored in Montmartre. The operation was badly conducted. The alarm was sounded and the generals were beaten. The troops fraternised with the rioters. Generals Thomas and Lecomte were shot. The government, in order to better quell the riot, preferred to let things play out and so withdrew to Versailles. The Communards occupied the Hôtel de Ville (City Hall), the Police Headquarters and the Palace of Justice. The 18th March marked the beginning of the Commune although it was not proclaimed as such until the 28th, after the elections which, thanks to abstentions, gave the majority to the extremists.

The Commune only lasted 70 days, from 18th March to 27th May, 1871. In those weeks, Paris experienced the most dramatic hours of its turbulent history. No sooner had the terrible siege against the Germans ceased than a new siege commenced, supported this time by the revolutionary forces against the regular army: thus, a foreign war was succeeded by a civil war which was itself marked by internal conflicts.

The Commune was incapable of setting up for itself valid institutions. The seventy-two elected officials, bearing the title of delegates, constituted themselves into a Central Committee. They were divided into ten commissions which replaced the ministries (29th March). A month later they proceeded to reorganise themselves. The Jacobins,⁹ already solidly established, concentrated power into their

⁹ The Jacobins, representatives of the terrorist memory of the French Revolution (1793-1800), fed one of the currents of the Commune's ideology in favour of the liberation of the whole of France. They were aligned with the Blanquistes. Jules Miot who visited Father Tuffier was an old Jacobin of the 1848 Revolution (Alistair Horne, *The Fall of Paris*, Chapter 22, "The Return of the Jacobins," pp. 327-343).

hands (21st April). They voted for the creation of a Committee of Public Safety: it was a veritable dictatorship (15th May). The rivalries continued apace and certain committees such as the National Guard could never be eliminated.

While fighting was taking place on the city walls, a regime of terror weighed on the population: prisons were filled with suspects, hostages were selected; a decree allowed them to be shot in reprisal. On 21st May the troops entered Paris via Auteuil without a shot fired. The slowness of the advance gave the Communards time to pull themselves together. Some paid dearly with their lives, others thought only of revenge. On several occasions, hostages were executed. At the same time, national palaces, public buildings and exclusive neighbourhoods were deliberately set on fire.

The horror and also the fear caused by these attacks led to ruthless repression: more than 16,000 Communards perished in street fighting and nearly 3,500 were shot; 7,000 were imprisoned or deported, while most of the leaders escaped the repression. Decimated and discredited, the revolutionary party was put out of action for a long time.

That is why no one judged the Commune more severely than the founders of Marxism and Bolshevism. Karl Marx and his friend Engels had followed events with undisguised hope. For the first time their followers were taking action. They were soon to be disillusioned.

“The Paris Commune demonstrated that the working class could not make itself completely master of the state machine and set it in motion at will,” Marx bluntly admitted. The leaders are responsible for this. Engels in turn declared “The International did not lift a finger to make the Commune.... Yes, the enterprise was carried out in a senseless way”. Marx continued: “With a small dose of common sense, the Commune could have obtained a compromise useful to the entire mass of the people, the only thing that could have been achieved at that time”.

A lack of maturity in the workers, the weakness and incompetence of the leaders, a contempt for real social progress: this was the assessment of the Commune by the leaders of Marxism. Trotsky echoed this assessment: “If on the 18th March power fell into the hands of the proletariat of Paris, it was not because the latter had consciously seized power, but because their adversaries had abandoned Paris.”

Benoît Mahon, a member of the Commune, already had this disillusioned comment to make: “This is the third defeat of the French proletariat.” (The first was in 1830 and led to the ascension of Louis-Philippe, the bourgeois king, to the throne. The second in 1848 was snuffed out by the coup d’état of Napoleon III. And now the third had folded after only two months of combat.) Were Marx and Engels proved wrong in their analysis of the world of capitalism? They scrutinised events, institutions and people, and in the light of this failed experience they formulated in ‘The Dictatorship of the Proletariat’ the laws of the seizure of power by the people. In passing, however, they bowed their hats to the Paris Commune, which “had aroused interest in France among the working population all over the world”. The legendary history of the Commune was already being formed.

Death, deportation and exile had singularly thinned out the ranks of those who formed the marching wing of the workers. The organisations they supported had collapsed. On this point, the leaders of the repression had been right. But it had escaped them that misfortune often gives a halo and creates a mirage. The leaders who had crossed the border were regrouping abroad. With the passage of time and exile, their stories were transposing people and events to the ideal plan, where faults and crimes fade away. As a political tactic, the ruling Republican Party was preparing an amnesty for the condemned. This led to a revision of the judgments and the provision of a different explanation of the facts. In order to revive the social struggle, the new leaders had every interest in veiling defeat by

turning it into an epic. Foreigners followed suit all the more easily because they had difficulty grasping what was specifically French and Parisian in this struggle. In this way the *myth of the Commune*, was born, the word itself having been borrowed from revolutionary legend.

While the interpretation of a fact has its place in history, it must not, however, obscure the truth. The Paris Commune wanted to be both a court that would judge the old world and a constituent that would prepare the new world, an assembly to discuss problems, and a government to dominate situations, a capital that wanted to impose its views on the whole country by force of arms and yet allowed itself to be torn apart by factions. It could not set itself a task commensurate with its strength, nor provide itself with the institutions to carry it out, nor, above all, choose its people and prepare them for action.

By the sovereignty of its action and the extent of its destruction, the Commune could be likened to a seismic tremor that revealed the fragility of the earth's crust and something of the power of the underground forces that generated it. Suddenly, the weak points of the Church in France were revealed as was the long work of undermining it that was being undertaken by the regime that officially favoured it.

Alongside a real expansion of Catholicism in France under the Second Empire and despite the many proofs of vitality it provided - abundant recruitment in seminaries and religious orders, the flowering of pious and charitable works, the country's major share of far-away missions, the gains in organising freedom of education - it was nevertheless noted that a significant fraction of intellectuals and the working class escaped its influence. It remains to be explained how the open war against the Church and violent persecution came to be one of the dominant features of the Commune.

Apart from a short reconciliation in 1848 when it was thought that the Church, with Lamennais' social catholicism, would support the proletarian emancipation movement, the Republican Party was always

resolutely hostile to the Catholic Church. There existed, it declared, between it and the Church a double opposition. An historical opposition: the secular alliance between the throne and altar placed the Church on the side of the oppressors and that should logically lead to its disappearance along with that of the old leaders. But above all there existed a fundamental opposition between the two: one worldview was opposed to another. One searched for the glorification of God and expected God to reveal essential truths; the other sought the glorification of the human person and admitted only those truths discovered by science and reason.

Thus, the Church became enemy number one. Two currents of thought emerged to bring it down. One was the 'Cold War' current, advocated by Quinet. One cannot expect to get rid of Catholicism by force, its rule in the nation is as great as the need for religion among the people. Therefore, it must first be forgotten. This will be the role of the school; hence the importance of the Ministry of Public Education. Such a plan of progressive de-Christianisation under the cover of legality and moderation, would rally intellectuals and inspire the whole Third Republic.

On the contrary, an open and merciless war against the Church was being preached by Blanqui. His programme, *Neither God nor Master* was at odds with the times. Blanqui embodied the aspirations of the common people, their claims, their dreams. He was the president of the Commune and had fallen into the hands of Versailles. The leaders of the Commune, at the instigation of Raoul Rigault, proposed to release Archbishop Darboy, Louis Bernard Bonjean and other hostages of note in exchange for the release of just Blanqui. Thiers, who knew the importance of the old chief for the insurgents, refused: "I might as well send them an army corps," he replied.

Rigault, the chief of police, then the Commune delegate for general security, was a follower of Blanqui. So too were Théophile

Ferré, his alter ego and successor, Eugène Protot, the delegate for justice and redactor of the decree on hostages, Da Costa, Levraud, Miot, Eudes, Gois, to speak only of those who were intimately involved in the story of the Servants of God. For these people, the Commune must necessarily become a replica of the revolutionary terror [of 1793].

However, during the first six months of the Republic, from September to March [1871] the Church experienced some respite. The Government vigorously opposed the disrespect that was being shown for church buildings and priests. That said, it gave signals to its rank and file: the expulsion of teaching Brothers from the XIth Arrondissement, the allowing of associations and newspapers to run riot against the Church, daily preaching of civil war and incitement to murder.

Everything changed with the proclamation of the Commune on 26th March. From the 29th of March, when the Commune organised itself in collegial form, it suppressed the department of religion and because of its importance attached it to the department for General Security.

The Commune was only five days old when, on 2nd April, a *Decree* appeared instituting the separation of Church and State and the confiscation of the belongings of the clergy:

Considering that the first of the principles of the French Republic is liberty; considering that liberty of conscience is the first among liberties; considering that the budget of cults is contrary to this principle, since it is imposed on citizens against their own faith; considering that in fact the clergy was an accomplice in the crimes against freedom of the monarchy, it is decreed:

Art. 1: The church is separated from the state.

Art. 2: The budget for Cults is suppressed.

Art. 3: Goods, both movable and fixed, belonging to religious congregations (known as 'mainmorte') are declared national properties.

Art. 4: An inquest will immediately be held concerning these goods in order to establish their nature and to put them at the disposal of the nation.

The recitals shed light on the procedures and ideas of the Commune. From a principle of general law, liberty, it draws a practical conclusion that is contrary both to natural law and international law: the confiscation by the State of clergy property failed to recognise that the budget for Cults was first instituted in accordance with the Concordat, the treaty, that had been duly and properly signed with the Holy See. Even more serious was the accusation against the Church of complicity, of crimes against freedom. This effectively was to ban the Church from society. Moreover, articles 5 and 4 legalised searches and requisitions. As soon as this became a religious war, no time was wasted and little attention was paid to form: the Commune became both the legislative assembly and the court of law.

The same week, on 5th April, the Official Journal published *another decree*, called *Hostages*. The day before, Émile Victor Duval, a delegate of the Commune had been taken prisoner in an unfortunate skirmish with the Federates and shot immediately, while another delegate, Gustave Flourens, had been killed with a sword. Rigault took advantage of the emotion raised by this execution to pass a decree in a night sitting that authorised the choosing and shooting of hostages as a reprisal. Protot, the justice delegate, drafted the text. In itself it was only a general measure with no reference to the Church. But in fact, it was a measure directed against the Church: from the point of view of the Commune - which proclaimed itself atheist and fought against the Versailles champions of the monarchy and Catholicism - the priests constituted hostages of choice, as it immediately became clear. Rigault made no secret of this and Protot's voting in favour of the decree can be explained by his anticlericalism. The decree stated:

Any person suspected of complicity with the government of Versailles will be immediately indicted and imprisoned... Any execution of a prisoner of war or of a partisan of the regular government of the Commune of Paris will

be followed by the execution on the spot of a triple number of hostages which will be designated by lot.

Since the previous decree of 2nd April had expressly accused the Church of complicity, Protot was therefore appointed *ex officio* in charge of hostages; moreover, the hostages were handed over arbitrarily.

On 21st April, the Blanquists took advantage of the disorganisation of the commissions to place their men in key positions. Rigault left the Prefecture, which he left to his friend Cournet, to become the Procurator of the Commune. The following day, 22nd, Protot voted to create a revolutionary court. On the 28th, the Committee of Public Safety was instituted, and on the 17th May, Rigault returned to the attack and demanded that “the decree of the 5th April be put into immediate effect”. Although the days of the Commune were numbered, in less than seven weeks it had taken a series of exceptional measures against the Church. The decree was there to be used. There remained only ten days to make use of it, ten days of defeat and therefore a time for rancour and vengeance.

Sometimes attempts have been made to minimise the influence of the press. “Verbal violence”, it has been said. This is to forget that all modern advertising is based on the repetition of certain slogans which, by dint of praising a product, impose it on the public. It was the press that made the 26th March elections and gave the majority to the extremists. Although the siege had given the government the legal means to rein in the press, because of weakness and secret connivance that same government allowed the newspapers to rage against the Church. In its short-sighted policy, it hoped to turn the blows of its adversaries on to the Church, and it was the first victim of the storm that it dared not suppress.

La Patrie en danger, the propaganda organ of Blanqui, set the tone: 13th September, 1870: “The role of the clergy among the armed civilians is all too evident, monks and priests who invade and circulate in the

capital, with an outsized arrogance, big bellied and unemployed. Already the Commune of Lyon has taken energetic measures against the population of monks and Jesuits who for a long time have infested the city. They have proved that the idea of revolution sits well with the philosophical idea of atheism and the emancipation of thought.”

19th September: “the citizens will only be truly free the day that they send the last of the priests to join the last of the kings in the tomb. The people of Lyon did not dilly-dally. They went straight to the aristocracies and the priests.”

2nd October: “We are among those who for a long time have declared war on God as on kings, on the despot of heaven as on those of earth. Three resolutions have successively failed to give in to the Cult of the Supreme Being. We will take measures to ensure that there will not be a fourth.”

26th October: There was a change of editor, Lafayette had succeeded Reynard. The tone rose, the style became apocalyptic. “From one side, the fawn and the floras of the light and the breezes. From the other side, the cryptograms of fish and monstrous beasts. Among them are the worst, the priests. Compared to them, the salamander and the bat are attractive. Of all these cults, the best is not worth a craven dog. Poor humanity! Do you have to perish in a shroud woven by the infamous? Boldness and anger, anger and boldness or you are dead. Deliverance comes at the price of a supreme, terrible effort. Terrible, do you understand? To work! That’s to say to fight to the end. Revolution, reaction: it is necessary that one of the two remain in the arena. No pity. What do you do with a sod of turf? Set it on fire. And carrion? One throws it on the streets.”

On the theme ‘Against the Church and the priests’, there was a unanimous and excessive press-orchestrated campaign. Small newspapers abounded as did ephemeral sheets, often with only a few issues, because the war between rival clans was relentless and the

Commune was the least liberal of the regimes. Newspapers were reborn under new names. The more representative sold for two sou: *Le Mot d'Ordre* (Rochefort), *le Vengeur*, (Pyat), *L'Ordre* (Vermorel), *l'Ami du peuple* (Vermorel). For one sou there was *Le cri du Peuple* (Jules Valles), *la Sociale* (Mme Andrée Léo), *Le Salut Public* followed by *La Montagne* by the journalist poet, Marotteau.

There was no shortage of comic notes. A man called Vial, a young apothecary from Asnieres, reported with great seriousness on 9th April that even among the cannon shells of Versailles he found reinforcements of leaden medals, dog-toothed on the borders and bearing one of two faces, an image of Saint Genevieve, the Patroness of Paris and on the other side that of Our Lady of Deliverance. A rain of cannons, well that's war. A rain of medals, that's zealotry. Such was the level: anticlericalism was getting the press that it deserved.

There was no shortage of tragic notes either. On 22nd April, Marotteau wrote in *La Montagne*, "We strike out God. The dogs are not content any longer to respect the bishops. Our bullets will not grovel at their scapulars. Not one voice will be raised the day that someone shoots Archbishop Darboy. We have taken Darboy as a hostage and if Blanqui is not given up, Darboy will die. The Commune has made a promise and if it hesitates the people will keep the oath. I truly fear for the Archbishop of Paris." A month later, with night falling, a band of Banquists shot the Archbishop on the circular pathway surrounding the Roquette.

Le Père Duchesne was, of all the papers, the most ferocious and the most read (about 60,000 subscribers). Founded by Humbert, Vermersh and Vuillaume, the paper carried a vignette designed by Rigancy: a commoner of lower class seated on the sidewalk; at his feet glistening crowns, mitres and crosses along with the slogan: "The Republic or death". Be loyal! Shout out to the priest as you would to the wolf: "Once and for all, finish him off". Its vulgarity prevents us from quoting it in full.

The history of the Servants of God of Picpus gives an example of a well-orchestrated press campaign. On 5th May, *Le Mot d'Ordre* (Rochefort) announced that a hideous crime had been discovered in the convent at Picpus. On the following day, there was wider coverage on these horrors: infanticides, sequestrations, tortures. On 6th May, a major headline was spread over four columns in capital letters: *The Mysteries of the convent of Picpus*. There was a drawing of Picpus near the margin. Throughout the capital, the street hawkers cried out: "Ask about the crimes of the Congregations," "Ask about the mysteries of Picpus." That same day *Le Cri du Peuple*, *Le Reveil du Peuple*, and *La Commune* followed in their footsteps. The next day, *L'Étoile*, and *L'Estafette* did the same. On 9th May, *Le Mot d'Ordre* addressed the charge and refuted the denials that the national newspapers carried; On 14th May it appealed for the help of foreign newspapers such as the *Times*. Crowds took to the street leading to Picpus.

However, it must be acknowledged that even before the newspapers ran wild, the onlookers were already flocking in droves to Picpus. According to the testimony of the Sister who was the bursar in Picpus, on 29th April more than 2,000 people invaded the convent. The day after, there were 5,000 and, on the 1st May, 12,000. What was this power that was even stronger than the media? It was the power of the local clubs and committees.

The Commune wished to make of France a federation of communes. In virtue of the same principle, it was inevitable that it would fragment in its own turn. The central committee was answerable to the arrondissement committees, neighbourhood committees and many other committees. While the delegates tried to make their views and influence prevail in the central committee, they also tried to carve out real strongholds in the arrondissements where they made the law, such as Ferré in the XVIIIth arrondissement and Ramier in the XXth. Their henchmen in turn created smaller fiefdoms for themselves on a neighbourhood scale, such as Fenouillas and Philippe in Bercy and

Clavier in Picpus. This new feudalism had its troops: battalions of the National Guard and local associations, which were the clubs. The sacking of the churches, their being closed to the faithful and the requisitions that were taking place for defence purposes can be attributed to these local groups. And the presence of the leaders of the Commune at the associations and at the raids attests that they had the support of central authority and received from it their orders.

30th March: some fanatics scaled the Dome of the Pantheon which dominates Paris. They sawed off the cross and planted the red flag. In executing the 2nd April decree on the nationalisation of goods, Captain Journaux along with an official mandate invaded the Archbishop's house on 4th April and arrested Archbishop Darboy. Acting on his own initiative, he undertook in the days following a methodical search of the house, breaking down doors and destroying furniture. Finally, he placed the archdiocesan property at the disposition of the Freemasons to hold their meetings there.

The "Vengeurs of Flourens", a group led by Le Moussu, stormed into the Madeleine Church for the sole reason that it was considered a "fashionable" parish in the Capital and its parish priest had been the tutor of the imperial prince. Their greed led them to discover another windfall. On 17th May, they invaded the celebrated sanctuary of Our Lady of Victories and laid their hands on some sacred vessels and crowns of the Virgin Mary, one of which was worth 90,000 gold francs.

At Saint Vincent de Paul, they used chalices to toast each other. At Saint Leu they put on the copes and chasubles and parodied a procession, singing obscenities. At Saint Laurent, they violated the sepulchres and in a mock show of gruesome fiction, they hoisted human bones claiming that they belonged to unfortunate young women who, they grotesquely declared, had been buried alive after having served the alleged debaucheries of the priests. "It was a veritable saturnalia of impiety," said Lecanuet.

Clavier and his group searched the Picpus convent, calling on the support of Protot, who, with Rigault and their staff, made it their general quarters. Displaced by a rival group and after an arbitration rendered by a general, they established themselves not far from St. Eloi. The clergy there were put in prison. They turned the place into a blockhouse (fortified structure) where they stored barrels of oil and gunpowder.

19th April: *L'Univers* published a list of twenty-six churches closed to worship of which ten had been turned into political clubs. It was a dream solution: no money down, huge rooms, furnished and with easy access. When needed, there was an organ available to accompany the revolutionary chants. At Saint Eustache, one delegate girdled with his red sash went to the presider's chair and began his discourse on the Latin text "*Ecce nunc dies salutis*" (Behold, now is the day of salvation). At Saint Sulpice, the parishioners barged their way in, massed towards the choir and as soon as the orator spoke from the chair, they intoned the *Parce Domine*. The Federates attacked the faithful, most of whom were Children of Mary, with the intention of dispersing them. The faithful, however, regrouped and resumed their reparative chant *Parce Domine* (Spare, O Lord, spare your people.) The members of the associations were at first stunned into silence but then resumed yelling the Marseillaise. The church building was evacuated.

In the absence of official records, the newspapers gave a fairly accurate picture of the atmosphere. As such, the leaders kept the heat on their followers and the ambitious tried their luck. The cafés were part of the scene also. Speaking and singing made one thirsty. In small groups plans were worked out, including attacks. In the cafés the strategists worked on how to reform the city and build the world of tomorrow. It was here where orders emerged regarding which expeditions were to be tried, what changes needed to be made at local level; however, the cafés were also the place to address the pettiness of their own experiences and resentments.

No less than in its official acts, in the journalistic opinions and in the behaviour of the masses, the Commune must be judged by those who most represented it. Here it can only be a question of sketching a portrait of those who played a decisive role in this story.

Some of the highest in rank were mixed up in the goings-on in Picpus. Some could be considered the true leaders of the Commune, men such as Rigault, Ferré, Protot and Ranvier who were in charge of the various ministries. Not only did these men, invested with the highest governmental responsibilities, take the initiative to pass exceptional measures against the Church, but they also signed orders to have poor, elderly and unknown priests arrested and massacred. Many times, they searched the convent of Picpus. On this there are formal testimonies.

There were others who formed part of the top staff of the Commune: Garraud and François were directors of the Mazas and La Roquette prisons; Colonel Gois presided over court-martials; Benoit was assistant colonel to General Bergeret; Levraud, Da Costa, Genton, were collaborators with Rigault and Protot. These were not chosen for their competence. Given the modesty of their former employment, they were in no way prepared for taking on their new day-to-day responsibilities. Only their convictions and zeal presided at their election.

Finally, people like Delegate Fenouillas, Commissioner Clavier, Secretary Girault, Captain Lenôtre, Captain Dalivour, Chief Brigadier Romain sought out responsibilities for themselves. One would be surprised at some of the initiatives these subordinates were allowed to take, and no less surprised at the approval they received from above. These seventeen men who were the principle actors in the drama that unfolded in Picpus were eminently representative of the Commune. So, what does one do when one wants to make a scientific study of a product? One takes a random sample from among the mass for analysis

and then subjects it to appropriate tests: according to the results obtained, a justified judgement can then be made about the product.

Raoul Rigault was born in Paris in 1846 to a bourgeoisie family. He was a kind of bohemian revolutionary. Intelligent, lazy, needy, good looking, he was the eternal student who lived expediently, frequented cafés, wrote short tracts and conspired against the Empire. Imprisoned, he was a star among the detainees, crying out “long live the guillotine!” The Republic succeeded in getting him out of prison and gave him the title of Chief of Police. He arbitrarily arrested people. On 31st October, 1870, he tried to take control of the Hotel de Ville. Because of this he had to resign, but he recovered quickly. Two days after the 18th March riot, he was given the lion’s share, Prefect of Police. On 24th April he had to cede this position to his friend, Coumet, so that he could take up his new appointment as Delegate for Security. On 1st May, when the Public Health Committee was established he took the title of Public Prosecutor of the Commune.

Small in stature but broad shouldered, sporting a beard and feverishly adjusting his pince-nez, Rigault, at the age of 25, had realised his life’s dream: to become a new Fouquier-Tinville. He professed a lively admiration for Hébert, a member of the first Commune, and his journal *Le Père Duchesne* which he absorbed. His acquaintance with the bohemian way of life and the underworld made him the recruiter of the henchmen that the Commune used for its dirty work. He could quip very well. Interviewing a Jesuit, he asked “what is your profession?” “Servant of God.” Stiffly, he went on “where does your patron live?” “Everywhere?” “Registrar, write: this guy says he is a servant of a vagabond God.”

Rigault gave this definition of the revolution: “Its criterion is the death of priests. As many as there are men who pronounce the name of God, there will be shots to fire,” To Archbishop Darboy who asked him the cause of his arrest, he replied: “For eighteen centuries

you have debased us. It's time for this to end.” He was known for black humour. For Abbé Crozes who asked to visit a friend in prison, he signed an arrest order which got the Abbé locked up. It was on his formal order that Archbishop Darboy, Louis Bonjean (President of the Court of Cassation) and the Jesuits were arrested. He signed a number of arrest warrants as the prison registers attest, among them the Picpus Fathers and his old friend Gustave Chaudey. To the latter he asked, “Do you wish to confess?” Chaudey replied, “You joke”. You are going to die,” replied Rigault. He commanded the firing himself, sabre in hand, according to the custom. Rigault was captured on 24th May in Gay-Lussac Street and shot on sight. He preceded the Archbishop Darboy in death by a few hours.

Théophile Ferré was 26 years old. Really short in stature, his face disappearing behind a beard and sideburns and his dark black eyes sheltered behind thick glasses, Ferré did not lend himself easily to a smile. He was imposing. The cold impenetrable mask exposed a fierce resolve. He had a personal issue to work out with the Creator who had made him so small in stature. He was ready to destroy the world if he couldn't rebuild it in his own way: “1793, 1820, 1848 were nothing. This time we will be walking ankle-deep in blood. If our weapons are taken away, we still have torches.” As he said this, he would casually throw up his torch, whilst banging the tablecloth with his cane. Ferré had known Rigault at Saint Pélagie. He too dreamt of a role but handicapped by his size, it would take him longer to realise it. Already at the head of the vigilante committee of the XVIIIth Arrondissement, he seemed to have played a decisive part in the 18th March riot. As the delegate of the XVIIIth, he made it his domain and entered the Security Commission as an alter ego of Rigault.

The debacle gave him a role commensurate with his ambition. He suggested cutting the bridges of the city and transferring the hostages there, and so turn the island into the tomb of the Commune. On 22nd May, he gave the order to the directors of Santé and the Roquette “to

have the gendarmes shot immediately, the priests and others...” The directors were opposed. As we have seen, on 24th May, it was Rigault who signed the order to shoot the Archbishop, the President of the Supreme Court of Appeals and four hostages of choice. And it was with his sabre that he commanded the firing. He himself had signed the proceedings.

On the 27th, Ferré ordered the gendarmes and town sergeants imprisoned in the Roquette to leave. But these, thinking of the massacre the day before where forty of their companions had been killed, refused. Ferré then freed 167 common law detainees hoping to pitch them against the gendarmes and the town sergeants. He changed his mind and brought out 1,333 imprisoned soldiers imprisoned at the Petite Roquette. The army of Versailles freed them on route there. Ferré attempted to flee disguised as a woman, wearing a wig. He was recognised and arrested. He was brought before the Third War Council and on 28th November, 1871, he was executed by firing squad at Satory.

Eugène Protot was quite a young man of 25 years, thin boned, beardless except for a shadow of a colourless moustache, lean build, and wearing on his head the hat of the National Guard decorated with three stripes, for he had commanded the 217th Battalion. He did not want to let go of the threadbare braided jacket with which he had made the campaign as a mounted sergeant. He was surrounded by half a dozen unsavoury, uncombed individuals, dressed in questionable overcoats or uniform jackets. This was Protot, the keeper of the Seal of the Commune. He was responsible for two of the more capricious measures of the Commune: he proposed and drafted the Decree on Hostages. He also proposed and had voted-in the creation of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Although he was the top magistrate, he himself conducted the searches. He was conspicuously present at Picpus according to Da Costa, and substituted for Rigault on 12th April, the day 13 Fathers were arrested. On 5th May, this time with

Rigault and Cournet, the Prefect of police, Protot was present for the arrest of the 15 remaining Brothers and 84 Sisters. He was also present at Saint Laurent and at Notre Dame des Victoires. According to the testimony of his friends and admirers, his blind anticlericalism explained these unusual steps.

Gabriel Ranvier was 43 years of age. He was a lacquer painter and a good artisan whose career was ruined by a manufacturing incident. From there he launched into politics and became an influential member of the Central committee. Aged 28, he gave the inaugural discourse and declared “The Committee of the National Guard hands over its powers to the Commune.”

He was the soul of Belleville, and in the final days he organised the resistance on the left bank. It was he who signed the transfer of the hostages from the Mazas Prison to La Roquette. He kept an upper hand over them and made frequent visits to review the gendarmes and the prison peacekeepers. It was Ranvier who received from Émile Gois the fifty hostages at the town hall of Belleville. “We have to shoot all these people, but I don’t want it to be done at the town hall.” He signed an order for them to be taken to the city, to Haxo Street. Then he conferred with Ferré to have other hostages suffer the same fate. He managed to flee the country and when an amnesty was declared, he returned to France.

Émile Gois was an enigma. He was only spoken of at the Council of War in the last quarter of an hour and then only incidentally. This Gois, a cellar boy, known as the “Sewer Grill” was promoted to Staff Colonel and bore the heaviest responsibilities. He was the one who took the initiative to ask for the fifty hostages and lead them to Haxo Street where they were shot.

With regard to Colonel Bénot, a butcher at a young age, he got what he wanted. It was he who gave the order to fire in Rue Haxo and he himself fired into the pile of bodies. He was also charged with

setting fire to the Tuileries. Seemingly, he did not want anyone else to have the duty of setting the fire. After committing the crime, he mounted the terrace of the Louvre with his boss, General Bergeret to rejoice in the effect produced.

Fenouillas, known as Phillippe worked at selling sites for hotels. A delegate of the XIIth Arrondissement, he proposed to rent the parish church to the clergy of Saint Eloi, averaging 4,000 gold francs for the nave and 2,000 for the aisles. Da Costa attributed the searching of Picpus to him. Rejected by a rival band, he went off to Bercy to sow terror.

Antoine Clavier was only a modest chief of police who was involved in the arrest of the Picpus Fathers. Soon his boldness knew no bounds. He was one of those who took the banker, Jecker, out of prison to execute him. He supported Gois in demanding that 50 hostages be handed over to them and he led them to where they were to be massacred. All this was done without a mandate. He tried to set fire to Saint Eloi in which powder and petrol had been stored. He fled to London and from there he continued to send threatening letters to the clergy and to the Fathers in Picpus.

His secretary Girault, who at first helped him, gradually replaced him in Picpus and St-Eloi. He sequestered the vicar Majewsky for several days in a narrow cellar full of broken bottles. Later pardoned, he became a deputy of Paris. Da Costa was also pardoned and became the author of a French grammar book that was widely distributed.

Garraud, François, Romain, Lenôtre are described elsewhere. As for the groups that they commanded, it is edifying to read the reports of General Cheveret and Rossel, the war delegate. "They were vagabonds dressed like soldiers who transformed the uniforms they had put on into unrecognisable rags. They had no discipline; they barely obeyed the officers whom they had chosen, wandering around the streets and cafes, given over to idleness." Drunkenness had taken on

such proportions that Cluseret convoked a war council to combat it. Versailles was even accused of bribing the troops with both alcohol and bullets. The testimonies of the SSCC brothers who were in charge of the cellar and cooking confirm this judgement. There was no lack of excuses: two consecutive sieges, idleness, privation, demoralisation but these were the facts.

From these quick sketches – the justification for which can be found in the following pages – there is one unavoidable conclusion. These men, bar a few exceptions, were very young. Nothing in their former life prepared them for the tasks that they were awarded, as if they were prizes given out at a fair. None of them proved to be a statesman or a leader who knew how to understand and govern a situation and bring to it new and efficient solutions.

On the contrary, they were led by their passions. They had personal and petty gripes to work out with society. They were intoxicated with power and words.

Their anticlericalism was short sighted and backward. They slavishly copied the least admirable antireligious politics of the French Revolution, bearing in mind it ended in failure: the church was not destroyed but the country was irreversibly divided.

Not only do they bear full responsibility for the bullying, the mass arrests, the massacre of 25 priests and 8 lay people, not to mention so many other victims, but these crimes were not compensated by anything positive as sometimes can happen in history.

Chapter II

THE ARREST

Paris avenged the shameful capitulation of Sedan by overthrowing the Empire and proclaiming itself a Republic (4th September, 1870). For all that, the war did not end. The Prussians marched on the capital. But Paris was determined to defend itself and prepared to withstand a siege. The army for the most part was a prisoner. So, a mass mobilisation was called for and the new troops were called the “the National Guard.” Since the barracks were insufficient, religious houses, among other things, were requisitioned.

The Motherhouse of the SSCC Fathers had, it must be admitted, something to tempt the soldiers: the size of the buildings, the courtyards, the garden, its location at the corner of two busy streets, Rue de Picpus and Rue de Saint-Mandé, and above all its proximity to the ramparts. However, the 800 men of the battalion that had to be accommodated were far beyond its possibilities. The dormitories, the common rooms, the bedrooms, every space was occupied, and everywhere was strewn with straw. The soldiers improvised. Discipline was loose. The rigors of a long siege of 136 days led to pilfering and a struggle for survival.

It was a relief for the community that with the armistice came a lifting of the requisition and the departure of the troops. That was not, however, the mind-set of all the occupants. Since many of the National Guard did not want to go home and take up their jobs again, certain elements – precisely those whom one might consider undesirable – made as if they didn’t hear, settled themselves in, their backs against the wall, thinking only of chasing the *calotins* (skullcaps) out.

The order to leave the place definitively and without delay finally reached them. There were some strange scenes that later would give

rise to much reflection. Brother Stanislas Beunat, in his capacity as chamberlain, supervised their leaving. He reminded the guards that they had forgotten a case of munitions in the small parlour of the first floor. No one paid attention. He took up the matter again. He got a deaf ear. It was only on the threat of reporting the sergeant to the authorities that the sergeant gave an order to have it removed. But then he exploded. “You want your own little 93.¹⁰ Well, well, you’ll have it.”

If one wanted to lay the blame on negligence, or on the omission here and there of military uniforms, often faded, the same could not be said of this voluntary abandonment of guns and ammunition. The leaving behind of the munitions appeared to be a pretext for future searches.

More than once through gifts and exchanges, Brother Marin Fouquet, a most resourceful bursar of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, had to help the community and the troops get along with each other. In taking leave of him, Captain Valette, a watchmaker in Vicennes, wanted to thank him with a gift which he deemed the more useful in the circumstances: two revolvers. Since the brother refused, the captain insisted. “You will soon have need of these.” He got this response. “The revolvers however good they are, do not match up to mine.” In saying that, the good brother showed him his rosary. Perhaps the superiors did not attach to these facts and others like them the importance which they deserved. Without doubt, some were judging the good brothers as too impressionable or not so politically astute. However, the friars had a more accurate idea of the situation on account of mixing daily with the national guards who, taking them for servants, spoke to them more freely.

¹⁰ This mention of 1793 was frequent and showed that in the minds of many, the Revolution and the Commune were linked. Here, the reference “you want your 93 ?” would be to counter-revolutionary thinking.

With disconcerting ease, the Commune triumphed on 18th March. Less than 15 days later, searches of the places of worship and convents were in full swing. On 7th April, Good Friday, three envoys of the Commune visited all the religious houses in the quartier. Clavier, the commissioner of Police, went to Picpus, the Little Sisters of the Poor, the community of the sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul where the saintly Catherine Labouré lived (the woman to whom the Virgin appeared), the Sisters (Dames) of Saint Clotilde, the Sisters of Mercy and the White Sisters (Dames) of Adoration. The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts was the only male religious order in the quartier. They were not forgotten. Had Clavier chosen Good Friday by design to show his hatred of the Church and his zeal for the Commune? The visits however were brief and properly handled. At the convent of the Little Sisters of the Poor, Clavier could not restrain his admiration and promised his protection as *L'Univers*, the journal of Louis Veuille, reported the following day. The Fathers were assiduous readers of the newspaper. They were happy to have met a police commissioner who was discreet and understanding. They would surely have been disillusioned to read in *l'Affranchi* (9th April) that 'a bomb-making device with bombs already prepared had been found in their house.' But who among the community would have been buying these new circulars that had been swarming around recently? Could they have imagined that this timid and sensitive commissioner would prove to be one of the most enterprising and hateful agents of religious persecution, that he would throw them all in jail in a few days, and that he would be honoured to be among those who would lead them to the firing squad?

We know from a letter from Fr. Radigue, how he judged the situation. It was he who, as prior, governed the Mother House, in the absence of the Superior General, who at that time was away visiting the Province houses. A painful case of conscience arose for Fr. Radigue. To what extent was he responsible for the imprisonment of his brothers. Could he have spared them this ordeal? His letter appeared to be a plea; he admitted it himself. In reality the letter was

of another type: it was an opening of conscience. As a former master of novices, he had long taught his young men this fundamental exercise of the interior life. He practiced it himself, always seeking to be clear headed and at the same time wanting to enlighten his superior.

Fr. Radigue's letter from the Mazas prison is dated: 1st May, 1871. He speaks first of the reasons for not fleeing. "I confess that today after the events I would act differently. I would try to leave; but the situation then was quite different, I was ignoring the danger which menaced us and I was looking at the inconveniences of a general flight. I was convinced that the old fathers and the simplex priests [those still in studies] would have nothing to be concerned about, that the visits that they made were only to search for arms, for money or draft dodgers. There was danger only for the heads of administration and for the younger brothers. These would fit their targets. I was expecting to be arrested along with Fr. Tuffier (the procurator) but I had resolved to stay at my post; in conscience, I saw it as my duty. What happened elsewhere made me stick to this view. They had only arrested the important people: the Archbishop of Paris, Gaspard Deguerry (pastor of the Madeleine), the superiors and procurators of the Jesuits; the superior of the seminary of Saint Sulpice was absent so they took they took Henri Icard; many communities of men had received visits without arrests. How could we think that we the last of all, ignored by the whole world, situated on the outskirts of Paris where all was calm, would run into these dangers?"

Fr. Radigue then gave the reasons why he stayed. "These considerations did not leave me without fear. But if I saw enough danger to allow us to escape, I did not see enough danger to order it, especially for the majority of priests who were in charge of ministries in the diverse communities. In all the churches in Paris services were being held. Were we to flee, would it not be necessary to deprive communities of Mass and confessions? I did not believe that I had the power to do that. Although free to go, our Fathers thought no more

of flight. Out of dedication, each remained at his post. One might say that this dedication was a lack of prudence. I would rather qualify their prudence than state its absence: it is better to be too devoted than lax. If we had all taken flight, who would have the right to quote such a thing? There would have only been an outcry of indignation at our timidity.”

Here, then, is the decision that he believed he had the duty to take. “On the evening of Good Friday, I called together all the members of the Council who were present in the house; we were only four. I explained the situation... It was unanimously decided that I had to give all the Brothers and Fathers the freedom to leave Paris. After supper, I shared the decision and explained that we were in a very critical situation and that we could be exposed to greater dangers, that everyone was free to leave. I indicated the places where they would have to go. Only three left on the Saturday morning”.

So out of the 43 religious present in the Mother house, only three took advantage of the permission. Two youths, a student and a lay brother went home, as did the preacher of the Holy Week Retreat, his task finished. The lay brothers formed two tiers in the community, and each had his own task. They seldom went out, for the most part they were without any great contact with the outside. Giving themselves totally to prayer and manual work, they led a truly contemplative life in the midst of Paris. After a long time of cohabitation with the National Guard, each brother of the community felt the need of a retreat for spiritual renewal. This they did with fervour. Their souls were readied for the supreme test.

On Easter Wednesday, 12th April, during dinner, one could hear the Federates passing by to the sound of an old drum. The guests listened for a moment. As the parade moved away, the Father who was reading that day in the refectory continued his reading. The Commune organised this deployment of forces to intimidate the neighbourhood,

which was nevertheless very calm, before launching its troops against the convents, especially the double houses of the Fathers and Sisters of the Sacred Hearts.

It was certainly not the elite of its soldiers that the Commune had put in charge of this operation of low policing, but those at the bottom of the barrel of the National Guard of the XIth Arrondissement. The disparate numbers of their hats showed this clearly enough: 3, 32, 50, 204. Less anxious to fight on the front lines where they would have had to face career soldiers, they reserved for themselves the more lucrative and less dangerous tasks, such as searches and arrests. In terms of military science, they were most familiar with the principle tactic that one must first attack the weaker opponent. At 1.30 pm they forcefully entered the mother house of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts, located at 35, Rue de Picpus. This episode played such a capital role in this story, revealing the procedures and objectives of the Commune, that it should be treated in a special chapter.¹¹

A vast courtyard and a high wall separated the two houses of the Fathers and Sisters. The portress, one fine character, managed to outwit the guards. She told the Father Prior that the Federates had invaded their house, entered the chapel, forced the tabernacle, stole the sacred vessels and desecrated the hosts. Thinking, not without reason, that it was only looting that attracted the Federates to the chapel, the Prior asked Fr. Tardieu to remove the ciborium from the tabernacle, but to leave the hosts in a simple corporal, so that perpetual adoration could continue.

The ebullient Fr. Tuffier conquered his nervousness by his habit of surveying the garden. A Federate who was up on the wall to reconnoitre the scene, saw him and said, “Hold it Priest.”

¹¹ See the appendix to this chapter.

He was already walking on the lean-to fixed to the wall and was about to jump into the garden when Fr. Tuffier called out to remind him that there was a door and a bell to enter private homes. The federate miserably withdrew. The remark carried, for shortly afterwards, at about three o'clock, a sentry was placed at the entrance of the convent, facing the porter's lodge.

At five in the afternoon, while a detachment surrounded the house, a 25-strong troupe barged into the porter's lodge. This was done under the orders of Clavier who was flanked by his secretary Girault and Captains Lenôte and Henry. Fenouillas, the delegate of the XIth Arrondissement, came as a support. The reports also mention the presence of Eugène Protot, the delegate for justice. One would see him again in Picpus along with Rigault, the delegate for Security and Cournet, the prefect of police, when they came to expel the remaining brothers and the 84 sisters who lived in the convent next door. Today one could never conceive of so high a functionary entering a particular house at the head of a bunch of partisans. Back then, it was commonly done. Without losing their sense of being in power, the leaders of the Commune willingly consorted with their former comrades whether in clandestine actions or in prison who, for lack of luck, boldness or talent were vegetating in the inferior ranks. They gladly helped out with police operations. If Protot appeared, it was probably later, at the time when victory was being celebrated at the expense of the convent. After the famine of the siege and the scarcity resulting from the half-seige, he could hardly look down on these small advantages of his office. No doubt this is the reason why in their depositions, none of the Fathers and Brothers speak of this character, because while they were bombing, the Federates had taken care to cordon them off.

Brother Marin Fouquet, aged 49, had been the SSCC bursar for 17 years and was charged with organising the departure of the missionaries from Havre. He was the right-hand man of Fr. Tuffier, the community procurator, who had total confidence in him and

confided delicate missions to him. Brother Marin left “Memoires,” now partly published, a precious mine of information on the history of the house particularly in these tragic days. From him, we learn about the takeover of the house by the Federates. Fr. Tuffier had sent Brother Marin to the porter’s lodge as a reinforcement. It was to him that Clavier addressed himself. “Call the Superior for me.” “He is not here, he is away in the Province.” “Ok, his replacement.”

Fr. Radigue soon appeared accompanied by Fr. Tuffier. Clavier told them that he had a mandate from the Commune to search the house. He asked Fr. Radigue to conduct him immediately to his own room. “Everyone go to his door and no one is to go out,” Captain Lenôtre shouted to his men before following the police commissioner.

Fr. Radigue’s room was on the first floor over the parlour at the opening to the stairwell. Although he was second in the Congregation he had only one room, simply furnished but big. It is where he met with brothers, worked and slept. Clavier went straight to the drawers, searched them, emptied them and took note of the letters. “What are you looking for?” Fr. Ladislas asked calmly. “You will find nothing here. We have nothing to do with politics.” “It is not your politics that worry us. We don’t care for your politics. But you say Mass, you wear scapulars. We do not want any more of these superstitions.”

The search, nonetheless, went on. Chests of drawers, wardrobes, libraries, everything was searched. Fr. Radigue was a great worker. The pages which he had written in his small compact style made for impressionable piles. The bigger course books, all in Latin, only awakened a smile of incomprehension. But there was also some works in French: *The Majesty and Excellence of the Adorer, Adoration, Feast of the Sacred Heart* (1866), *The Dignity of a Martyr* (Saint Servan 1849), and finally the coup de grace, *The Religions of the Sacred Hearts tending to perfection according to the Rule and the Constitutions*, a manuscript of 864 pages, finished only a short time before. They backed off fast. The

pages, it seems, burned their fingers. But would they go empty-handed?

“Powder, Commissioner, powder, I found powder,” cried out a voice in triumph, the soldier waving under the nose of the priest a box of powder which he had found in the night table. “It is simple Charcoal which I take for a sour stomach” replied Fr. Radigue, barely suppressing a grin. It was verified. The revolutionary poured a little in the palm of his hand and inhaled it. That’s right. With such budding revolutionaries, the comic often comes with the tragic.

“Everybody assemble downstairs”, snapped Clavier trying to save face.

Fr. Tuffier told Brother Marin to warn each of the Fathers and Brothers to assemble in the parlour with as brief a delay as possible. Such was not the opinion of Brother Marin.

Since the time he had been assisting the Father Procurator, he knew that he could afford to take risky initiatives, even if it meant being told off if things went wrong.¹² While he was on the lookout during the search, he had devised a plan to enable the young brothers to escape through a back door in the garden, the existence of which the federates were as yet unaware of. So, slowly he hurried to gather the Community together. In the parlour, the delegates were getting impatient. Fearing the worst, Fr. Tuffier again urged Brother Marin to search again. The guards in their turn took a tour of the garden and brought back with them Brother Didier, the gardener, who had, imperturbably, continued to water his vegetables. But at least five of the young men, Brothers Elijah, Antonin, Paul, Benoit, Téséphore,

¹² Marcel Bocquet expresses his appreciation of the Memoirs and Biography of Brother Marin Fouquet. Office of the Annals of the Sacred Hearts, Braine-le-Compte 1913 <https://sccpicpus.com/en/martyrs-of-the-commune-paris>

were able to escape and, in Brother Marin's mind they no longer risked being enrolled forcibly into the troops of the Commune.

As they arrived in the parlour, the religious had to declare their name and surname and their employment; then at a sign from those in charge, they lined up against the wall. Since the seats were all too few, they considerably offered their seats to those who were standing, to the astonishment and annoyance of the Federates.

"Everyone is here then?" asked Clavier. Brother Marin rapidly answered in the affirmative. Fr. Tuffier remained disquieted. He rose up and checked. Had he not yet figured out the manoeuvres of Brother Marin? Yes! He had but he was thinking of old brother Antoine, who was left alone in the infirmary. Would it not be better to have him lined up with his confreres than have him exposed to the bullying of these fanatics? Fr. Tuffier sent Brother Marin to find Brother Antoine. Antoine had put on his best clothes. Although one might think that he was sick and crazy, the good brother would prove himself the shrewder! The brother had his own ideas. No! He was not mistaken. Seeing the guards in arms and his own confreres ranged along the wall, he believed the hour had come for him to confess his faith, and, boldly, he offered himself for martyrdom. "I don't hold on to life. Cut off my neck! Cut off my neck!" he cried from the threshold. In this moment of extreme tension, there was an outburst of laughter. Everyone knew the gravity of the hour but the contrast between the debility of the old infirmed man and the vigour of his declaration and the offering of his neck to the sword was so expressive that irresistibly the laughs came. The jailers permitted themselves to join in. But Captain Lenôtre reappeared. He placed ostensibly two sentries inside the parlour and two outside and gave an instruction that no one could ignore: "The first one to stir, the first to speak ... a bayonet in the belly."

From the very first hour, the porter had been confined to his gatehouse with orders not to allow anyone in. And, if ever anyone

ever did take a fancy to alerting the neighbourhood and revealing what was going on in the house, they were to be shot on the spot. For the time being he was required to hand over all the keys to the convent; and above all, he was not to forget the keys to the wine cellar. The porter had protested that he did not have a key, that each one had their own. He was told that if he wanted to keep his head on his shoulders, he had better cooperate. The porter had no other option than to go into the parlour and ask each one for his keys. Clavier and Lenôtre closely watched the operation. When the brother in charge of the refectory put back the key of the cellar, their distrust redoubled. Are you the cellar keeper? Is this the only key? Otherwise, you will be shot in five minutes. The witnesses noted the unbelievable brutality of Clavier towards the “cellar keeper”, Brother Michel Balme, an old man of 76 years. In going out Clavier noticed that the young Belgium brother Liévin Jacobs, assistant porter, was wearing a key hanging on a cord like a medal and which, in his evident anxiety, he had forgotten to hand in. Clavier ordered him to be seized and searched and since 100 francs were found on him, he confiscated them and treated him as a thief. The medals were pulled off, his scapular torn and then they took him to an old isolated house in the middle of the courtyard and threw him into a small room under the stairs, where he was kept for twelve days.

It was truly a curious paradox! The revolutionaries talked only about their fight against the priesthood which they saw as the number one enemy of the emancipation of the proletariat. Yet, they treated the priests with obvious care. They proclaimed to everyone that they were going to liberate the proletarians and finally give them the status of free men. However, the domestics – for that is how they classified the brothers who did not wear a soutane – they brutalised and would soon treat them and exploit them like serfs.

Now, they thought, the search would be able to proceed without constraint and yield substantial results. The house was searched from

cellar to attic. They didn't even bother to look for the keys. They broke the locks. The cellar, especially, held them back for a long time. The house received its wine directly from a property located in the region of Lot which had been bequeathed to Picpus by a former Superior General. They tasted the wine as if they were connoisseurs; wine for everyday consumption, wine for celebrations and wine for mass. The cellar was hit hard that day.

From there they moved on to the kitchen, where Brother Conrad, a German, prepared supper as usual. One lifted the lids and another tasted the food. And as the hour advanced, they decided to sit down in the refectory and had the supper that was being prepared for the Community served to them, taking care to substantially reinforce it with what they had found in the storeroom: all was washed down copiously.

The looting had begun. Under the pretext of needing light for searching, they laid their hands on the wax candles. There were many boxes of them. They were never seen again. The procurator had stored clothing as much for the missionaries as for the peoples of Oceania notably a hundred pairs of slippers: all gone. And that was only the beginning. And was it to mislead them that Captain Henry brought them a broken watch, asking if the owner wanted to claim it. The inventory made after their departure gives a better idea of their high ethical standard!

Suddenly, the door of the parlour was violently pushed open. Strong protests could be heard. A scuffle? Some Federates were pushing in an ecclesiastic who was arguing with them. With him there were four civilians. Everyone knew Abbé Guéibels, the vicar of the neighbouring parish, Saint Eloi. He had come with his two brothers to visit another priest, Fr. Saint Aromand, who lived in Rue de Picpus across from the house of the Congregation. A sentry had become aware of him as he was closing the door. He thought that he was one

of the Sacred Hearts Fathers who had fled and raised the alarm. A detachment charged the house and triumphantly returned with Abbé Guébels, his two brothers, Fr. Saint Aromand in his bedroom robe and slippers— and his servant. The Abbé protested that he was a Belgium subject and had the right to free circulation. Clavier then appeared. A few days earlier he had encroached on the Church of Saint Eloi and had already quarrelled with the vicar. He pretended not to know him and held him prisoner with one of his brothers. Along with him, he recognised the other priest, Saint Aromand who had the look of death on his face. (He died shortly thereafter.) At the same time, Clavier released the servant and the younger of the Guébels brothers. However, he strongly objected to Saint Aromand's use of the term "domestic servant" which he saw as an affront to human dignity according to the Commune.

At 7 o'clock, the sentries were changed with new arrivals who brought provisions. There was no question of sharing the food, but the wine did encourage confidence: "All this is the fault of the scapulars of Trochu" one of the guards repeated with feeling.

One has to believe that this was the slogan of the day. It served to rouse up recruits before they assaulted the convent because on that evening it was heard often. Since the Commune was considered as a continuation of the Revolution of 1789 and the Federates were seen as the successors of those great ancestors, it was good to continue the parallel: the pendant of the royalist Chouans and the scapulars of the Sacred Heart. The papal Zouaves were also in Paris to defend the capital. But too many Parisians held up against their heroic charge in Loigny under the leadership of Charette and Sonis. It was one of the most skilful feats of arms of the unfortunate war of 70. And so, one thought of the scapulars of Trochu. If Paris had succumbed, it was

because General Trochu, in charge of its defence, had distributed scapulars of the Sacred Heart instead of weapons to his soldiers.¹³

The propaganda affected only the mind of a simple Federate, not his heart. He permitted some extra benches to be brought in so each one might sit down.

As the chiefs and their men feasted joyously in the refectory, the Fathers and Brothers under the eyes of the sleepy guardians spread out on the sofas in the parlour, kept a religious silence on their benches, less out of fear of reprisals than by habit and need. Saying the breviary, praying their rosaries or meditating in their hearts, each was confiding himself to God and asking to be ready for any and all eventualities. There was no doubt that it was to these long hours of recollection and of prayer that the prisoners owed their serenity and their joy on the morrow and the following days.

¹³ Although it was an important defeat for the French army during the Franco-Prussian War, the Battle of Loigny (2 December 1870) was marked by the bravery of the volunteers from the West, the Pontifical Zouaves, under the leadership of Colonel Athanase de Charette and General Gaston de Sonis. The Zouaves recall the Chouans who were anti-revolutionary fighters from 1792 to 1800. General Louis-Jules Trochu was the somewhat ineffective (in the eyes of some) military leader of Paris during the siege, September 1870-January 1871. *Scapular of the Sacred Heart*. There are two types of scapulars. A monastic scapular which is part of the religious habit of monks and nuns and a devotional scapular. The devotional scapular is a miniature replica of the monastic scapular. It is considered a sacramental or religious object and represents a particular devotion, such as devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. An image of the heart of Jesus became the emblem of the counter-revolutionary forces in France. This image was placed on flags and banners and worn as an arm badge by soldiers and those who opposed the anti-religious tendency of the revolution.

See <http://1815-1918.blogspot.com/2010/12/battle-of-loigny-2nd-december-1870.html> (Accessed in December 2018).

The wait lasted three hours until the chiefs reappeared. Clavier took his place at the small table, and surrounded by his assistants, he began the introductory part of the interrogation.

“Who among you is the first?” “It is I,” Fr. Radigue said, not unaware of the fact that in parallel circumstances, honour conceals danger.

“Stand before me and answer: name, surname, age, place of birth and your function.” And since Fr. Radigue was holding – if fortunately, not the first place in the Congregation, at least the second – Clavier followed up with more questions:

“Why do you priests of Picpus have houses in five parts of the world?” Yes, he had seen them in Algeria when he was deported there. (At Nouméa also, somebody else said) What were your goals? Your activities? What are the young people employed for?

Clavier, an improvised commissioner, was still quite new to the job. No doubt he felt it himself, for he barely dared to look up from the register in which he recorded the depositions. Blond and bearded, under the light shed by the lamp he appeared to be about 25 years old. His secretary Girault “a 19 year old rascal” was even less assured than his patron but he would surpass him in due course. Henry was a small, dry, violent man who seemed unable to speak without frothing. Lenôtre, who played at being important, tried to make a lot of noise despite his mean and toxic air. One would have to laugh at his pretensions even without the scar on his cheek, which was as large as a two-franc piece, and which gave him a ferocious look. Both belonged to the 204th Battalion. Philippe, his real name was Fenouillas, a delegate of the XIIth Arrondissement in no way that evening merited his reputation as the “hyena of Bercy.” The former convict was seated nonchalantly on a sofa. He was rolling cigarette after cigarette, and savouring the pleasure, certainly unexpected for him, of presiding over a court of justice in the parlour of a religious house.

But what more astonished and saddened these religious vowed to teaching was how extremely young their captors were: the majority were not much more than 15 and certainly less than 30 years old. These beardless kids were playing it big and tough with all the excesses and the earnestness of their age. Without knowing it, they only inspired pity in their victims who were thinking that this rebellious behaviour, the words of hate and the penchant for destruction and for wine were the more imputable to their milieu and their circumstances than to themselves. This behaviour would mark them for life.

Clavier continued his investigation, dotting it here and there with remarks criticising the organisation of the house or the assignment of the brothers. He was astonished for instance that the sisters had two chaplains when one would have been sufficient for the task. Hearing that Father Carchon was the chaplain for the Little Sisters of the Poor, he took him violently to task, accusing him of being the author of an article which appeared in *l'Universe* in which he allegedly spoke well of them. No, he never had such an admiring attitude towards the sisters and he protested strongly against this "lie."

Twenty-two lay brothers did not wear the soutane. Taking them for servants or day workers, the Commune did not retain them. The interrogation over, he carefully reread his notes and passed them to Philip who approved them and declared solemnly as he glanced at the men: "All who are wearing a soutane will depart this evening for the depot. This is a measure of security which has been made necessary in response to the measures which Versailles has taken." "But that is an illegal measure," protested Fr. Tuffier. "In a country of liberty, it is truly strange that one takes us from our home and that our home, of which we are the legal owners, is seized."

"And those who were deported in 1852," replied Clavier in a dry and clipped tone, "were they not taken from their residence? Were they not perhaps also proprietaries of their domicile?" Then throwing

aside the mask and speaking clearly this time: "As to the citizens," he said referring to the lay brothers, "they are free to return to their work. But there will be no going out from this house."

It was 10:30. The prisoners had taken nothing since midday, and they were further stretched by five hours of waiting and stress. While the lay brothers left in silence, bewildered by the arrest of the Fathers, Brother Marin took a risk: "You are not going to let them leave here without taking something?" The reply came: "I forbid you to bring them anything. They need nothing. It is late and the taxis have been waiting for us for a long time."

Thus, they were arrested, a decision taken while all were at table with Protot, thanks to whom, without doubt, things were being managed efficiently and the simple mandate of a search was turned into a mandate for arrest.

Clavier went back on his decision and permitted that bread and water be given to those leaving. By his own authority Brother Marin added in wine, meat and cheese. But they hardly touched the food.

When the guards refused to let them go up to their rooms to take the most indispensable objects, Brothers Marin and Stanislaus hastily prepared some linen for them and handed it to each of them with a word of friendship. The guards called them to order: "Here are two lads to keep an eye on!" As for Brother Amator, a nurse, who had been a little too insistent in asking the federates for wine for the prisoners, he was immediately arrested and locked up with Brother Liévin. Not all the guards were bad tempered. One of them allowed Fr. Tuffier to go up to his room and whispered in his ear these words which speak volumes about the esteem in which he held his leaders. "Take everything you can. Above all, do not leave any money, you will never see it again."

For the 13 religious the hour of truth had come. Fidelity to their vocation and to the faith demanded the sacrifice of liberty and life. One point is beyond any doubt. It was their double consecration to God - through sacrifice - and to the religious life which empowered all of them in their imprisonment and four of them for death. The declarations of Clavier and his band were formal: "You say the Mass! You are wearing the scapulars... All those who are wearing the soutane are going this evening to the depot."

It was not by pure accident that the honour of pouring out their blood was reserved to the four members of the General Council. They did not hide their titles and functions from the interrogator. From then on, it seemed to the Commune that taking them was a good thing. Since the head of the Congregation was absent, at least they were able to get hold of his principle co-workers. No doubt they were under some illusion about the importance of the Congregation and the role it played in the Church. Nevertheless, they placed the four councillors at the top of their list. And when the Commune with its back to the wall wanted to deliver a mortal blow to the church, it designated these four priests because they thought it would effectively behead this Congregation that was vowed to the Sacred Hearts, to Perpetual Adoration, to the teaching of youth and to foreign missions.

Although nothing seemed to draw the other nine religious to the attention of the Commune except their presence in the Mother house on that day, 12th April, they too were representatives of the SSCC Congregation. The order below is that of their imprisonment which happens to conform with the ranking in community according to years of religious profession.

1. Fr. Ladislas Radigue, Prior
2. Fr. Polycarpe Tuffier, Procurator
3. Fr. Frézal Tardieu, Councillor

4. Fr. Marcellin Rouchouze, Councillor and Secretary General
5. Fr. Siméon Dumonteil, 77 years old, had been a missionary in eastern Oceania, Marquises Islands. He returned to France and never ceased praying for the foreign missions. He passed on his zeal to Mademoiselle Zoé du Chesne who, on his advice and with approval, founded the Apostolic Work, the goal of which was to provide the foreign missions with objects for worship and ornamentation. For the innumerable projects undertaken and the works which it commissioned, the Apostolic Work made no little contribution to evangelization. He died in 1872.
6. Fr. Louis Lafaye, 64 years old, had already exercised his ministry for a long time in the Diocese of Limoges when he entered the Congregation. For many years, he was the superior of the major seminary at Versailles, directed by the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. When he came out of prison, he was named novice master, then General Councillor. He died 1887.
7. Fr. Daniel Holtermann, 36 years old, was of Dutch nationality. He had completed his first sojourn in South America where he served as a teacher in the college at Valparaiso, Chile, where he would return and eventually die. While in Paris, he concerned himself with poor children of the area and with the soldiers.
8. Fr. Philibert Tauvel, 30 years old, was teaching dogma at Versailles. Later, he would have important duties at the Motherhouse, first in Paris and after the expulsion, in Belgium. He survived by a half century these events which marked him so profoundly. He was a witness of great quality, though many visual details escaped him, perhaps because he had lost an eye in his youth.
9. Br. Laurent Besqueut was at the time, chaplain of the Mother House of the SSCC Sisters before he also became a General

Councillor. At the age of 63, he had only recently joined the Congregation. It was his esteem for his former masters at Versailles that led him to SSCC.

10. Fr. Sosthène Duval, 30 years old, was at the time teacher of literature at the junior novitiate in Picpus. Later, he was sent to Tahiti, in the Pacific. He returned to Paris to make a retreat but this for him, as for Fr. Tauvel, revived bad memories. When the Congregation was expelled from Paris, he too went to Belgium where he died in 1907.
11. Fr. Séverin Kaiser, (26 years old) and originally from the Prussian Rhineland, was only passing through Paris. He was detained after the Commune at Versailles where he was with his brother Médard. After a time of exacerbated nationalism, perhaps it is worthwhile to note that no sooner had the lost war ended, than the two Germans were able to teach in the major French seminary and to win esteem. A seminarian once, rather loudly, mocked Fr. Severin's accent. Without flinching, he confronted the mocking student, examined his notebook, and under the pretence of perfecting his French, he asked the reason for some particularities in the student's use of the French language, the propriety of certain terms, and of some expressions which appeared curious to him. His high culture, good moral values and his tact foiled others' disrespect.
12. Fr. Stanislas Carchon had also come from diocesan clergy (Verdun). He had only made his vows six months earlier. He served the Little Sisters of the Poor. Therefore, it was his first obedience that led him into prison, not a bad way to begin one's religious life.
13. Brother Constantien Lemarchand, 54 years old was not a priest but was a choir brother as distinct from the lay brothers who were totally given over to manual work. He aided the priests in

their ministries. In Picpus, Brother Constantin undertook the task of sacristan. He was the only one of the brothers to wear a habit. For the Communards, who didn't busy themselves with knowing subtleties, to wear a soutane meant one was a priest. So, it was under this title that he was arrested and incarcerated. He left a report of his captivity which is highly informative. The arrest of Br. Lemarchand confirmed that one of the more salient traits of the Commune was its hatred of the priesthood and religion.

14. Frère Michel Balme	(76)	refectorian, sick
15. Frère Alain Richard	(67)	porter, sick
16. Frère Palémon Miquel	(69)	tailor
17. Frère Aubin Reynouard	(71)	carpenter
18. Frère Mathieu Sirvain	(71)	maintenance
19. Frère Theodore Martin	(64)	infirmary
20. Frère Amator Dellac	(64)	refectorian
21. Frère Didier Panel	(63)	gardener
22. Frère Agapit Policy,	(54)	master mason
23. Frère Damien Beaudin	(71)	kitchen aide
24. Frère Joseph Hussenot	(64)	porter
25. Frère Yves Toutain	(48)	gardener
26. Frère Marin Fouquet	(50)	Local bursar
27. Frère Maurice Virrieu	(55)	kitchen aide
28. Frère Crepin Mauzaudier	(48)	gardener

29. Frère Conrad Bussmann	(47)	cook
30. Frère Stanislas Beunat	(40)	chamberlain
31. Frère Boniface Roos	(44)	cobbler
32. Frère Lambert Clashaus	(36)	tailor
33. Frère Liévin Jacobs	(27)	porter
34. Frère Etienne Bassard	(34)	gardener

APPENDIX

Very Reverend Mother Benjamine Le Blais and her eighty-four companions of the Rue de Picpus community

A tribute to the Sisters During the Paris Commune taken from the book *Figures Picpuciennes* (Paris, Spes, 1941); pp. 29-48; Chapter II “*In vinculis non dereliquit illam!*” (“She did not desert him in his bonds”, Wisdom 10:14)

This appendix honours remarks made by Marcel Bocquet on the need to write a chapter that presents the Sisters during the events of the Paris Commune. This contribution was chosen for its emotive narrative, knowing that there is still much to be learned from the way the Sisters, too, lived the Paris Commune. Here are some other sources of reference:

- Benoit Perdereau *Les Martyrs de Picpus* (Paris Adolphe Josse 1872, pp. 335-353);
- Prosper Malige, *Picpus Pendant La Commune* (Paris Evreux 1898, pp. 161-214);
- Marin Fouquet *Biographie et Mémoires* (Braine-le-Comte, Bureau des *Annales SSCC* 1913, pp. 135-137).

Chapter II: ***“In vinculis non dereliquit illam!”***

From 17th March onwards, the Commune ruled Paris: confiscations, arrests, massacres were the order of the day. The churches were closed after ornaments and sacred vessels had been seized; the Sacred Hosts were profaned; the prisons were filled with priests and religious culpable of “adoring a God whom the Commune does not recognise.” The more good deeds one did, the more one was exposed to insults, vexations and bad treatment. Being reparative, the Congregation had to be numbered among the victims: there were eleven priests detained at the Roquette, Rue Haxo. Four died, Fathers Ladislas, Polycarpe Tuffier, Marcellin Rouchouze and Frézal Tardieu, pouring out their blood for the cause of God. The Sisters escaped the killings but not the incarceration.

The Superior General was Mother Benjamine Le Blais, “virtue personified” as the venerable foundress called her. She was born (1802) in Saint Jean de Luz where her father was the commandant at Fort Socoa. She entered the Novitiate in 1822 and made her vows on 9th July, 1823, on the Feast of Our Lady of Peace whom she honoured with filial devotion.

She lived a lively faith, abandoning herself confidently to Providence. She was profoundly humble, delicate of heart, indulgently good. These qualities distinguished her. Her inexhaustible charity with which Heaven had enriched her, plus her sweetness, led the foundress Mother Henriette to choose Mother Benjamine in 1828, to found the community at Alençon (Orne). In 1837, Françoise de Viart, the Mother General, confided to her leadership the community at Chartres (Eure-et-Loir). After nine years at the Mother House, she was called to oversee the establishment of SSCC in Mortagne (Orne). She was named Prioress of Picpus in 1853, and in 1866 a strong majority finally designated Benjamine Mother General, following the death that year of Mother Gabrielle Aymer de la Chevalerie (1853-1866).

On 12th April, 1871, sixty Federates invaded the Mother House. She received them. Greeting them with distinction and grace, which was her way of doing things, she asked them what they wanted. “We don’t have to explain

anything to you,” replied Clavier, chief of the sinister band, “Give us all your keys and follow us.” Then turning to one of his captains, he said: “go and put a sentry at all the doors, and if any woman tries to get out, put a bayonet through her body.” They began their odious searches beginning with the room of Mother Benjamine: her papers, confidential letters. On her testimony, all was seized and examined: “Nothing here belongs to you, citizen Le Blais”, objected Clavier, when she timidly made a comment. He went on: “If I find out from the newspapers that you have told of what happened here today, I will have you all taken to Saint Lazare.”

Fortunately, in anticipation of the events that were closing in, Mother had sent most of the novices who were living at Picpus to the Province houses. The hostel was closed and only two students were left whose circumstances would not permit them to re-join their families.

Leaving the room of Mother Benjamine, the bandits went immediately to the chapel. The sisters on Adoration, clothed with the red mantle, were at the prie-dieu. “I was at adoration at 1.30 p.m.” wrote a sister, “when I heard the door forced. The Federates entered talking loudly and making a lot of noise with their weapons. One of them went to the Tabernacle and shouted for the key. When that was slow to appear, he forced the door with his bayonet, seized the sacred vessels and threw the Sacred Hosts over the altar. The Prioress who was summoned asked graciously not to profane the Sacred Hosts anymore: “Get out of here or I will put this bayonet through you” the Federate said furiously, and continued his sacrilege.

“The miraculous Statue of Our Lady of Peace was taken down from its place. We asked them to leave it with us.” After a moment of hesitation, they said, “it’s wood, leave it to them.” Thus, the blessed statue of Our Lady of Peace was saved and then skillfully hidden, and only when the sisters were back home, would it leave its place of retreat.

Searches over, Clavier announced that half his men would be lodged there in the convent at the expense of the sisters; after this he withdrew. The venerable Mother General was placed under guard day and night. The

infirmarian charged with the care of the Federates accomplished her mission with a goodness and devotion which these miserable fellows were obliged to recognise. And in the meantime, what did they need?

To pass the time, these fellows with little to do, though seldom with an empty stomach, found nothing better to do than foist their anger on the sisters. The Mother General was principally the butt of their invectives. In their eyes she was guilty of the worse crimes and she deserved nothing less than being shot. Following the example of Jesus, she stayed silent and prayed for the troops: "Father, forgive them..."

It was in the midst of these anguishes, every day more poignant, that the month of April passed. Adoration of the most Blessed Sacrament continued night and day and was a great consolation for the suffering sisters. But the divine Prisoner had to take refuge successively in various places in the house before settling in the infirmary of the hostel. "Towards the end, as things were getting worse, the Mother General fearing a new profanation, decided that all the Eucharistic hosts - which they had kept and guarded and before which Adoration had continued up till then - would be consumed. The sisters, one after the other, without the ministry of a priest - they were all in prison - approached, not to receive but to take the sacred Communion. When all had communed, the remaining Hosts were consumed by those whom the superior designated for this. There was only a tiny particle left before which to continue Adoration. After the Holy Communion, the sisters went down to the chapel (the ceremony had taken place in the infirmary) to renew their vows before dying since, as all feared, they would have to die.

As events would unfold, the bell for them would not toll, though things began to unfold very fast.

29th April: *Two thousand people invaded the Mother House, spurred on by curiosity. The most horrible calumnies against the sisters were being spread around in the press just as had happened with the clergy.*

"A good woman duly furnished herself with a lantern and a box of matches to facilitate visits to every corner of the house. Going from one place

to another, she inspected all. Then, as she left she said "that's all there is and I had taken my lantern to see better. No big deal! If I had known, I would not have disturbed you so much."

2^d May: *Ten thousand people entered the community going through the windows of the hostel and spreading out from loft to cellar."*

Summoned to put some order into these house visits, the captain of the Federates placed the following notice on the door: "The public may not enter until Justice has been pronounced."

5th May: *The day was spent in prayer and Adoration: first Friday of the month.*

At 7 p.m. two big police wagons came to the entrance. "Citizen superior" was invited to appear before the Council, who were meeting in the house of the Fathers of the Congregation. She asked to be interrogated in her own convent. But after being refused, Mother Benjamine went with two Sisters: Mother Téléspore, the bursar and Sister Athénodore, the director of the hostel. The Superior appeared before fifteen people seated around a table that was lit up with candles taken from the chapel. Her interrogation over, she was locked up in a cubbyhole that was under the stairs. She remained there until nine in the evening and Mother Téléspore joined her there while the directress of the hostel got authorisation to return to her two students. The sisters gathering in the community room prayed for their revered Mother. At nine o'clock, they were told to go down to the big parlour where they had the joy of rejoining those whom they feared never seeing again. It was impossible to say even a word to him! Clavier was under pressure to conclude, and he asked for the older sisters. Sixteen offered. Pointing to a National Guard, he said, "Follow the citizen." The guard led them into the courtyard without permitting a change of clothing and made them mount the wagons stationed near the door of the convent. Mother Benjamine questioned the proceedings. Clavier responded to her ferociously: "This doesn't have anything to do with you. You are nothing here any longer." It was eleven at night, an hour sacred to the Congregation...

The infirmarian remained at Picpus with four sisters who were ill. Mother Benjamine made it known to the infirmarian that she ought to consume the particle of the Host being guarded in the infirmary. Jesus ceased to be corporally in the midst of his brides and perpetual adoration was interrupted...

One in the morning: six wagons arrived to take the remainder of the community into custody. Each found a place in the police transport. National guards surrounded them and some made sarcastic remarks about an elderly sister holding onto her stick with two hands; only in looking at her did they understand that she was making one final appeal to them. What did she want? To remain in the infirmary because she was no longer young and fit. "If she is eighty-four, she has lived enough to die." That was the response that a National Guard threw in her face. Approached by the Superior, the sister renewed her vows and allowed herself to be hauled up among the other sisters onto the police wagon.

Meanwhile everyone was boxed in; the wagons were full; as for Mother Benjamine, ah for her the corridor was again much too good, let her stand! And the venerable Mother obeyed; not a word, not a murmur, she prayed united to her Master.

Where were the prisoners being taken to? No one knew. Only when they descended from the wagons did they realise that it was Saint Lazare, a prison for women lost to vice. Without their knowing it, they had made a good choice for women who were devoting their lives to making reparation.

Three in the morning: The last vehicle reaches the prison gates. They meet up. Crowded into the corridor on the ground floor, some are sitting, some standing, some against the wall, the eighty-four sisters wait for someone to direct them to their respective rooms or cells. They will be five to six to a cell.

Reverend Mother was sequestered in a secret place; in the cells there was no furniture except a modest bed. Cleanliness was short of the mark. There was a wooden seat with no back, an earthen bowl and a jug of water. Such were things for the venerable mother of sixty-nine years who was sick! The bursar and the directress of the hostel were housed the same way.

7th May: *Sunday but no Mass.*

8th May: *A search was carried out. The director of the prison, Mouton, a former cobbler and ex-detainee, initiated the search. "The surveillance was undertaken rigorously, as his masters would have expected of him: silver, objects of piety, and even the scapulars which were an integral part of the Sisters' dress."*

To serve eighty-four sisters in their cells truly made the work more complicated. The sisters found themselves removed to the garret that was situated on the fifth floor of the building. In this space, there were ninety beds, so close to one another that the space in between was barely sufficient to move. More importantly however, the joy of being together was mutually comforting and made up for the rest. Ah, if only the good Mother Benjamine could be with us!

Little by little the community life was organized: at seven, prayer and meditation, adoration was made regularly just like at Picpus. Turning in the direction of a church and in the greatest recollection, the sisters provided their guard of honour, spiritually at the foot of the Tabernacle.

Around 9.30 in the morning, the sisters went to the refectory that the inmates had just left - and in what a state! "We ate from bowls and drank from doubly disgusting metal tumblers. The menu was simple: soup which resembles dish water and small black bread, a pound and a half providing for the day."

Free time until recreation: some read, others knit - some good people supplied both books and wool - others sewed etc. there was an hour of walking in the courtyard. Again, free time and rosary.

At 3:30 in the afternoon, supper: "ratatouille of beans and potatoes. That's all! Sunday and Thursday, four times in all, we had meat, and once I had neither a knife nor a fork to eat with. Imagine how we got on." (Letter of Sister Renée Clessin to her family).

Mother Benjamine - is there need to say it - was subjected to the same regime! "The Good God blessed us there and I found it good..." she responded when asked how she put up with such crude food.

12th May: *The Reverend Mother and her two companions were reunited in the same cell but still separated from the rest of the community. "We were okay there," wrote Sr. Téléphore. "We left the door open at the close of the evening but we did not stray far afield; otherwise we would be watched by the guards."*

13th - 17th May: *"There was the strange spectacle of eighty-four sisters reunited in this prison; in the Communard salons people were talking about going to see the place. The visitors were forced to admit that the way the sisters held everything together was perfect. Everyone admired their silence, piety, charity; but who would be able to understand what they suffered in being "on show" to God and to people..."*

One day Mr. Mouton made it up to the attic. He looked well. "What's going on?" Soon, following him, appeared Mother Téléphore and Sister Athénodore. We gathered round them and embraced. "Why isn't Mother with you? Is she sick? Still hidden away?" As the questions multiplied so did the tears. A witness of this outpouring, the director, was put to the test. He also was touched.

"Ladies," he said, "it is not my fault if today you do not see your Mother superior. I will bring her tomorrow provided that you agree to be more reasonable. ... For I know your Mother; she truly has a good heart and if she sees you crying, she will be grieved."

The evening of the following day, Mother came to embrace her daughters, and all were moved to finally see her. That day ended with sisters enjoying her presence during recreation.

18th May: *The Communards were becoming less sure of themselves. Six sisters were freed through the intervention of the US Ambassador. The*

Communards had seized money from some of the sisters but then they were forced to return it. They got their revenge by putting Mother Benjamine back into solitary confinement.

19th May: *The army of Versailles entered Paris, but the prisoners did not know that the hour of their deliverance was close.*

21st May: *“Cannon fire, alarm, shouts of those detained, agitation among the prison employees, noises associated with armies coming from the outside.”*

22nd May: *“The prison guards were talking about the Versailles army’s entry into Paris, their comments generally appeared to be in favour of the Commune.”*

The captives were taken down to a workshop on the ground floor because, it was said, there was a danger of cannon fire. They would stay there for three days and three nights on benches using their packs as pillows for their heads. “... I will never be able to describe to you the whistling of the bombs and shells that were heading towards our prison; we could hear the collapse of the houses and barricades caused by cannon and machine gun fire; it was frightening....”

23rd May: *Night without sleep, because close to the prison, an arms depot was on fire; one saw only the funnels of flames and of smoke. The bombs, the whistle of the bullets, flashing, crisscrossing... it was truly scary.*

It was impossible for Reverend Mother Benjamine to rejoin her sisters: there was too much danger and besides she didn’t have authorisation.

24th May: *Cannon balls and bullets rained down on the courtyard.*

4:00 p.m. Mouton visited. He didn’t seem reassured: “I am lost,” he said to the sisters. “But I have not been mean to you. I hope that you will vindicate me. I was ordered to let you go out to the barricades where you

would be shot, but I did not do it." The sisters promised to save him if they were able.

5:30 p.m. Another visit from the poor director. He gave permission but it was too late to start looking for Mother Benjamine. Finally, he himself took refuge amidst the sisters. Mother arrived. No sooner than Mother came there was a lot of noise in the corridor; the soldiers of Versailles entered victoriously; they opened the workshop where the sisters were and General Clinchant presented himself. "Where is the director?" The poor unfortunate fellow came forward shaking. "Hiding among the women!" "Who are you, ladies?" "We are religious." "Are you prisoners of the house or of the Commune?" "Of the Commune, General." "Prisoners of the Commune," the General shouted three times while stamping his foot. "Ladies you are free, to do in the house as you please."

25th May: The sisters were taken from their provisional refuge and lodged in the part of the prison once occupied by the prison Sisters. Thanks to their intervention Mr. Mouton's life was spared.

27th May: A first joy! Fr. Louis Lafaye, himself also a prisoner of the Commune, visited the sisters in his prison garb. One could only laugh to see him in this outfit. Things were getting serious. On the eve of Pentecost, each confessed in preparation for the Feast.

28th May: Great joy! There was a Mass at the prison: the officers, soldiers, and a great number of the people attended. Peace is beginning to dawn.

30th May: Some wagons, no longer those of the administration, come to pick up the beloved prisoners who paraded out before a curious but sympathetic crowd of people. In the evening, Mother Benjamine and her daughters returned to Picpus. Everything there was upturned, soiled, in disorder through there was no notable damage to the chapel. The same evening the sisters began to restore the sanctuary. How could the sisters not wish to have Mass without delay in order to resume adoration?

31st May: *The dismal drama is finished. The adorers on the prie-dieu thanked Jesus for saving them and asked pardon for so many crimes committed. They retrieved with inexpressible joy the statue of Our Lady of Peace. "Honour this sacred image," Mother Henriette had told her daughters, "one day you will owe your preservation to her." These words received radiant approval for the obvious help of Mary during the critical days.*

Surrounded with the affection of her daughters which helped to erase the memory of those crude trials that she had gone through, Mother Benjamine continued to govern the Congregation: the strength of her soul and the lucidity of her spirit were simply amazing.

On 22nd April, 1879 having left the convent to buy a statue of Saint Joseph, Mother Benjamine had an attack of apoplexy; she was brought back to Picpus and died the next day in the sweet serenity of a soul who had fought the good fight. She saw opened to her the heart of Jesus, her sanctuary and her place of rest forever.

Chapter III

THE BROTHERS

The brothers did not wear the habit, only a big black cloak which they put on for religious exercises and left off for their hours of work. You would have to be blind not to see from their comportment and conversation that they were religious. But with their minds filled with all the nonsense that went on in the public meetings or that was read in the revolutionary newspapers, the men of the Commune feigned to see them only as domestics and to make matters worse, as the servants of the priests. Seeing them defenceless, they took revenge on the brothers more than the priests, perhaps for no other reason than they feared that the priests might be reinstated. Their brutality was not, however, uncalculated. They profited from this unexpected advantage of playing, for once in their lives, master and servant, having others to serve their every whim and humour. It did not appear that their republican conscience was at all disturbed by the fact that their conduct was not in accord with their principles of liberty and equality.

The brothers, stunned by the incarceration of their Fathers, were suddenly left to themselves in a house ransacked and occupied by a horde who looked like military only in that they possessed arms. But in such circumstances, they were able to be true to themselves. The majority of the brothers were simple and reserved persons who did not understand what was going on: they only knew not to put themselves against the uprising but to hold firm until the end of the storm. Some were used to the fray on the outside but the more impulsive did not hide their indignation and without calculation, more than once let words fly at their new masters.

Clavier did not give the brothers time to recoup. The coaches taking away the thirteen prisoners had no sooner left than he and his companions set themselves up in the refectory to eat. He ostensibly arranged in front of him all the keys of the house alongside his revolver and ordered, as if in a café, “mulled white wine with lemon.” Brother Marin promised the wine but said that there was no lemon in the house. “How come! One is not allowed to question my orders,” came the explosive response. “You have the keys,” Brother responded calmly, “besides, you looked everywhere. Do you believe that I would leave you thirsty for lemon if I had them?”

That this was obvious only made him more vexed. To salvage his authority, Clavier called the cook whom he judged to be more malleable. He was making a big mistake. Brother Conrad Bussmann was a big man. It was his habit to lug about huge big pots every day and the responsibility of feeding a large community did not exactly develop in him passivity or patience. His *savoir-faire*, his courage in the face of someone wanting to put him down made his frank speaking forgivable. “Tomorrow you will prepare seven chickens for us. We are seven, one for each.” “You are not the boss to command us here,” the brother responded, visibly upset. It was almost midnight and the cook had been in his kitchen since 4:30 in the morning.

Clavier lifted his arm to hit him. Brother Marin intervened strongly. “Understood Commissioner, you will be served as you wish.” Left alone with Brother Conrad, Brother Marin explained the dangers of a revolt that would go nowhere. But the cook confessed: “Since six this evening, I have served more than twenty litres of wine and as much coffee.”

To make a diversion, Brother Marin explained to Clavier that Brother Protais Duval had died that very afternoon just before the invasion of the house and it was important to render him the final commendations. “Be without fear”, he said. “We will not leave him

to rot on his straw mattress. Hurry up and prepare us seven beds and put us altogether in the one room.” “But we do not have rooms for seven beds. There are student dormitories.” “Put us where you like, and above all, no priest’s mattress. It stinks.” And then Clavier addressed himself to Captain Lenôte: “this guy is to be watched closely. He is everything here. The others are nothing. Tomorrow we will fix him.”

While Clavier was testing the firmness of the beds (new straw and reeds were provided in compliance with their instructions) Brother Marin was meditating on how to handle the situation. Without ever wanting to leave his humble state of being a lay brother, he had arranged almost all the important affairs of the Congregation. He had been involved in all the important services. With his initiative and dexterity, he combined a profound piety and a total submission to authority. He was a real leader for the other brothers, happy as they were to see one of their own associated so closely with the running of the affairs of the Institute. His presence in those trying days was a real comfort to them. But now that he was countermanded, what support could he give them? Was it not his duty to flee? Hidden in the vicinity, he would watch even more closely over them. This caused some consternation when he told his companions of his intention to keep out of the way of the occupiers. Nonetheless, they gave into his reasoning and supported his escape. In the middle of the day he escaped from the kitchen through the service door, while the cooks were scouring the pots with great noise.

At the same moment Brother Lambert Clashaus, the tailor, disappeared in the opposite direction into Avenue Saint-Mandé. Blond and 36 years old, in his prime with the cut of a grenadier, he sensed again the soldier that he formerly was. He had attracted the attention of Captain Lenôte who wanted the great honour of enlisting him in the troops.

Put out of sorts by these two evasions that took place right under their noses, Clavier decided to make a big show of it. He ordered that all the brothers assemble in the Chapter room. He walked in with revolver in hand and with a stroke of the butt, he caused the holy water font to fly off the wall in pieces. He went to the place of the Superior General and with a chopped voice, he began a harangue: "I know you are not domestics; you are religious. But I know how to untie your tongues."

And standing up he threatened the brothers with his revolver. "You will speak, or I will blow your brains out. Not all of you are here. Where are the commissioner and the big blond guy? Answer!" "We do not know." "So, you do not know. Find them immediately or I will shoot you."

The night moved on and nothing came from their silence. Picking six brothers at random: Palémon, Amator, Yves, Etienne, Maurice and Boniface, he had them locked up in the shed.

Boldness paid off under the Commune's regime. Seeing the Picpus convent as the spoils of war, would he not be promoted to lieutenant for this great feat of arms? Clavier moved into the Superior General's apartments. In these times of scarcity, it was no small advantage to be housed, fed and watered for nothing and to have a large and stylish staff to serve you. To benefit the Commune, he gave himself the mission of detoxifying these poor victims of their superstitions and fanaticisms.

He picked Brother Stanislaus Beunat as the one to serve him. The task for brother was difficult. The commissioner liked the finer things and an open table. Brother Stanislaus, aged 40 and active, knowing the resources of the house, served with the same sense of duty, if not with the same heart, as he would the Superior General. In effect he was only the scapegoat. No lessons, no sarcasm, nor

obscenities were spared him. More than once his straight forwardness shut the jailers up. The topic of confession came up.

“Gentlemen, these questions would take us too far. Besides you would understand nothing of the answers that I would give you.” Another wanted to talk about the vow of chastity. With a rebuke, he stopped them in their tracks and changed the topic.

“The Blessed Virgin! Do you adore her?” “No”, said Stanislaus, “I do not adore her. I honour her and I love her as the mother of Our Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

At the end of the meal that he served them, Clavier, somewhat tipsy, turned brusquely towards him, putting the revolver into his belly demanded “swear that there is no God.” Stanislaus replied, “I swear that there is one. I love him and I adore him.”

“Shall I shoot him,” asked Clavier of his companions. “Shoot,” they cried from all sides. “Shoot me if you will,” the brother said calmly. “Swear.” “No way.”

In face of the firm stance of Br. Stanislaus, Clavier took back the revolver and with an air that sought to be ironic rather than embarrassed, he responded, “he would get killed rather than renounce his superstitions. He would like to pass as a martyr.” “No,” retorted Bro. Stanislaus, “your threats will not make me deny my religion.”

Because of what was happening before him and the remarks he was hearing and fearing worse profanations, Br. Stanislaus decided to take advantage of the upper hand that he had gradually gained over them to get into the chapel. Drawn to the Congregation through adoration of the Eucharist night and day he had more than trembled on hearing their blasphemies. “Go and look for your Good God that we may fry him.” said one of the drunken guests.

The facts responded to what was said. Not content to break or throw away the crucifixes and pious images that decorated the rooms and corridors and target the statues of St. Michael and St. Benedict in the gardens, they also entered the chapel on the first day. The statue of the Sacred Heart had been shattered, St. Joseph was riddled with bullets, St. Peter had been fitted with a candle-extinguisher, but above all the tabernacle had been forced open. Disappointed and furious to find only a cloth - a corporal - containing hosts instead of the precious vases they had expected, they spread the consecrated hosts on the top of the altar and the carpet. The chapel had been formally forbidden to the Brothers and locked. Br. Stanislaus managed to slip into the gallery which was used for night adoration. He was dismayed by what he saw. Approaching Girault who, in the absence of Clavier, was in charge of the house he said, "What have you done? You have thrown down the consecrated hosts, I must go and collect them" Girault replied, "You're crazy with your superstitions."

However, because he insisted, the Brother was able to enter the chapel accompanied by Girault and an armed Federate. As he was gathering up the dispersed hosts he saw Girault approaching the altar wanting to seize a host.

"Stop," he said with authority, "don't touch that, you have no right to it." "As much as you perhaps," said Girault.

Thus held in respect, Girault let him carry on. Without any doubt, some of the hosts had been torn to shreds. It was only known later how this sacrilege was committed. Some days previously, an old man, visibly impaired and hard of hearing and led by a child, had come to Picpus from Pantin where he lived. He had come to make his Easter duty as he did every year and he knew nothing of what had transpired in Picpus. He talked with a sentry whom he mistook to be the porter. The idea came to them to play a good joke on this unfortunate man, paying no respect for his white hair. The Federates

took him to the chapel and shouted that they were going to take him to Communion themselves. The old man refused to lend himself to this unworthy comedy. So, they seized him and forced him to swallow two hosts: "You must be happy now," said Girault: "The priests would have given you only one and we gave you two."

After having reverently collected the hosts in a very white cloth, Brother Stanislaus took them to his room, watching for the moment when he could hand them over to the parish priest of St. Eloi, who at that time was hiding in the infirmary. The priest placed them in a small butter dish which he locked in a bureau. In this way, adoration, the essential work of the house, began again. The brothers had been let into the secret: in turns, they tried to slip into the infirmary without waking anyone. At night, when everyone was asleep in the house, they gathered for a vigil of prayer and reparation and for confession. The priest addressed a few words to them: "History teaches us that in the early Church, Christians pursued by the pagans took the Holy Eucharist home with them to take communion themselves and draw from the body of the Lord the strength they needed. Placed in the same perils, we need a similar grace. We also have another duty to fulfil. These hosts have been profaned. Our communion of reparation will be even more touching than that of the Catacombs."

In the early hours of the morning, a dozen of the brothers gathered in the infirmary to go to Communion. Did their comings and goings and their happy faces raise suspicions? A short time later, the Federates searched the infirmary. They discovered that the one they had taken to be an old sick brother was actually Abbé Pierre-Auguste Denis, the pastor of Saint Eloi. He had been present in the house when brothers were arrested so he slipped into bed as a sick brother. Furious that they had been fooled, the Federates resolved to take revenge against the clergy of the parish under the guise of helping their priests.

They informed each of the vicars that their pastor who was hiding in Picpus anxiously wanted to see them. No sooner did he arrive than Abbé Guébels was seized and locked in a cell. His Belgium nationality, which had saved him a week earlier, as one had seen, did nothing for him this time. Soon came Abbé Majewski's turn to be thrown into the wolf's mouth. He argued in favour of his Polish nationality. He was stripped and beaten up. He then threatened to complain to Dombrowski, an important Pole whom the Commune had made a general. The magic word worked: the vicar was freed on the spot and even received a certificate of citizenship.

While Abbé Denis was not imprisoned in Mazas until 2nd May, the Picpus convent had become a sort of special prison in the hands of an autonomous gang who were looking for revenge, hoping for ransom or wanting to assert their authority as little chiefs. Easter celebrations always brought to Picpus passers-by, especially foreigners, who were sure to find confessors in their languages. They naturally went to the gatehouse. They were unfortunate. Arrested as suspects, men and women were questioned at length, despicably searched and even stripped and castigated. They left terrified.

The capture of Abbé Denis, as one might imagine, did not improve the lot of the brothers. The searches resumed under the direction of Girault. On many consecutive nights, there were raids on the cells and the dormitories obliging the sleepers to get up and join in the searches. They then made a discovery which was to give everyone plenty to talk about. A key bearing a label: vault key!

Were these reminiscences of soap-operas or melodramas which people had read or seen? The Communards had a dread of hiding places concealing arms, treasures, communications. "Now you can no longer deny it. Where is your hiding place?" Not getting any response, the Communards locked up the brothers in the cellar with

this threat: “Lead us to it or you will be shot, hanged or buried up to your neck.” (It was Good Shepherd Sunday, 23rd April)

The triple formula (shot, hanged or buried) was repeated over and over again with no other effect save giving the brothers some respite. “This confinement” reported Brother Agapit, “gave us an advantage that we had been deprived of since the beginning of the invasion: that of having our evening prayer in common and also Matins for the next day. For before they opened the door of our prison a little before six, we had already prayed.”

The night brought sleep as well as cuts and blisters that came from the brothers handling the axes in the search for the famous underground hiding place. Why excavate oneself when one had an abundant work force on hand, both expert and free? As one of the Federates said, their triple punishment could be commuted into that of hard labour.

One dug in the garden, one dug under the infirmary, another in the kitchen. Then it was decided to be more methodical and excavate a long trench that was 80 centimetres in depth. It was suggested that one should consult with Brother Agapit who, as a master mason, had aided in the construction of the house. He was forced to dig down into the most unlikely places: in one place where tiling had risen because of the humidity; in another place where the terrain was sagging, or in the manure pit. No matter how much the brother explained to them that the clay buildings were built upon pillars and not on foundations (and thus could not support subterranean constructions), he was still forced to continue with the useless searches.

However, the looting was advancing quickly: garden, farmyard, storeroom store, mission procurator’s room, sacristies, rooms, everything was done systematically. Two carriages and the brothers’ horse were not enough for their greed, so they borrowed a wagon

and the horse belonging to the Sisters. Wagons and horses went out every night to mysterious destinations. One night it was a barrel and 100 pairs of shoes, another night a new barrel and two bags of flour. Sometimes it was vegetables, sometimes coal, wood or furniture, linen. The brothers were asked to fill up a 400-litre barrel for drinking on the spot. A pig was killed and the contents of Fr. Besquet's library was used to roast it. It was a real bonfire with flames rising to the height of the second floor. The pork butcher, who had been requisitioned, was so afraid that he made them an inedible paté. On the other hand, the thirty chickens roasted by Br. Conrad, left them licking their fingers.

They feasted, inviting their pals, rarely women. More often, the guests of honour belonged to the numerous committees of the Commune. It was chateau life in the convent. There were jealousies and scuffles. That the national guards of the XIth Arrondissement established their stronghold in the heart of the XIIth was an injustice. A general, no less, was appointed to settle the debate. He did so in favour of the XIIth. On 25th or 26th April, the 74th battalion replaced the 204th.

The new occupants were more disciplined and less greedy. As they confined themselves to the ground floor and the first floor, the brothers took advantage of this respite to put some order and cleanliness into the house. Above all, they wanted to remove the objects of worship out of desecration's reach and store them in Br. Stanislaus' room. That ended up being enough for one fanatic to accuse the brother of having misappropriated goods belonging the Commune with the result that he was brought before the committee of the XIIth Arrondissement.

“We don't want the Jesuits and you are one.” The brother denied that he was a Jesuit, that he was a priest, he didn't even know Latin. He was condemned to join the Fathers and under escort, he was led off to Mazas in the midst of cries and insults from the crowd who were egged on unceasingly by his escorts. It transpired that they had

not presented the mandate to arrest him on time. The prison director refused to admit him. Br. Stanislaus had to return to the town hall of the XIIth. He was questioned again hoping to find him at fault. The Mayor, Philippe happened to pass by. He remembered the good suppers that the brother had served them and gave him a certificate of citizenship. In his simplicity, the brother was returning to the convent when he was stopped by Doctor Renaud, the house doctor: “You unfortunate man, don’t go throwing yourself into the wolf’s mouth. Don’t you think that there are enough victims already?”

Things were going bad in Picpus. It seemed that a new group was laying down the law and wasn’t going to stop until it had emptied the convent of all in it. And since the vaults had yielded nothing, the occupants were accused of sadistic crimes, and lewd murders. “Read about the Picpus mysteries,” shouted the newspaper vendors.

Of all the Paris Communities, Picpus was undoubtedly the one with the most relics. The Founder had brought them back from Rome: skulls, insignia bones, whole bodies. The gilded objects and the glassware could perhaps raise some money, but the reliquaries had no value either in art or in material terms. Thinking they were treasures, the Federates broke them. Their illusionary greed led them to spitefully throw them into the fire or into the latrine or abandon them in some corner. The truly satanic rage of one doctor, a defrocked priest, saw the advantage that could be drawn from spreading the rumours, which he duly did. (No doubt this was Dr. Pillot, a delegate from the 1st Arrondissement, a former priest, a self-declared atheist who was enrolled in the International.)

Fr. Daniel Holtermann, who had been imprisoned on the 13th, was released shortly afterwards on account of being Dutch. He had been hanging around Picpus since then in the hope of slipping in again and being of religious help to the brothers, especially to Bro. Alain Richard, who having received treatment, was asking for viaticum. It

seemed to be easier as the Federates were receiving plenty and an officer had permission to briefly close his eyes. As soon as he entered, the brothers gathered around him: they hugged each other, told moving stories, expressed their fears and hopes. However, he gave communion to the sick man and began to hear confessions.

Suddenly the sound of hurried steps and a tumult of voices could be heard at the bottom of the stairs. A group of about fifteen notables of the Commune, three of whom were wearing the red scarf (Protot, delegate for Justice, Rigault, delegate for Security, and Cournet, police prefect, invaded the pavilion where the infirmary was located. According to Da Costa, who was acting as a substitute in the group, these were all the top brass of the Commune. While they lingered at the bottom inspecting the premises, Br. Crépin Mazaudier set about getting Father up to the upper floor and into the attic using a ladder hidden in a cupboard; then he went down to welcome the unwelcome visitors. Their fury was immediately unleashed against the pious images that still decorated the walls of the infirmary. In the room next door, known as the Founder's room, they discovered a reliquary which they smashed. The doctor was the most relentless. Seeing them so agitated, Brother Crépin testified, it seemed as if by some diabolical instinct they sensed the presence of the priest and the Blessed Sacrament. They went up to the upper floor, discovered the ladder and tried to lift the trapdoor that gave access to the attic. The Father had the idea of standing on it and weighing it down with all his might. Several times they pushed a bayonet into the wood around his feet, but without hitting him.

“Let us look in the cellars.” The doctor said. “What abominations we will find in the vault if we can discover where it is.” The group descended to inspect the cellars. After two long anguishing hours, Br. Crépin, believing the danger over, had the priest come down. There was a new alert. Two of the chiefs came up again. Fr. Daniel only had time to hide behind a bed. But it was only the Founder's room that they

wanted to enter for the reliquary. Br. Crépin saw one of them seize a bone and slip it into his pocket.

A short time later the Superior General of the sisters accompanied by two of her sisters passed under their windows. They were going to be interrogated and convicted of terrible crimes and the aforementioned human bone was the evidence that the president of the improvised tribunal victoriously brandished. On the strength of this evidence, there was an arrest warrant issued against the double community of sisters and brothers.

It was almost 9 o'clock in the evening when the brothers, gathered together with the exception of the three who were sick, were led to the large parlour of the Sisters. They passed through the gap that the men of the Commune had made in the wall that separated the two communities in order to steal more easily and justify the slanders being made against them. Their surname, first names, place and date of birth were taken. Late in the night, they heard the screeching of heavy vehicles on the cobblestones. Were they going to join their fathers? They weren't told anything. They were looked upon as if they were insignificant and imprisoned.

There were indeed police wagons, but they were reserved for the 84 sisters who, with the Superior General heading them, were jailed in the Saint Lazare women's prison, a prison of sinister memory. Lined up into two rows and positioned between two rows of sentries with bayonets, the brothers were led to the Mazas Prison where the Fathers had been since 17th April.

It was the 5th May, 1871, the First Friday of the month, a day consecrated to reparation and particularly made solemn in Picpus with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in keeping with the spirit and the mission of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. There were eleven:

1. Frère Palémon Miquel, 69 years; tailor
2. Frère Aubin Reynouard, 71 years; carpenter
3. Frère Mathieu Servais, 71 years; maintenance
4. Frère Amator Dellac, 64 years; refectory
5. Frère Didier Panel, 63 years; gardener
6. Frère Agapit Policey, 54 years; mason
7. Frère Joseph Hussenot, 64 years; porter
8. Frère Maurice Virrieu, 55 years; kitchen aide
9. Frère Boniface Roos, 44 years; cobbler
10. Frère Liévin Jacobs, 27 years; porter
11. Frère Etienne Bassard, 34 years; gardener

The two cooks, Brother Conrad Bussmann, (47) and Damien Beaudin, (71) were not taken but joined them later. Brother Yves Toutain made a narrow escape through the main door. It was not until 17th May, that the house was totally emptied. After bringing the sick, Antoine Tufal, (75), Michel Balmé, (76) and Alain Richard, (67) to the hospital at Enghien the two infirmarians, Brs. Crépin Mazauder, (48) and Théodore Martin (41) were incarcerated at Mazas prison on 17th May.

In total, twelve priests (four of whom were General Councillors), 1 choir brother, 15 lay brothers and 84 sisters (including among the sisters the Superior General and two General Councillors) was the tax levelled on the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts by the Commune. The reparative vocation of one and the hatred of the other would exact more.

Chapter IV

FATHER LADISLAS RADIGUE

It seems strange at first that so little is known of a man who held so many high offices in the Congregation and for a full twenty years formed the novices. But isn't that the lot of the teacher? His students revered him, regarded him highly, loved him. They had only one expression for him: a real professional. Beyond seeing the master, they scarcely knew the man. Perhaps even as a spiritual director, he was not really known. To see him bent over his chores with a forgetfulness of self and to have his hand on the road of perfection, the disciple would hardly have imagined that his spiritual father has known and still knew struggles, failures and uncertainties

Yet no one had been less solicitous to extend himself and less secretive than Fr. Ladislav Radigue. He was joviality and simplicity writ large. Some took him at face value and never discovered until later his culture, intellect and his life experience. On the other hand, all were agreed in proclaiming, along with his happy character, his elevated virtue and to recognize that his religious life long prepared him for the heroism of his martyrdom. We must therefore resign ourselves to knowing only the outlines of his life without the benefit of savoury anecdotes, the expressive traits which help to determine a physiognomy.

Ladislav was the second oldest of six children of Thomas Radigue and Marie-Antoinette Françoise Dolente. They had married four years earlier on 19th October 1819; he was twenty-three and she was sixteen and a half years old. They were financially comfortable farmers in the region of Boisauumont and were parishioners of Saint Patrice-du-Désert, Orne. The deep valleys with the high hills had earned for their region the name "Swiss Normandy." The eldest child, Ladislav-Justin

was born on 8th August 1821. Then came Armand who would become Brother Ladislas in the Novitiate, Marie-Armand Celine who was born on 23rd June 1825 followed by Gustave- Marcel-Victor on 15th August 1826, Charles Octave on 13th May 1828. and Flavie Valerie who was born on 12th December 1829.

Armand-Pierre was born on 8th May, 1823 and was baptised on the same day, as was the custom. That date happened to be the Feast of the Ascension. Nothing much is known of his mother who was religious but of poor health which, after six pregnancies, became precarious. She died on 15th November, 1830 at the age of 27. Before her death, she had a presentiment of the vocation and the glorious destiny of her son. “You will see,” she would say to her family, “my little blond, he will be a priest and die as a great saint.”

Armand himself was of frail stature and unsteady health but his faith was deep, and his smile radiant. His father was aware of the resemblance, physical and moral, between the son and mother whom he had lost and he showed Armand a marked predilection. François Radigue was a dutiful man whom trial had visited early in life and shaped him. Without complaint, he would face his hardships day by day and be equal to the challenge; without counting the cost, he moved steadily ahead. In the evening of his life when he bid good-bye to his son and then learned of his martyrdom, he instinctively found the simple but profound words that would make him equal to the supreme test. For the present the immediate urgencies of six children crying for their mother was his main responsibility. Armand was seven years old when he lost his mother; Flavie was the youngest, only eleven months old.

To assist his nephew, Abbé Dujarié, pastor of Ruillé and the uncle of his deceased mother, offered to take Armand into his presbytery; there he prepared him for his first holy communion. Finding evident signs of a vocation, in October, 1834 he arranged for Armand to enter

the minor seminary at Sees. Founded a century earlier, the seminary had been taken over in 1820 by a truly holy man, Canon Bazin (his cause of beatification has been introduced) who gave it new impetus and spirit. Without yet having the reputation that it would justly obtain later, the school offered excellent courses and the students received a solid Christian formation. The school was particularly a place of Marian devotion and its chapel was the first erected in honour of the Immaculate Conception and for that reason had received the title of basilica. The seminary had an abundance of choice vocations for both dioceses and religious congregations, among whom and well placed was the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts.

Many students flocked to the small town of Sées, which was located at the foot of its cathedral, and which emerged as a precious shrine, greatly animated by priests and nuns. There were 263 students in 1841, 340 a few years later. Classes reached and sometimes exceeded 50 students. It was the price of success and also the backlash of the 1828 Ordinances which limited the number of ecclesiastical colleges.

Apart from his father's house and two short stays in Ruillé and Vaugirard, Armand Radigue's entire life was spent in three houses: Sées, Issy and Picpus. He entered the Immaculate Conception Minor Seminary at the age of 11 and left it at 20; he continued his studies there from the eighth grade to philosophy; it seems he was prey to a painful crisis and found his vocation there. It was therefore a decisive stage for him. Only a few late testimonies of his comrades and some brief lines from the registers are available to help resurrect this part of his life.

Those who were his classmates and friends still remembered the tender piety and the kind, gentle and open character that won him the esteem and sympathy of all. He was in a big class where friendship and closeness united the students.

“What attracted him to me,” Fr. Tellier of Tinchebray said “was his candid and simple air. Later under different circumstances I discovered in him a sincere piety.” In friendship as in religion, he was not demonstrative, but, basically, he had a great tenderness of heart which he occasionally exposed. Having had the misfortune of losing his mother at a young age, he was fiercely attached to his three brothers and his two sisters. For love of his older brother, he asked to take Ladislas as his religious name. While in minor seminary, his young brother was hit with a grave illness. What desolation he suffered and what touching care he offered him. If Ladislas had ever wanted to promote himself a bit, he could have used his success at compositions. He had plenty of good sense and a natural flair.

College records have only kept how well he did at year’s end and two brief evaluations of his conduct.

In 8 th	he is 7 th out of 24 students	
in 7 th	7 th out of 49	"
in 6 th	13 th out of 38	"
in 5 th	11 th out of 52	"
in 4 th	19 th out of 53	"
in 3 rd	19 th out of 44	"
in 2 nd	19 th out of 44	"
in 1 st	14 th out of 34	"
in Phil	5 th out of 38	"

One can detect three periods. Among the earliest years, eight through five, he is a good student. Then comes the crisis: he is nineteenth in his class and this holds for three consecutive years. Finally, he pulled himself together and finished well with the note: good conduct.

What was the nature of the crisis? The records made a brief comment at the end of the second year: “sent home for indiscipline

- 2nd April 1841.” Two other students in the class were under a similar sanction, one of whom received a note from Fr. Provost: “he promised me he would stop being undisciplined” and that he was provoked by another, whose name never appeared in the records again. Was Armand sent home for some time because of idleness and insubordination? It would seem yes, he was.

Asked some thirty years later, a classmate affirmed that he left the seminary in a cloud at the same time as his two brothers were in the 7th class and attempted to get into the college of Argentan. Another witness who seemed better placed to know denied this fact and thought that he went home to be with his brother who had typhoid. This would confirm the testimony of Flavie, his youngest sister, who stated that he did not return to college until after his brother had completed his convalescence.

Whether or not Armand profited from the illness of his brother to take a break or if his missing in action began with his superior’s poor evaluation of him, one cannot deny that at the time he was going through a crisis. He may have counted too much on his on his ability to maintain a low average, since his gifts would have allowed him to shine in first place. Less given to work, he allowed himself to slip into dissipation. “Very fun loving, spirited,” noted a contemporary. More alive to friendship than to rivalry, he never lost an opportunity to have a laugh. There was about him a natural good humour, a playfulness, which would have been hard to contain. Twenty years later he wrote: “I cannot always be serious when I write or when I speak. Sometimes I am taken seriously. I do not dare any more to speak or write except to those who have known me a long time.” (To Fr. Leriche, 27th April 1864)

That same year, 1841, the general invigilator wrote to the superior (an unusual procedure) to complain that each year the exams were a cause of unruliness due to a lack of supervision and coordination

among the professors. Were the students profiting from this discord among their teachers or were they the victims?

To explain the levity and instability of Armand it may be necessary to make mention of his father's re-marriage. The new mother wanted to do well, maybe even too well. The four boys went to the seminary and one remained. One can sense in some of Armand's letters that he had high regard and respect for her, but he referred to her as Madame Radigue. He must have suffered from the change and a classmate noted: a secret, repressed tenderness.

Age and experience would help. He had to take his life in hand and be attentive to the call of grace. His youngest sister noticed the change. "He was very studious. He even worked during the holidays. He gave me good and pious advice. He often advised me to do all the good within my power. 'You can do it day and night and it is never enough.'" The mark of a neophyte? But two years after the conversion of the little troublemaker, the fifth year received a "very good" for conduct. Armand came back resolved to consecrate himself to God and to be a missionary in the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. He did not even wait for the end of the academic year to enter the Novitiate, at that time located in Vaugirard, a suburb of Paris.

"As soon as he entered the room where the students were gathered," Flavie said later, "they all left their places and lunged at him, leaping over desks and tables, vying to be the first to embrace him for they regarded him highly and all loved him. They thought that he had come to stay but when they understood that he had come to say good-bye, they were emotional to the point of tears." Fr. Provost confirmed this statement. "There was great sorrow for us one evening when this boy so close to us packed up before the end of semester. Armand Radigue and Alfonse Duval were leaving to enter the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. We admired their

dedication; but there were tears in all eyes and deep sadness in all hearts at the hour of the last farewell.”

Twenty-five years later, Ladislas still believed that he had to explain: “I left the Diocese solely because I believed that God wanted me in another place. But bless the Lord, I will always love my native land.”

The Founder of Picpus, Fr. Coudrin was Vicar General of Sées and his religious had for some time directed the major seminary. The SSCC were especially well known since in Sées and two other towns of the Diocese, Alençon and Mortagne the sisters of the Sacred Hearts had boarding schools. Their chaplains, Fathers of the Sacred Hearts were not without some influence, for precisely at that time their confreres in the islands of Gambier and Hawaii were writing some of the more beautiful pages of the 19th century missionary period. The *Annals of the Propaganda of the Faith* published these stories and it was from such readings that the first desire to join the Sacred Hearts came to Armand. However, the letter which he left to his classmates at the time of leaving included the words “the heart of Mary is the meeting place for absent friends”; this might reveal, perhaps unbeknown to him, that what attracted him more than the missions was devotion to the Sacred Hearts.

He took the habit on 19th July, 1843, and because of his attachment to his eldest brother, whom he loved tenderly, he asked to have the name Ladislas. In the Novitiate he had the chance of a first-rate person as a director, Fr. Euthyme Rouchouze. He would be with Fr. Euthyme twice more, working with him for fourteen years. Fr. Rouchouze was truly gifted with leadership qualities. Ten years later the destiny of the Congregation would be confided to him, a Congregation divided and weakened by a painful schism. He would calm spirits but also establish discipline. He was also a man of learning. He had a thorough knowledge of the Bible which showed in his classes and especially in

the skill he had of using biblical texts to give a solid foundation to the devotion and doctrine of the Sacred Hearts which, at that time, was in its infancy. His circular letters revealed a man ahead of his time for both matter and teaching style.

Let us take a look at three hand-stitched books of Brother Ladislas. The first began on 16th October, 1843, and ran until 28th December. It comprised of sixty-six pages of compressed writing and was dedicated to the study of Psalm 119. The second and third notebooks contained a commentary on the Letter to the Hebrews which ran 117 pages. The notes were in French, but the text commented upon was in Latin. There were many quotations from the Fathers of the Church, Saint Thomas and other books of the Bible, all in Latin. It was less a critical study and more a well savoured reading of Scripture, destined to nourish the spirit and heart of the novice. This brought a whole new light to the real level of study in the seminaries, major and minor, under the July Monarchy.¹⁴ Demands were made of beginners that would never happen in our days. Would there be many today able to grasp, on the wing, lessons full of Latin quotes as well as possessing whole books of scripture?

These notebooks revealed the progress made by the young Radigue. He was no longer the willingly rebellious student who relied on his talents to get by with ease. From this point on he understood the call of Christ and of souls. One senses a more refined sense of duty, a more demanding care to work methodically, a more pronounced taste for the Sacred Sciences. He was also preparing for the long and obscure work ahead of him – that of becoming a master for whom however

¹⁴ “The July Monarchy was a liberal constitutional monarchy in France under Louis Philippe I, beginning with the July Revolution of 1830 and ending with the Revolution of 1848. It marked the end of the Bourbon Restoration (1814-1830). It all began with the overthrow of the conservative government of Charles X, the last king of the House of Bourbon”.

Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_Monarchy (Accessed on 24/12/18).

there was generosity rather than rigour, a willingness to speak to all rather than delve into questions.

He was perpetually professed in Picpus on 7th March 1845. He later told Fr. Tauvel that during the sermon he was accosted with a terrible temptation to leave the chapel. He got control over himself by remembering an important principle of the spiritual life: never make a big decision in a moment of trouble. Overcoming his hesitancy, he made his vows and recovered instantly his peace.

These twenty months of Novitiate were at the same time both an apprenticeship in religious life and an initiation into the ecclesiastical sciences. At the end of the year he received from the hands of his Superior General, Bishop Bonamie, tonsure and minor orders (20th December). Two years later, he was made a sub deacon (25th July 1847) and then ordained deacon (18th March 1848) and priest (2nd April 1848).

An unexpected obedience awaited him. This young twenty-four-year-old priest was asked to accompany a deportation of prisoners to the Marquesas Islands in Oceania. On 5th March, a decree had appeared suppressing the death penalty for political offences and replacing it with deportation to the colonies. After the events of June 1848, the government proceeded with massive arrests and convictions. The Marquesas were recently annexed and the cooperation of SSCC was requested as it was responsible for evangelisation. Time was of the essence and Fr. Ladislav was available. Hastily, he went to say good-bye to his family. In the meantime, the Government asked for a postponement. The decree languished in bureaucracy for two years and was never applied. Twenty-three years later Fr. Radigue would find himself face to face, if not with the same insurgents then with their sons, only to fall under their bullets.

Provisionally he was to wait in the Novitiate which had moved from Vaugirard to Issy. This provisional status would last twenty

years. The property was one of those “folly” suburban buildings constructed in 18th century style. A rococo pavilion was converted into the chapel. The ponds had almost all disappeared; the beautiful avenues terraced with yew trees, so suited to recollection, made for lively walks during recreation. Overlooking the famous seminary, the view extended the length of the capital where domes and bell towers appeared behind the screen of ornate chimneys.

Fr. Ladislas was the third director of the Novitiate which hardly ever went beyond twenty novices who had to work on their mandatory studies. He was more an elder brother charged with initiating the novices into the observances of religious life, directing the recitation of the Breviary, manual work on the property and encouraging recreations and walks. If it was easy at the age of twenty-five to give himself to all this, his merit was that he continued doing it for fifteen years and at the age of forty, he found himself in the same position.

Violent headaches continued to assail him. He could have argued that his duties were not that important and thus could be dispensed with from time to time, but he never failed to appear. Much more, he wrote his entire classes. And these were real treatises that he composed on the Liturgy, the Mass and etiquette (where the novices learned never to avail of the Superior’s snuffbox without being formally invited to do so). “He was the living rule of the community, a model of regularity.” That is the testimony of the former novices.

The SSCC Congregation was at this time passing through a difficult crisis of growth. The Founder, Father Coudrin, had been succeeded by Mgr. Bonamie, Archbishop of Smyrna. Wanting to complete the work of the founder, he undertook to recast the Rule. But he was more direct than skilful and in a brief time there was a vigorous opposition to him, led by none other than the Founder’s right-hand man, Fr. Hilarion Lucas. At first Bonamie was sustained

by Rome, but it was not long before Bishop Bonamie was disavowed by Rome. The Holy See named Bishop Parisi, the Bishop of Langres, as visitor.¹⁵ This remarkable prelate in so many ways was circumvented by the opposition. They say he lost his cardinal's hat on account of it. He realized, too late, that by bullying the former Superior General, he was undermining all authority, especially his own. However, a healthy part of the Congregation remained faithful to Bishop Bonamie. It showed this by electing - with a very large majority - not the opposition candidate (supported by Bishop Parisi), but Fr. Euthyme Rouchouze. The small number of opponents tried to form a dissident group, which, however, was not viable. Saved just in time, the Congregation, at that time in full expansion, had to withdraw into itself for many years to rebuild its strength.

In those times of trouble, it was more difficult to know one's duties than to do them. This was the rare merit of the Issy novitiate which was led by Fr. Alexandre Sorieul, master of novices and companion of the founder. He was supported by Fr. Euthyme Rouchouze, the future Superior General "who representing yesterday and tomorrow" did not stumble under the storm and became "the centre where, under God's eyes, interests dear to the Institute could be discussed." It was right to associate to this work of restoration the name of Ladislav Radigue and that of the other three Servants of God. Perhaps, as Fr. Malige said, Ladislav's time at Issy "was a preparation for his definitive role, his martyrdom, as delegate of the Congregation in the bloody expiation of the Commune."

¹⁵ In order to deal with the crisis of the Rule at the beginning of the schism, the Holy See - by decree dated 29th March, 1852 - appointed Bishop Pierre Louis Parisi, Bishop of Arras as Apostolic Visitor. Consequently, the Holy See dismissed the two Superiors General, Bishop Bonamie and Mother Constance Jobert. This prompted the Congregation to elect new generals (1853): Fr. Euthyme Rouchouze (died in 1869) and Mother Gabrielle Aymer de la Chevalerie, niece of the Good Mother (died in 1866).

In July 1863, Fr. Alexander Sorieul died. Ladislas had looked after him as a son would his father, with total devotion but also maintaining a deferential distance, which astonished some of the novices for whom giving respect was not a dominant virtue. After some long months, the weight of the house fell on his shoulders. Little by little his gifts were being extended. In addition to the course of Scripture that he taught, there was added the management of the household economy. His knowledge of agriculture plus good friendships in Normandy gave him the know-how to cultivate a better yield of the vegetable garden. A greater number of novices and of lay brothers chose him as their spiritual director. Substituting as novice master plus the care he had for the sick brought about the ruin of his own health which had always been delicate. His migraine returned causing him, according to Fr. Tavel, to spend one week out of every two in bed. The nomination to be Novice Master at that time came from the General Chapter because by right the incumbent became a member of the General Council and became the third in leadership of the Congregation. Foreseeing the choice of the capitulants which a straw vote had made known in advance, Ladislas thought of asking for a change. Then, present at the last moments of a lay brother of great virtue, he asked him to intercede for him before God and to pray that God would change the assignment or give him sufficient health for the task. His prayer was heard. His headaches disappeared. He even put on weight. In September, the General Chapter named him Novice Master.

Ladislas took an active part in the General Chapter of 1863. As he was charged with the task of explaining the Rule, of clarifying it more precisely and of cultivating the spirit of the Rule, he felt the need for an authentic commentary on it. The need was further sustained by the memory of the recent crisis. He made a proposal that a commission be named. No one but he was qualified to do such a work well. Instead of a commission to work with him, he himself was assigned to do it.

He had another project in his heart. The crisis through which the Congregation had passed had slowed down recruitment. Should we not create minor seminaries? They could welcome students on the threshold of their studies and at the same time give them a solid human and Christian formation, a formation inspired by Picpucian spirituality. The idea caught on. All religious Orders came to have their “apostolic schools” but the institution was new then, and if Fr. Radigue could not be considered as the father of this new initiative, he wasn’t far from it. Beginning the following year, premises were set up for this purpose in the house in Picpus.

His ministry of spiritual direction was founded upon a deep knowledge of novices. He complained to the school directors of their being “almost completely ignorant of their students’ personal histories and achievements, talents, character, aptitudes,” and he insisted that they give him “all the details that would be useful to clarify the decision as to whether or not we ought to take them on.” (Letter to Fr. Leriche, 22nd June 1863)

If he insisted on having documented records on them, it was not that he felt cut off from his novices. After 15 years in Issy, and in spite of his position, he remained the one who entered through the little door as if he was one of the group, seeking to establish friendly contacts with them. His new dignity in no way affected his natural simplicity. Some even let themselves be deceived at first sight by appearances and believed him to be without personality. On the same level as the novices, he naturally gained their confidence, without, however, using this skill to draw the facts out of them, which some prefects of discipline can excel at. He obtained this total confidence only because he totally shared their life, even their recreations. He made it a law to never fail to do so. Because he believed that it was in these moments of relaxation that they were truly themselves and accepting of who they were. Whether he was walking with them through the streets of Issy or in the woods of Meudon, speaking to

them about the big problems of the day debated in the newspapers, or in winter teaching them games such as checkers or dice games, it was clear that he had only one goal: to know them better in order to shape them better.

He knew how to be firm. “We remember such and such a novice”, said Fr. Malige, “a novice who did not lack in self-esteem and who preferred intellectual work to manual labour. The director had noted that trait and reserved for that particular novice the more humbling of tasks. If others dug, watered or raked, he had the job of spreading out the manure. Often while others were studying, occupied with reading, he was charged with doing some supplementary work in the garden that he did not like.

Fr. Ladislas never forgot that he was addressing beginners, and he did not hold back from using little tricks which would make the youth of today laugh but which the youth of that time accepted. To form them in devotion to the Sacred Hearts, he proposed that one day of the week be consecrated to successively fulfilling the functions of promoter, repairer, adorer, lover, disciple, victim, servant, supplicant, and zealot. He patiently explained what was involved in each of these functions and that each came with meditations, prayers, resolutions and holy patrons. “Given that devotion meant a permanent state and not something transitory, one needed to practice the acts that go with each task, repeat them frequently and for long enough so that a habit would form.” If one were to judge a method by its fruit, the great missionaries whom this method formed, come to mind. Suffice it to mention Fr. Damien de Veuster, the future apostle to the lepers in Molokai. His heroic death would give so much glory to the Congregation. At that time, the novices of Germany and Belgium who did their formation in Leuven had to complete their formation at Issy and make their profession at Picpus. The entire future of the Congregation was thus confided to Ladislas Radigue as novice master.

The formation that he gave could not be neatly packaged, as one might think, into these small practices of piety. His culture, attentive work, experience of the students, genuine life of holiness allowed him to penetrate deeply the divine mysteries. He had abilities to envision layers of development to construct a solid spirituality and furnish a meaningful unity to the life of each novice. For Ladislas everything revolved around the imitation of Christ or to borrow the words of the Rule “retracing the four ages of the life of our Saviour.” He was friendly with the neighbouring Sulpicians and that contact helped him to better study the French school of spirituality that was at the origin of devotion to the Sacred Heart and which notably influenced it.

He established in principle that Fr. Coudrin was stirred, like all Founders, to remedy the evils that was confronting the Church at that time, materialism and naturalism: negation of the supernatural, exaggerated love of independence and of the body. But just as every revolution has its prototype in the rebellion of the earthly Paradise, so every restoration finds its model in Christ. For his work to continue, Christ must therefore continue. This imitation of the Four Ages ages is for us the practical means of living our consecration to the Sacred Hearts, it is the foundation of our spirituality. It also has the advantage of making the various ministries in which we are engaged into a homogeneous whole, a harmonious construction without which the centre would seem disparate. If we are educators, it is to retrace the childhood life; as worshippers we retrace the hidden life; missionaries retrace the evangelical life, and if we practice exterior and especially interior mortification, we are retracing the crucified life.

These ideas were developed in the aforementioned *The Religions of the Sacred Hearts According to the Rule and Constitutions*, a huge manuscript of 864 pages, dedicated to Very Reverend Fr. Euthyme Rouchouze who had charged Ladislas with this work in his Circular

Letter of 20th October, 1863, in conformity with the work of the General Chapter.

The Chapter had stipulated that a commission would be named to review the work and to present it at the next Chapter. The manuscript was delivered on time for it is dated the feast of Saint Benedict, 21st March, 1867. But without a doubt the 864 pages discouraged in advance any attempt to examine or redraft it. The precious manuscript was placed in the archives, and there it remained. That was an error. True, Ladislas had given into his natural excess, his style lacked tightness and conciseness, he resolutely set out the documentation and discussion. He seemed to ignore that there are different questions and controversies. He gave a tranquil exposition, and in the technical part, he skimmed over the questions. As a whole, however, he threw light on a fundamental point of Picpucian spirituality: the imitation of the four ages of Jesus. To illustrate this, he composed or drew with a pen an image representing the SSCC, a ciborium with four Gospel scenes. He himself distributed the image.

Visually his drawing complemented what Fr. Euthyme had accomplished at the same time. Whereas Fr. Euthyme had magisterially exposed how consecration to the Sacred Hearts is the goal and soul of the Congregation, Radigue showed how to live this consecration in the life of each brother and in the different assignments. They were the two sides of the one coin. Those who would later deal with these questions would have benefitted from reading it and drawn inspiration from it, finding it balanced and complete.

Prior of the Motherhouse

The General Chapter of 1868 named Ladislas the Prior of the Motherhouse. This decision was based on the common life that he had shared with the Superior General Euthyme Rouchouze, with whom he had been a novice and co-worker at Issy for ten years. For

five years, he had been, in his capacity as Novice Master, a member of the General Council. Some days later, he wrote to Bishop Jaussen, the vicar apostolic of Tahiti. "You have no doubt learned what the last Chapter made of my puny self. I assure you that I am far from rejoicing. I was used to my solitude in the Novitiate. I was attached to my life's work. But, in the end, it is what the Good God wants. May his name be blessed."

The position of Prior required, among other gifts, those of tact and humility. Given that the usual direction of the General House was left to him, it would be fatal if the Superior General interfered in this job, which was often confused with that of the Institute. In the case of a prolonged absence or illness of the Superior General, the Prior also needed to take over the interim and expedite the day to day business.

In addition to his open and conciliatory character and his great spirit of faith, Fr. Radigue admitted that the only way to put oil in the wheels and soften the inevitable wavering was to appeal to the deferential friendship which bound him to his Superior. "There are two men in the Congregation with whom I have spent almost all my religious life, with whom I have lived closely and whom I have loved like a son loves his father, as a friend loves his true friends." (He was referring to Frs. Alexander Sorieul and Euthyme Rouchouze). And he added: "Ah, dear Father, what heartbreak one feels in such circumstances. Both left me greatly embarrassed. But the Good God willed it. We have only to bow down and adore him." (Letter to Fr. Leriche, 11th January, 1870).

The fact is that Fr. Euthyme, although of an advanced age, was fully active. But he was struck with typhoid and died a few days later on 2nd December, 1869 without being able to organise his affairs. He had governed the Congregation for sixteen years. He had not designated a Vicar by design no doubt in order not to influence future

elections. It fell to Ladislav Radigue to take over in the interim. In the Circular Letter that Fr. Ladislav addressed to all the houses to announce the death of Fr. Euthyme and his taking on of the leadership, he could only offer homage to the deceased and so spoke from his heart.

“A great sadness has struck the Congregation. We lose a Father worthy of our sorrow and who, surely, has many claims on our gratitude. In the midst of the many trials through which the Congregation has passed, God upheld a man according to his own heart, a man of faith who hoped beyond hope.

“He was the wise man of whom the Gospel speaks; the one who built his stone on rock; the rain fell, the floods came, the wind blew. All was set against the house, but it did not fall because it was built upon the rock.

“By his activity, energy and love of the SSCC he saved our dear Congregation from future ruin. Thus, we also ought to be penetrated with a powerfully deep gratitude for him.

“Convinced that a religious society can live and prosper only as long as it is animated by the spirit of its Founder, Fr. Euthyme left no stone unturned to maintain the spirit of the Good Father in the Congregation. He loved to study the life of our pious teacher, to recall his words, his examples. He wanted all the places sanctified by the presence of this venerated Father to be dear to all his children.

“True child of the Good Father, he had the deepest respect for his memory, or to put it another way, a kind of devotion to observe to the letter the recommendation of the apostle, ‘Remember your leaders. Think of all the good that has come from their lives and follow the example of their faith.’”

Vicar General

As prior and vicar general, Ladislav Radigue had to prepare and convoke the General Chapter of Election. He could not forget the last General Chapter of Election sixteen years earlier [1853] which ended in a schism. There had been a calming down of spirits but was

there a fear of a reaction to the iron-fist of the reformer who was Fr. Euthyme? Ladislas' duty was to anticipate all possible fermentations and create an ambience favourable to elections and a change of leadership. He paused and consulted, especially with Fr. Polycarpe Tuffier. Finally, he resolved to make an intervention. Taking the ideas that he had developed in his commentary of the Rule, he traced out the duties of the electors of the Superior General and of each of the members of the Congregation. In reading these lines of wise counsel one could see how much the two years as Prior had matured and ennobled him.

“Our Holy Rule tells us formally that the work of a Chapter of Election is one of the most important events of a Congregation. An event of such gravity can only be accomplished in peaceful contemplation and encounter with God in fervent prayer. It will not have a blessed outcome except to the extent that earthly interests and affections are banished from our hearts, purified by holy exercises of spiritual recollection and raised up to God in prayer.

“After the Mass of the Holy Spirit, each of the electors kneeling before the altar takes an oath: this is the only time this is required of him He swears to listen only to his conscience, that is to say to give his vote only to whoever he believes most apt to fulfil the office of Superior General with dignity; he swears to divest himself of any feeling of interest or inclination; he has no other motive other than the glory of God and the greatest good of the Congregation to the extent that he would be open to giving himself as Superior even if he might have a natural antipathy to it; in a situation where he might consider himself in conscience as more capable of governing well for the glory of God and the good of the Institute, but he is subject to the disapproval of the brothers, he must remain open.

“As the Superior General of the Congregation, he is the head of the Institute; it is he who must extend his influence, enlighten our journey and direct our steps. It is from him that we must await the impetus to act; it is he who must give movement to the whole body; it is from his light, his initiative, the wisdom of his direction, his enlightened zeal that the prosperity of our works will depend.

I add that our great happiness depends in great part on the Superior General: for he is our leader and also our father, and with this title, there comes a great influence over the joys which one experiences in the family.

We do not forget, however, that the prosperity of the Congregation does not depend uniquely on the Superior General. He is the leader, no doubt, but he can do nothing if the members are paralysed, that is to say when there are brothers who are not flexible enough to follow a given impulse.

With a spirit of faith we can easily fulfil our duties in relationship to the Superior. We respect him in his absence as when he is present. Our obedience is prompt, exact and persevering. We are to ignore among us complaints, opposition and the gossip that bewails superiors, the judgments and criticisms which destroy authority. Our grateful love for the one who unceasingly watches over our souls to protect them from evil and to whom we will give an account of it before God's judgement seat, is shown not by words, but by actions."

This was the surprise revealed by that this man. Until now, he had lived in the shadow of the novitiate, mostly as an assistant; and suddenly he revealed himself as a real leader. His direct action had the same clarity as his official language. He had simply put more form into it and made it more friendly. He wrote to Father Postel: "At the election of our deceased Father there was only a semblance of a retreat, but I do not believe that we are obliged to follow what was done at that sad time. As far as it is in my power, we will follow the exercises of a serious retreat. To obtain this result, it seems to me that the union of all the members of the Council giving an example of regularity would be very effective. We are coming to the end of these four months. I was thinking that they would never end" (28th March 1870).

Supreme authority weighed on this gentleman. Certainly, the conveying of authority brought with it an anointing which, perhaps, may have escaped the deceased, but he did not let it depreciate in his hands. There was even some daring in his wanting to outline so

rigorously his duties to everyone. What he did not say, and which explains his fears is that he had to send this circular and direct the institute from his bed.

The previous summer had already tested him very much, more than his bantering suggested: “I suffered in the shoulders, back, chest. This morning again I was bothered in all these upper regions. Hopefully after walking all over my carcass, my rheumatism will finally go away. I wish it a safe journey and no return.” (13th September, 1863). He had not yet recovered from this serious warning when Father Euthyme's death brought it back. “It is too much,” he groaned, “to be in the General government and be responsible for the house in Paris” (Letter to Fr. Postel, 14th February, 1870). His strength betrayed his courage. He had to take to bed. He half-confessed to his niece Nelly, whose education he directed in playful and firm letters: “It is true that I was rather seriously ill from a swelling of the chest. But I was never in danger. Today I am recovering and pampering myself, you have to see!” (Letter, 14th March, 1870).

Obedience - to be a Martyr

Fr. Radigue gave himself fully to presiding at the Chapter of Elections. And it was with great relief, on 5th April 1870, that he handed over authority to the Superior General Marcellin Bousquet, one of the first novices he had at Issy in 1849. He did not suspect that in a short while he would have to step in again, for the General Chapter and the new General Superior, recognising how wisely he had managed the Congregation, re-elected him prior. They were far from imagining that in giving him this obedience they were destinating him for martyrdom. His final juridical act was the purchase of a plot at Issy Cemetery, which for more than half a century would house his glorious remains. “We don't want the Prefecture to approve a sale in favour of an unrecognized company.

Since the mayor wants this plot as much as we do, he has found a way to turn the difficulty into an opportunity. As the cemetery of Issy is very small, the mayor is going to buy a neighbouring plot in my name. I will then make a gift of it to the cemetery association on the condition that in perpetuity the members of my community in Paris and Issy would be buried in the part of the land (50 meters) that I will reserve for myself.” (To Fr. Postel, 14th February, 1870)

A Motherhouse, especially one belonging to a Congregation still in development, is like the family house for everyone. And it was precisely the role of the prior to create this ambiance more than the role of the Superior General who was often away and whose decisions often demanded painful sacrifices. In his deposition, Fr. Bousquet spoke of the warmth and delicacy of his welcome: “...this paternal goodness drew us very close to him. He was the living representation of the spirit of the SSCC members.”

One more touch to the portrait is given by his sister, Flavie. “His father was sick and asked him to visit. No sooner had he arrived than the siege of Paris began. He decided immediately to return. His father insisted that he stay, the blockade had begun. “I am frustrated by what I just learned. I have to leave to go do my duty.” Overcome by his insistence, his father permitted him to go. ‘Go do your duty, my son, you always do.’”

He returned to Paris to share with the community the heavy trials of the famous siege in the “Terrible Year”. Some days after the fall of Paris, the Superior General, obviously depressed by the privations and cohabitation with the National Guard, left to visit the houses of the Province believing that outside of Paris, thanks to the Armistice of Versailles, the trials were over. His Prior whom he would never see again did not share his optimism. “Our Father,” he wrote to Fr. Postel, “left on 8th February ... the days of mourning are not yet done with for Paris. Are we not at the vigil of disasters even more terrible

than those that have devastated our poor capital? It would take little to set fire to the four corners of Paris. With what fright have we seen the bombardments and the famine! Our worries about the future are tempered by our confidence that we have in God” (26th January and 19th February, 1871).

One of his early sermons was found in his notes. It was dated 19th May, 1849 and had as its subject: “Dignity of the Martyr”. He commented on the text of St. Paul: “It has been given to us not only to believe in him, but to suffer for him.” (1 Phil. 1:29) One sensed that the sermon was lovingly composed and carefully written in large format. But it was never delivered. It was not until 22 years later, on a beautiful May evening, that it was pronounced, not with the eloquence of words, but with the eloquence of blood.

Chapter V

FATHER POLYCARPE TUFFIER

One of the most indefinable traits of character is certainly popularity. Sometimes it is due to very little: the enthusiasm of one's acquaintances, the originality of the person, but it often has to do with human warmth, strong personality, "presence" as one says about the theatre. If it is not always possible to justify character from a distance using the documents that one possesses, it is however necessary to take it into account to make a fair judgment on someone.

From an early age, popularity surrounded Fr. Tuffier. Brothers in community with him liked to contrast his petulance with the placidity of Fr. Tardieu, another brother from Lozère, who like him was a member of the Council and along with him a victim of the Paris Commune. One sensed among his confreres, friends, superiors, acquaintances, and biographers an outright preference for Fr. Tuffier. They smiled at his liveliness, his candour, his absent-mindedness. They were edified by his piety and simplicity. "The prodigious vivacity of his southern nature" wrote Fr. Perdereau in his final comments. "And if the investigation revealed along the way of torture and in the last hour a generous impulse, a beautiful unforeseen gesture from one or other of the martyrs, instinctively they attributed it to him, as it agreed with the image they had kept of him. A legend surrounded him that is sometimes difficult to fit with reality. However, how can we deny that this spontaneous and general judgment had some weight?"

The Christian roots of his family

Jules Toussaint Tuffier (in religion, Polycarpe) was born in Malzieu in Lozère on 16th March, 1807, and was baptized the following day. Malzieu was perched at an altitude of 863 metres in a

sheltered valley created by the Truyère in the high plateaus of the Margeride, on the road leading from the Auvergne to the South. With its ramparts and garrison, its court of justice and its royal officers, its collegiate church with 14 canons and its Ursuline convent, its rich wheat fields and herds of sheep, its weavers producing serge and twill, its shops and markets, the small town radiated over the upper Gévaudan and had inscribed in its coat of arms the proud motto: *Vireti Gemma*, “the pearl of the valley”. The Revolution sounded the death knell of its influence: it was no longer a simple district county town, and to make matters worse, two rival town halls had been established side by side, one for the town, the other for the countryside. Its ramparts were crumbling, only one priest served its crumbling church and there was no school.

Jules Toussaint was the posthumous son of Jean-Paul Tuffier, who died five months earlier on 23rd October, 1806. Of the five children who preceded him only two survived, Charles-Antoine born 25th March, 1802, and Dominique born 19th September, 1803.

Suzanne Martin, his mother, was also originally from Malzieu where she married on 3rd January, 1797. Widowed at the age of 31, she had to call upon all her courage and rare spirit of faith to carry out her heavy task. Both she and Jean-Paul belonged to merchant families where business acumen and the desire for social advancement were naturally combined with a demanding Christianity and strong affections. In the parish registers, Tuffier and Martin merchants alternated with notaries, lawyers, doctors, canons and priors. Unlike her son, who would excel, Suzanne Martin had no business sense. A customer would come and ask her for change. “See for yourself in the drawer,” she would say without checking. During her long stations at the church, where she exhaled her grief over so much mourning in her home, she entrusted the keys to the maid, without ever checking the sales on her return. When she was reproached for her excessive trust, she replied: “It is your mistrust that puts the idea of stealing in

their heads.” It took an inventory to prove her wrong: the busy shop that it was, was left with a huge deficit.

Suzanne Martin’s gifts were quite different. Her tender disquiet had long feared the loss of her newest child, as she had lost her husband and other children. Jules, of robust temperament, never totally set aside this fear of falling ill. His teasing cousin Reine did not fail to mollycoddle him. “You’re very fussy”, echoed Reine’s brother.

This woman who was so naive in business turned out to be an excellent educator. She could also rely on the family of her husband’s. The two sisters-in-law got along wonderfully: the same piety, the same generosity, the same ambition to give their children a thorough education (despite the lack of schooling) combined with a solid Christian formation, the same success too. Among the children of Antoine Tuffier, Reine became the Superior General of the Union; Guillaume went on to become an archpriest of the cathedral; another became a tax collector and romantic poet. Among the sons of Jean-Paul, Dominique became a tutor for a family who were so happy with his services that they helped him buy a boarding house in Paris. Thus encouraged, he made his way in the capital: his son became a renowned surgeon, his daughter married the lieutenant-colonel de Labretoigne. On his way up to Paris, Dominique strayed from the path of the Church. When he was seriously ill, the mother came to stay with him. Every morning she made the pilgrimage on foot to Notre Dame des Victoires, more than an hour away from her home, and obtained through her prayers and sacrifices the restored health of her child.

Charles-Antoine continued with the family business. With his pious and distinguished wife, they were a compatible couple. At Easter time, he confronted a cousin to his face: “Are you going to fulfil your church duty?” “I don’t have the time today. I have something going on.” “You’d do good to come, slowcoach! When you die, you’ll have to leave everything!” The cousin changed course, made his confession and died within a week.

Already the mother discerned that Jules, ever lively and open, would be her consolation, her support and her pride. A complete bonding of temperament and aspiration gave her easy access to the heart of her child. At the height of the Revolution when even the priests and religious were chased out, the mountains of Lozère were left with fervent Christians. The turmoil over and worship restored by the Concordat, Lozère became again, what it had always been: a nursery of vocations. The recently founded Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, had established a second house at Mende and already vocations were flowing in.

Seeing Jules voluntarily imitating the priest at the altar and preacher in the pulpit, the mother imagined her son a priest and her finishing her days caring for him in a presbytery. She had designed the ornaments and had a neighbour make a chalice, paten and ciborium. She was at the first Mass every morning, receiving communion each Sunday and Feast days and during the day, she often returned to the church that was only a few steps from her home. It was not for her to refuse her son to the Lord nor would she hesitate in making the emotional and financial sacrifices.

A young Novice

Jules was barely seven years old when his mother entrusted him to Father Régis Rouchouze, whose reputation for holiness was already beginning to spread beyond Mende. No doubt Dominique, his brother, would accompany him. Father Régis admitted the child, despite his young age, and undertook to form him and open him up to wider horizons than those he had experienced in Mount Mimat¹⁶.

¹⁶ The university's harassment to force older students to attend high school was no doubt not unrelated to this haste.

He loved to recount how one day during recreation – it was 2nd February 1819 – when he was no more than twelve, he heard himself called by Fr. Régis. “Master Jules, go to the Novitiate.” “This was for me,” he would recount later, “like the voice of God, so much confidence did Fr. Régis inspire in me.” The novices were surprised to see him in their ranks. They wanted to send him home. “Let the child come,” Fr. Régis said to them in imitation of the patriarch Saint Benedict who loved to cultivate vocations from a very youthful age, such as Saints Basil and Maur. The nascent Congregation was seeking to organise a vocations recruitment program. Some weeks later Jules left for Paris and effectively began his Novitiate at Picpus on 3rd May, 1820 under the name Brother Polycarpe, disciple of Saint John the Apostle.

His probationary period had to be extended well beyond the usual time, and he did not take his perpetual vows until three years later on 14th May, 1823, at which time he had reached the canonical age of 16, the age required for vows to be valid. Fr. Malige, relying on cousin Reine, tried to delay his departure to Mende by 5 years. But the Book of the Professed, drawn up by Fr. Marcellin Rouchouze at a time when Fr. Tuffier was living in Poitiers, is clear on this point. Fr. Bousquet, the Superior General, who was his confidant and friend, recorded his age as 14 when he entered the Novitiate and declared that Fr. Coudrin loved his simplicity so much that he had him preach on the Day of the Holy Innocents. Another day the Founder found Polycarpe in tears and asked him the cause of his sadness: “Good Father, they would not allow me to hear you preach”. The Founder immediately put him in the car that was going to take him away and dried his tears.

His young age did not interfere with his studies. According to Father Hilarion Lucas, who was the superior, the Major Seminary of Picpus was the most important in the capital at that time, because in addition to the students of the Congregation, it housed Irish people

who were not allowed to continue their studies at home because of English proscription laws. The number of students were 80 and went up to 100, and there were some valued teachers: Fr. Hilarion had taught at the Sorbonne and had served as the theologian of the French Embassy in Rome. And others, like Fr. Maigret. In view of these times of the reorganisation of the Church in France, studies were good there. “Fr. Tuffier,” said the Superior General, Fr. Bousquet, “had a solid education, a sure and extensive theological science”. Moreover, too young to be ordained priest, he was forced to redo his literary and ecclesiastical studies.

With the reopening of the school in 1826, Br. Polycarpe was employed at the College in Picpus where there were many students. The following year a new wing had to be built to accommodate them. In 1828, government Ordinances forbade Congregations to teach. The college had to close its doors. Br. Tuffier resumed his theological studies, as he was only twenty-one. Did he follow the courses in Paris or those of the Major Seminary of Rouen which had just been entrusted to the Fathers of the SSCC? He received sub-deacon from Cardinal Prince de Croÿ of Rouen on 20th December, 1828 and was ordained deacon on 19th December, 1829.

A story told by his cousin Reine paints an image. Br. Polycarpe had obtained permission from his Superiors to go back to his native country and see his family. He was twenty years old. As he approached his mother’s house, he was getting excited and impatient. But suddenly he deviated. His generosity called for a sacrifice. Before any other, he would greet the parish priest of Malzieu. “You can see,” he said as he approached him, “that I am not listening to the voice of flesh and blood, since my first visit is for you.”

The naïve religious had spoken. He would more than once show his naiveté. He had never yet lived outside his religious house. He was easily startled. When someone tried to tell a light joke in his

presence he would say “I am not listening. I do not like this type of humour.” He would stay providing the joke went untold.

However, he was far from being gloomy. He loved joy and knew how to spread it around him. Pulled in opposite directions between his natural exuberance and his willingness to bear witness, sometimes he abandoned himself to his infectious laughter which provoked the hilarity of those around him. At times he would then question his aunt: “Have I gone too far, have I scandalised anyone? I'm brusque,” he admitted. More speaking than thinking. “I'd like to make up for a word that escaped me, but it's too late. I may make resolutions, but I don't keep them.” He wasn't judged so harshly by those around him, far from it. It was precisely this impulsive nature, these ingenuous distributions that won him every heart. One admired his freshness of soul, his candour: “Stay as you are, my Jules, his aunt told him. “Always be cheerful in the Lord”. “That's it, my aunt, that's it (he was already in the habit of repeating the same words twice), you must bear the yoke of the Lord with joy.” And he laughed even more beautifully.

Two years after the closure of the college in Picpus, the Revolution of 1830 obliged the Irish to return home and the student brothers were dispersed to the houses of the Province. Br. Polycarpe was one of the few who remained to guard the house. He witnessed the sacking of Picpus by the rioters on 16th February 1831. Fathers and Brothers were mistreated, beaten violently, imprisoned, while doors, windows and furniture were broken. This was a long-lasting loss for the Congregation and for Br. Tuffier an anticipation and a general rehearsal for the Commune.

The Years of Apprenticeship

Br. Polycarpe took refuge in Normandy and a few weeks later, on 2nd April, 1831, he was ordained at Sées: he was just 24 years old, the canonical age. With his colleges closed and the Province houses

overflowing with fugitives from Paris, the Founder, for a change, was embarrassed by the abundance of his subjects. As Vicar General of Rouen, he decided to call the new priest to him and entrusted him with the parish of Martainville sur Ry, near Darnétal, “dedicated to Our Lady of Peace”, he told him. “It is the Mother of God who calls you there. Make her divine Son known there and win souls for her.”

The young pastor had no experience of ministry. Up to this point, he had always lived as if in a greenhouse. With his naïve simplicity, he was bound to make many mistakes. His piety and fidelity to the Rule would however make him a good pastor. For the first time, he was free in how to use his time and handle himself; he did not forget that he was a religious, upholding the observances as much as his new way of life permitted him. A detail reveals the man. Unexpectedly, the Founder came one day to see him. In visiting the presbytery, he pretended to feel the bed to see if it was soft. “The Rule, the Rule,” exclaimed Tuffier, in his monosyllabic style, “a straw mattress like in Paris, not padded.”

He was full of zeal for the House of God. He always had, it was noticed, a dust cloth in hand, checking himself the cleanliness of the church. He restored three altars, re-did the sanctuary, and erected a new Way of the Cross. But his influence was best served thanks to his diligent effort to visit the parishioners. This ministry left its mark on him. He found it useful and necessary to have frequent contact with the people; the daily interchange with the country people of Normandy helped him lose his naiveté, at least in business matters. He brought his mother there, she kept the presbytery and aided in the teaching of catechism. She had realized her dream and the memory of her is venerated in Martainville-sur-Ry.

According to the testimony of his successor, Fr. Tuffier was regarded as a saint. “He did good”, was the opinion of all who knew him. He did nothing that was spectacular nor anything that was

extraordinary during his stay. His virtues were those that shine in the shade without anyone seeing or taking notice. Everyone believed they had said it all when they declared: “Ah, he was one holy priest!”

He had been Pastor of Martainville for nine years when in 1840, he was called back to Paris. Soon again he was back in Normandy but this time at Yvetot, as chaplain to the sisters of the Sacred Hearts and the important boarding school under their direction. Two years later, he was sent to do the same at Laval where he stayed five years. The mother superior singled out his zeal, piety, exemplary dedication, and the friendships he made with the diocesan priests on account of his willingness to assist them.

An Enterprising Superior

During the holidays in 1847, he was named superior of Cahors in a place called Les Petits Carmes, where the Congregation had a simple primary school. From the beginning of the century up to the government Ordinances of 1828, there had been a college there to serve a large youth population that resided in the vicinity. But with that freedom gone, the college had to become a simple primary school.

So, for the third time an obedience came that gave a new orientation to his life and a complete change of environment and occupation. After 17 years of solitary life, he returned to the community to be a leader. From spiritually directing nuns and young girls, he went on to govern men and young people. In 11 years as director of the school how did Fr. Tuffier manage to turn this modest school into a full-service college, enjoying the confidence of families? In 1850, the law on freedom of education was passed. Fr. Tuffier immediately decided to add a short course in Latin, Greek and science to the school, according to the official curriculum. The trial was a complete success. Opening a new class every year, in 1856 he was able to successfully present his first students for the baccalaureate exams. At the same

time as managing and enlarging the premises, he erected a beautiful chapel: He said: "Here I am always in the middle of troubles, more often among thorns than among roses, but what do you want? To practice ceaselessly accepting what Providence sends us and to submit ourselves always to his adorable will" (July, 1856).

Former students and professors were unanimous in attributing to him a great part in the prosperity of the establishment. "I remember the satisfaction with which we awaited his visits to our study hall. When he came, in a simple, familiar way he wanted to know how we were, give advice, address our complaints. We felt like a family. We laughed at his absent-mindedness; many times, we joked about the very distinctive way he carried himself. The best proof of our confidence in him was that he was the spiritual director of many of us."

He thought that one of the essential tasks of the Superior was the spiritual direction of the students. If he followed their studies from up close, assisting at examinations with an attentiveness which taxed the liveliness of his temperament, he always had at heart more than the baccalaureate. For him central was the formation of convinced Christians.

"We particularly loved his catechism which he knew how to make interesting with his flashes of wit and the clarity with which he exposed the mysteries of religion." Another added: "He had the gift of ubiquity. One couldn't go anywhere without meeting him." No one took umbrage. It was for him more the need to live amid his charges than any principle of education. The porter had the habit of saying to visitors who asked to see the Superior: "Wait here, he will not fail to pass this way again." "Be dedicated to your work," was his favourite expression. The maxim he always shared was: For a religious, a priest, a superior: "be dedicated, that's all."

Chaplain of Religious

Following on from the General Chapter of 1858, Fr. Euthyme Rouchoze, the Superior General continued the task of restoring discipline, returning to tradition and making major changes among the superiors. Fr. Tuffier had to leave Cahors, leave the college that he had resurrected, the students whom he loved, the friendships that he had formed. He did not try to hide his pain. The tears flowed. The sacrifice was great, and it was total.

His sending to Mende, far from alleviating the pain, increased it. Another religious congregation had just taken over the management of the state school. In a small town of 7,000 inhabitants where there was no room for two colleges, the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts were forced to close theirs; it also slowed down recruitment. The one who had resurrected the school in Cahors could not remain indifferent to the closure of the school of his youth and his vocation. But even though it cost him a lot, given his ebullient and sensitive nature, he knew how to avoid easy criticism and to devote himself to his rather heavy responsibilities: in addition to the large community, the novices and the postulants, the Adoration Centre in Mende still housed a boarding school and a school. He preached several times at the cathedral with success. He knew that in small towns the listeners expected extraordinary preachers. He carefully wrote his sermons: first a first draft, which was copiously crossed out, followed by supplements and corrections, with the following in the margin: “1st edition, it must be rewritten”. He recopied it once, twice.

The Bishop of Mende entrusted him with the task of promoting and organising the work of Holy Childhood. He devoted himself to this work and committed the parish and communities to organise additional quests and lotteries. He put the Sisters under great pressure. His cousin, (Mother Reine, Superior of the Union) was one of the first to make him aware of this. He suffered on account of it and he

was the first to recognize that sometimes he went too far. The Paris-based council governing the work of Holy Childhood praised his zeal and the results he obtained.

His cousin described him in this way: “He cannot remain seated for long. He must get up, open the window, make noise. The confessional where he had to remain immobile and closed in took its toll. So, he would lose patience. ‘Oh, I was so abrupt this morning and how slowly things went. When I speak badly, I retract it immediately, but the damage is done. When will I have this virtue of patience? Since becoming a religious, I have made so little progress. My God, my God. If you knew how little I am worth. I am confused in directing such holy souls: I am so far from resembling what I say in my sermons.’” He went on to say, “Your brother does not like to stroll! I will pay attention to the good Canon and he will convert me.”¹⁷ The good Canon contented himself in showing him the shape of Lot at the gates of Mende. “If he encounters a rock that he cannot surmount, he circumvents it.” And the Canon concluded by saying: moderation, patience.

General Bursar

From Mende, he returned to Laval in 1862. The following year the General Chapter called him to the Council of the Superior General, to take on the responsibility of procurator and reside in Paris. His cousin, Mother Reine judged it this way: “He did not have the patience, let us say, enough patience to confess the sisters but as to having order, goodness and neatness, he was qualified to discharge this office....”

¹⁷ Canon Charles Guillaume Tuffier, pastor and archpriest of the cathedral of Mende was the brother of Mother Reine, the biographer of Father Tuffier, and first cousin of Father Polycarpe. He was four years younger than their father (Charles-Antoine, born in 1802). The canon had to take early retirement because of his hearing loss.

Although, her good cousin knew how to work with people and circumstances, and saw everything in a good light, he did things brusquely. His frequent changes, the difficulties he had to overcome, did not strike him insensitive. This was his seventh position.

Since the Congregation was not recognized by the State it was unable to legally own property. Houses could only be declared and registered under the name of a particular religious. Thus the property of the Congregation was at the mercy of unscrupulous heirs or religious tempted to found some Order of their own. And this is what happened. A series of resounding trials followed, contested by the most famous lawyers of the time: Berryer and Olivier. The Congregation was sentenced to pay enormous sums of money, equivalent to a quarter of the Sisters' thirty houses and a third of the Fathers. The colleges in Poitiers and Cahors had to be bought back (the latter 3 times in all). By the time Fr. Tuffier took over, all the debts were extinguished. But this had only been possible thanks to the sacrifice of many. People lived in the strictest poverty. The Motherhouse in Picpus had heavy burdens, including those of the novitiate and the seminary, and very few resources. Most of it came from the work of the brothers and the ministry of the Fathers in the neighbouring communities.

In the opinion of all, Fr. Tuffier's management was outstanding and, five years later, the General Chapter renewed his mandate. "Impetuous and active, he was gifted with exquisite good sense and a very sure judgment," wrote the Superior General, Fr. Bousquet who also said: "He had great and rich qualities in his nature. Beneath an open and cheerful exterior he hid a heavenly virtue." And Fr. Perdereau said of him: "the certainty of his practical judgment was noticeable in administrative matters. He was truly a man of good advice. His theological erudition was far more extensive than the liveliness of his somewhat disjointed conversations would suggest.

One often saw unexpected flashes of light shining through these sparkling protrusions.”

In the advice he gave to his cousin in Mende, he happily defined his way of acting: “It is unworthy to deceive the Superiors by flattering them. I know how to say to them: ‘you are wrong’. They must be very good Superiors: they are never good enough. The poor Sisters were not born slaves: they are very good for God, but the yoke must be lightened as much as possible. In order to serve God, one must have a happy heart, a big heart. To make them happy means a lot for their health.”

This was his way of working with the lay Brothers, for whom he had direct responsibility as Procurator. “He wore his heart on his sleeve,” it was said of him. He knew how to trust them and leave them responsible. But he also did not hide from them his way of seeing things, even if it meant at time rueing his high-spiritedness and having to repair it with good grace. He sometimes harassed them, but it was more a matter of sharing the life of his family than of controlling their work. He loved life and joy too much not to watch carefully over the food, which he knew was important for the good spirit of a community.

The risk for a bursar is to get absorbed in material concerns - all the more so because with the burden of a large house comes the revision of the accounts of all the houses and the distribution of resources. Moreover, he was the procurator for the Missions: the departures and journeys of the missionaries, the trousseaus, equipment, the distribution of help and donations were all his responsibility.

Despite a busy schedule, from his arrival in Paris until his death, he accepted the duties of chaplain at the Mère-de-Dieu boarding school, which had 80 students. The children enjoyed his catechisms and the beautiful stories he taught them. It obviously relaxed him to be in their midst. In the teacher’s judgement sometimes he relaxed

them too much as it then fell upon the teacher to restore the order that was being threatened by the laughter. Then Father would accuse himself first, ask for mercy and leave again. Having preserved his soul as a child, he loved childhood, and knew how to speak to it and find the way to its heart. He took great care to prepare the children for First Communion and also for life.

During the siege, the sisters had taken in the wounded. Fr. Tuffier visited them every morning and took an interest in them. He gained their trust so well that he was able to bring them together twice a week to teach them catechism and prepare them to receive the sacraments. He was unfailingly patient with them, it was noted, not without edification.

The Passion sermon that he preached on Good Friday made a deep impression on all his listeners. Archbishop Darboy had just been imprisoned. "His captivity," he cried, "is far more glorious to him than a Cardinal's hat". And he showed how the present persecutions of the Church was a continuation and complement of the Passion of Christ. A soldier, whom he had converted, was present at the sermon. He came to thank him for it with an outpouring of gratitude. "What do you expect," replied the Father, "the time is favourable, the material is abundant. Who knows what the Good Lord has in store for us? We are not at the end of our trials."

He always preached with fire, not without a hint of an accent that made his words more sonorous. A few days earlier he let slip a confession that he gave in a sermon in Picpus: Commenting on the text at the beginning of the Mass: '*Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam*', (I will go in to the altar of God; to God who gives joy to my youth) he exclaimed: "The mere thought that I am soon to go up to the altar to offer the divine sacrifice, reassures my soul and I regain courage."

Neither did he put on a face for home. This was him thinking out loud. He admitted his weaknesses as well as his impulses. To his cousin, Mother Reine he wrote: “Pray for me, I've grown old and I'm not doing well, on the contrary. I keep declining and yet I don't want to die. These are the mysteries of the human heart. We will have the Jubilee and Lent and we will try to convert a little bit” (18th December, 1865). To Canon Tuffier he commented: “I blush: I am a religious scandal”. “Malzieu does not exist for me anymore. When one is given to God, one needs nothing. Your cousin, who is not unhappy in the service of God” (19th December, 1865).

Chapter VI

FATHER MARCELLIN ROUCHOUZE

Jean-Marie (religious name, Marcellin) Rouchouze belonged to the patriarchal Rouchouze family which cannot be spoken of without reference to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. Fr. Coudrin has entrusted Mende, the second foundation of the Congregation to a Rouchouze. Fr. Régis Rouchouze, under whose direction Mende became the nursery of the new-born institute, was himself popularly considered a saint. There was also Bishop Etienne Rouchouze whom the Holy See appointed as the first apostolic vicar of Oceania. He was charged with the implantation of the Gospel in that distant part of the world, but he perished at sea with twenty-four missionary priests, brothers and sisters. It was also to Euthyme Rouchouze, regarded as reformer and saviour, that the General Chapter (1853) made an appeal to put an end to the painful schism that divided the Congregation at that time. According to Fr. Patern, the number of Rouchouzes who entered into service of the Sacred Hearts as fathers, brothers or sisters amounted to 45. Several of them, including the three above, died a saintly death. All that this meritorious family lacked was the honour of giving the supreme testimony of faith, that of blood: this was to be Fr. Marcellin's share.

Originally from the harsh and severe Pilat massif on the borders of the Loire and the Ardèche, a Rouchouze came to settle on the edge of the Lyonnais mountains, on the gentle banks of the Gier, where the ribbon industry was concentrated. A skilful, lively but good ribbon maker, Barthélemy Rouchouze first settled in Saint-Julien en Jarez, then in Saint-Chamond. He married Suzanne Clot, a tall and beautiful woman who knew how to maintain Christian traditions in her successive travels. They got up every day at 5 o'clock and at 5.30 a.m. they went to Mass. They had evening prayer in common and

read the lives of the Saints; they had to be very attentive, for the next day the father would ask for an account of the reading of the day before. The rosary was often added to the reading. In fact, Barthélemy was the worthy brother of Fr. Régis. When he was widowed, having given all his children to God and to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, he asked to end his days there as a brother.

Three children came to enliven the Rouchouze household: Jean-Marie was born in Saint-Julien on 14th December, 1810; François on 15th January, 1813 and Anna in Saint Chamond on 27th May, 1816.

Despite this energetic domestic discipline, which left them in some way emotionally tense, they got on well together at home. Certainly, their mutual affection was not unrelated to their decision to embrace religious life in the same Congregation where they became Fathers Marcellin and Euthyme and Mother Anna-Regis. But one suspects, it was not so much the family atmosphere that they were seeking, in spite so many of them being there, than a high ideal of life that they had known and tasted from an early age.

It is unlikely, however, as the first biographer states, that the two brothers were entrusted to their uncle in Mende as early as 1818 or followed him the following year to Cahors where he had been appointed Superior. Jean-Marie would have been only 8 years old and François 6. It was still the time of stagecoaches and access from Mende or Cahors was not easy. Around 1823 they studied in Sarlat, an old and picturesque town in the Dordogne, which the Middle Ages and the Renaissance had turned into a university centre. They had been called there by one of their cousins, Abbot Deflacieux, a professor at the college run by the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts. “They soon became,” he said, “the first in the class. Calm, gentleness, regularity: that is what we noticed in Jean-Marie and even more so the silence. He grasped explanations very quickly. His memory was excellent, and he carefully

cultivated it. His notebooks and his person were kept with great care and in admirable order.”

There are strongly united families where the success of one helps the social advancement of others. The Rouchouzes also helped each other along, but in a completely different way. Their happy disposition in mind and heart showed that they would follow in the footsteps of their elders. Thus, it was judged as something positive for them to be under the tutelage of their uncle, Fr. Régis.

They left Sarlat and their cousin Fr. Deflacieux and went to Mende ... where Fr. Régis returned in 1819. The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts has begun modestly there with a primary school to which they soon opened a section in Latin. The university was adamantly opposed to its transformation into a college which would rival the state school and obliged students coming from an upper class to follow the courses there. The Congregation was drawing an abundance of vocations from the school as would the Diocese for the Major Seminary. Families from the mountains willingly confided their sons to the Fathers. To save the situation, the bishop recognised the college as a diocesan seminary: from then on, all the courses were given there by right, to the great benefit of discipline and piety.

The spirit was excellent according to the testimony of Father Régis who wrote in 1828: “The students, all boarders, about one hundred in number, are models of virtue; they edify all those who witness their behaviour. All or almost all were received in the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin (a religious association for laity). These poor children loved each other like brothers, you could say ... You would see a large number of them with a book in their hands as early as 4 am and even earlier, although the regulation fixed the rising at 5 am...”

Style is time, manners too. Such studious early risers could only make for good students. The subjects were less numerous than in our

days, but they had Latin and Greek as a basis. It was the chance of a lifetime ...

It was the chance of a lifetime to be at the school of a saint. Public rumour had it that he had the gift of reading hearts. He knew how to discern the vocation of his nephews: “Jean-Marie will become a good and holy religious. Francis will walk fast and become something in the Congregation. They are pious. They love work, especially the Rule. God will bless them.”

Unlike his younger brother, who quickly found his way, deciding on religious life and entering into the practice of frequent Communion, the elder did not yet see clearly the way for him. He took communion fervently, but less often. This character trait was already becoming apparent: Jean-Marie, whom his comrades noticed for his zeal, his instant grasp of a situation, decisive in sports and in exams and chosen to be team leader was in fact timid and self-effacing when faced with the major stages of his life: the taking of the habit, his profession, priesthood, leadership. It was not a weakness of the will or a reluctance to engage what was set before him, but rather a strong feeling of having been destined to assume these roles and devote oneself to them in silence. There was nothing morbid in this, but an exaggerated self-distrust, an uncommon humility.

Jean-Marie wasn't in tow to his younger brother. He naturally took his place as an elder when it came to offering himself and his services. While attending classes, he gave lessons in Latin and mathematics, while his brother taught calligraphy to the little ones. They did not try to play at being teachers but continued to join in with the students' games. Fr. Marius Ruard, a relative of the Rouchouzes, who naturally entered the SSCC Congregation, and who was also a scholar of seaweed, cited this trait which perhaps explains the inferiority complex from which Fr. Marcellin suffered for a long time. “On returning from a walk,” he said, “(he was already 22 years old)

“he gave an account to his father, without being invited, of the places where he had been, the people he had spoken to; then he finished by saying: ‘I met a poor woman who seemed to me to be in need, I gave her a dime.’” “That’s good,” replied his father. It seemed to be more than respectful deference. Unconsciously his youth came up against three strong personalities: his father, his uncle, his brother.

Then came the Ordinances of 1828 that imposed the closure of all establishments belonging to unauthorised Congregations. This was the case of the house in Mende. However, thanks to the support of the authorities who had promised to close their eyes, the return to work in October went ahead as usual. But in the last days of the year, the order came to send the pupils away. Although it was argued that most of them would not be able to return to their families before spring, given the state of the roads in the mountains, the school was definitively closed. So, the Fathers were forced to return to the primary school, which in a short time had 120 pupils; and once again a Latin section was added. Thanks to this formula, the two brothers, after a stay with their family, returned to help their uncle while continuing their studies.

Studies ended for Jean-Marie and François when the Revolution of 1830 ransacked the Motherhouse at Paris forcing a long postponement of their desire for religious life. It was not until 25th March 25, 1833, that François took the habit at Mende and the name Euthyme. Jean-Marie decided to put off till later his decision to join.

Shortly afterwards, an official letter from the Propaganda of the Faith caused great excitement in the house of Mende. Their cousin, Etienne Rouchouze, in religion Fr. Jerome, had been raised to episcopal dignity. A simple schoolmaster, the humble, shy and young Fr. Jerome, (he was only thirty years old) was given the task of leading the evangelisation of the whole of Eastern Oceania, from Hawaii to Tahiti, from the Marquesas Islands to the Tuamotus and the

Gambiers, where the first missionaries had just arrived. The family had been unable to accompany the newly elected to Rome, where the Cardinal-Prefect, in order to mark the Catholic takeover of Oceania, insisted on consecrating him himself. Shortly afterwards, Bishop Rouchouze came to spend a month in Mende. Richer in vocations than in money, the Rouchouzes, Fathers, Brothers and Sisters offered to follow him to the distant islands. Would Jean-Marie, whose zeal and devotion was appreciated by everyone, be the only one to absent himself from this momentum?

Fr. Régis Rouchouze who had directed his soul since the age of nine, his brother (now a novice), the new bishop who was just a little older than him and who had been his colleague at school until these last few months, all lovingly encouraged him to embrace the religious life from which only his scruples distanced him.

And then the last obstacle fell: Jean-Marie's father, a widower, and his younger sister, whom he believed he had the duty not to abandon, both asked to enter the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. All three showed up at the house in Mende which under the direction of Fr. Régis hosted novitiates of brothers and sisters. Who would not pardon his tardiness in making a decision after this great catch of fish? He was only twenty-four years old!

He took the habit on 24th August, 1834, and, as a sign and promise of a change of life, he changed his name from Jean-Marie to Marcellin. It was not so easy to change his character. Before binding himself definitively and making his perpetual profession lying down beneath the mortuary pall, he asked for a new deadline. According to the rules of the time, the duration of the novitiate was 18 months, with a fairly wide margin. His was 30 months. He pronounced his vows in Picpus on 2nd February, 1837 in the hands of the Founder who died a few weeks later and for whom this was one of the last official acts.

His time in the major seminary would normally come to an end after 3 years. But as the priesthood approached, his scruples redoubled, he thought himself unworthy of the honour and did not decide to advance in the orders. This was neither a lack of generosity nor fear of his obligations, for he did not hesitate to receive the subdiaconate which imposed all the obligations of a priest: chastity, breviary, without the consolations that go with priestly ministry. It was 10 years later when he was ordained priest, at the age of 42.

His superiors did not hold his hesitations against him, and as soon as he finished his studies in February 1840, they made him a teacher in the major seminary in Picpus itself, in charge of teaching philosophy. When the Congregation sought to expand in Belgium, one naturally thought of the sub-deacon who was always available, whose varied talents and untiring complacency would, it was thought, adapt well to the trial and error and the experience which every foundation abroad brings with it. At the beginning of 1842 he was, therefore, sent to Nivelles, in Brabant, halfway between the border and the capital. The Fathers had not been able to obtain the main college as planned. However, the small town already had 4 schools. They brought together 85 pupils, but he wrote, "we are forced to live in the midst of physical and moral distress." In 1844, he was transferred to the college of Enghien, in Hainaut, whose rapid development had a more solid foundation. He stayed there for 6 years until the college closed in 1850 due to circumstances which will be discussed in the following section.

The law on freedom of education, as we have seen in connection with Fr. Tuffier, led the superiors to transform the novitiate of Graves, in Aveyron, into a secondary school. On a hill overlooking Villefranche-de-Rouergue, which offered an outstanding panoramic view, stood the imposing mass of Graves castle, flanked by robust towers, the first that the Renaissance had built in the country. Despite its interior cloister, topped by an elegant Italian loggia, it hardly lent

itself to the development of young college students, fresh out of the mountains. The high chimney, delicately crafted, was walled up as it was considered as fragile as it was immodest. With less taste but with an evident concern to save money, there was a utilitarian wing attached to the principal façade without regard for the majestic marble columns that embellished the façade. However, as they waited for the architect, Br. Anastase - another Rouchouze - to build new classrooms and the vast church, the nave of which was supported by two collateral rows of tribunes, they had to be content.

The beginnings of the new college began humbly, as did the new teacher who was given French in the first year and arithmetic and calligraphy for the second year; this gave him plenty of time to roam the country and take an interest in its antiquities. The following year he taught the fourth class with only two students. The college had only 48 students in the college. To his friends in Belgium he spoke of the little war that the principal and teachers of the other college waged on the newcomers. “They ran through all the towns and villages of the three sub-prefectures, begging for pupils and they won or rather bought several of them at a discount, but what is worse, these gentlemen while they were in town, stopped some of those who were destined for us. They even came once to take two of them away from us at the foot of the hill leading to our castle. It is therefore not surprising that with all this merry-go-round, they have 50 boarders, two more than us” (8th November 1851).

This hidden war, the class of two students, far from bringing him down, animated him. The different experiences that he had in Paris, Nivelles and Enghien gave him the self-confidence that he lacked. His successes, the influence he exerted on both parents and children, were revealing to him. In the cheerful tone of the letter one can discern that morale is high. He finally agreed to receive orders, and he wanted to use this school year to prepare for them with dignity. In Cahors, where he was welcomed by Fr. Tuffier, he received the diaconate on 20th

December, 1851 and the priesthood on 5th June, 1852. At the beginning of the following school year he was appointed prefect of studies: the number of pupils increased considerably, since there were 102 boarders and 20 students - according to a letter of 15th January 1854.

He was a born teacher and he excelled at being accessible to students. He found a thousand things to maintain their attention. Far from neglecting the less gifted, he took them aside and became their volunteer tutor. A living example of regularity, he knew how to impose it on the most recalcitrant. "He is fair," said the students who otherwise appreciated his skill at games. Frank and open with his superiors, he was the most cheerful of the confreres and a lively entertainer at recess, lending himself to everyone's desires, whether moving or resting, bowling or skittles, checkers or chess: he was far from being indifferent in a community where recess was regarded as a regular exercise. He graciously replaced supervisors or teachers, helping them to correct exams, if need be at the cost of his sleep.

His success was so complete that he was appointed superior of the college at the beginning of the 1856 school year. Only obedience made him accept the office. He soon had to go through a rather difficult period: the number of students dropped significantly at the beginning of the next school year. He explained this to his cousins: "Our students are not as numerous as last year, because I was anxious not to lower the price of the boarding house. Nevertheless, we have 73 boarders and 10 day students. It seems to me that this is a reasonable number. In addition, there are students who are like shoppers in a shop: they come and go, as is commonly said" (14th January, 1858).

The tone was that of a man who easily surmounted obstacles. In fact, 1858 saw a change of many superiors, such as Father Tuffier. Fr. Tardieu kept him in his post. But soon his health, shaken by his work, gave way. A feeling of inadequacy overwhelmed him, and his self-assurance left him. He therefore accepted with relief being sent to

Poitiers to exercise the more modest functions of teacher-prior and prefect of studies. The college had one-hundred-and-sixty students of whom ninety were interns or semi-boarders plus some forty in the elementary school. But the upper classes followed the courses of the Lycée, and so the Fathers only had to teach from the eighth to the fourth year. Free from real responsibilities, he could devote himself entirely to teaching. He found the pupils more indolent than in Aveyron, but he soon overcame his bias and he would have a better sense of their zeal after seeing several pupils of the Grand Maison commit themselves on leaving their classes to joining the Pontifical Zouaves of Rome.

At Poitiers, Fr. Marcellin found the memory of the Founder more alive than at Mende and even more than in Paris. During the Revolution, Fr. Coudrin had been the soul of the Catholic resistance there. It was there that he found refuge and under many varied disguises exercised his heroic ministry. In Poitiers he animated the Association of the Sacred Heart of which the three branches priests, sisters, laity became little by little became the three branches of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. It was not insignificant that Fr. Rouchouze had such direct knowledge of our origins. It would be good preparation for his next assignment.

To put an end to the divisions which desolated the Congregation, the Holy See saw only one solution: to ask for the resignation of the Superior General (Raphael Bonamie) and hold new elections. By a strong majority of 20 votes out of 24, the General Chapter of 1853 elected Fr. Euthyme Rouchouze as General. The new Superior did not disappoint the hopes placed in him. He knew how to pacify minds and hearts and restore discipline. His circular letters exposed with remarkable perspective the true spirit of the religious of the Sacred Hearts. At the same time, he showed himself to be a wise administrator, saving his Institute from the financial crisis this time

as resounding lawsuits threatened to deprive the Congregation of their houses.

Fr. Euthyme thought of associating his elder brother more closely with his work of pacification and renewal and in 1865 he appointed him Secretary General. He knew that no one would take offence at this collaboration. Father Marcellin enjoyed the general confidence of all, as shown by the choice his confreres had made of him to represent them at the Chapters of 1853, 1858 and 1863. On the return from the 1853 Chapter in an icy descent a league away from Cahors, the coach skidded, and it began to tumble down the 50-metre-deep ravine when a small wall opportunely stopped it from falling further. We have right here a snapshot of his approach. He made few personal reflections, other than a few quick judgments about events and people. He preferred to describe the facts in detail and copiously. Already a perfect analyst, his power of work, his happy memory, his inexhaustible complacency and above all his desire to devote himself to his work made him the dream secretary, and the learning of calligraphy gave his regular and fine writing elegant curls!

Admittedly, the situation was delicate. Fr. Marcellin had enough tact and the merit to know how to render the most important services without putting himself forward or overstepping his duties. Besides, in spite of the affection, trust and esteem he showed his elder brother, the Superior General knew how to keep his distance, too much so at times, as one would see at the time of his death. Fr. Euthyme always tried to be accompanied by his secretary. He even took him to Rome in 1867. But Fr. Marcellin “experienced a mild cholera there which tested him quite badly”, “It is better”, he said, “that I remain in Paris, since I am ill, whenever I accompany him on his long tours” (20th November 1869).

Here is an opinion of one of his successors: notwithstanding the most difficult research, he composed alone and by hard work a ‘Book

of the works/ministries exercised by each of the members of the Congregation since leaving the novitiate'. He undertook this task above all in a spirit of obedience, in conformity with the prescriptions of the Rule. Moreover, this resume, like that of his three martyred companions, owes much to the wealth of information he accumulated in such a short time.

It was with the sudden death of his brother in December 1869 that the quality of the feelings that united them could be seen. The distances which are invariably established between the leader and everyone who surrounds him with respect can be contrasted with the subordinate whom everyone takes for granted. Inevitably, there are tensions when a plan made in secrecy is revealed to a third party. Nonetheless, nothing could alter the profound affection that the older brother had for his younger sibling. He wrote in January 1870: "I am still under the weight of sadness and ennui which assail me daily amidst my many activities and it seems to me that nothing in the wide world will ever fill up the immense emptiness which came to me on 2nd December. However, I humbly kiss the ever-adorable hand of the One who touched my most cherished affections" (19th January 1870).

He had written similarly a while earlier: "Nothing new but the difficulty in which I find myself. The Superior General having left nothing of a testament, left little order in his affairs." There is no resentment in there being nothing left aside but an explanation is judged indispensable to clarify the situation. The new Superior General [Fr. Marcellin Bousquet] recognised Marcellin's services and on the day after his election asked him to be both his personal secretary and the secretary general adding "that he hoped that I would not refuse him this mark of personal commitment. How could I deny him after such a caring proposal? I therefore had to make an especially strenuous effort throughout some months. I made the decision to ask for some help which my brother had promised – it was an illusion –

for two years. I felt that my head was getting tired because of being bent over at my desk.”

Here is what the Superior General, Fr. Bousquet had to say about Fr. Marcellin: “He stood out everywhere for his calmness, gentleness, great regularity of life and a willingness to please his colleagues, always taking on the most painful things” (*Summarium*, p. 22). Shortly afterwards Fr. Bousquet brought him into the General Council. It was for Fr. Marcellin Rouchouze a little more honour, but above all an increase in work.

On the page in the *Book of the Works* dedicated to Marcellin (vol. 1, p. 148, No 256), it is noted: “Continued as Secretary General under the Superior General, Fr. Bousquet and named by him as a member of the General Council. 22nd August, 1870.”

Neither one nor the other could foresee that this new mark of confidence would lead him, nine months later, to pour out his blood for God and the church.

The letter of Fr. Marcellin Rouchouze (Paris, 14th March, 1871) to his sister Anne in La Serena, Chile, is a good illustration of the quality of Marcellin’s writing style, his engagement with the world about him and his intense love of family. The letter is also a window on the situation in Paris during and after the siege. The fact that he had written this letter to his sister, a month before his imprisonment, was a great consolation to him in his time of trial.

“My dear and beloved sister,

Your cordial missive, dated 3rd November, 1870, only arrived at its destination on 3rd March, 1871. Alas! All the desires expressed in this letter, so impatiently awaited, have inevitably fallen into the water, as a result of the triple circle of iron and bronze, which our sad and miserable capital has suffered for four long months and a half. Thanks to the balloons mounted quite frequently by intrepid aeronauts, the inhabitants of Paris

were able to give news to the relatives and friends in our various provinces; but none of these balloons ever managed to return to Paris. Some of them have fallen into countries more or less close to France, or into the hands of the Prussians; in the latter case the aeronauts were ruthlessly shot by our barbarians; the dispatches of the government confiscated, the letters were opened and kept or sent to their destination according to the whim of our invaders. For my part, I hazarded seven or eight letters by way of balloons, to wit: three to Jean-Louis, our cousin, Germain (Mende), she only received the last two; to our Fathers in Cabors, the last of which I understand arrived; two to Saint Servan which did arrive; one to Fr. Leonce, whose fate I do not know; finally, another to Fr. Aumônier de Sarlat who received it. The departments could correspond with the Capital only by means of racing pigeons carried by each balloon; these interesting facts meant that our dispatches had to be encrypted in microscopic characters; every word of the dispatch cost fifty centimes. Sadly, a certain number of these air travellers succumbed to the cold or became the food of the hawks whom the Prussians had trained to pursue them. Our Very Reverend Father (VRF) received only two dispatches during the siege, one from Rouen, the other from Poitiers - each of them was a month on route. You understand, my dear Sister, that the absence of news has not been the least of our moral penalties during this period of time. You were wrong not to follow the inspiration you had to write to our house in Mende, and to let yourself be stopped by not knowing a surname. So be wiser now in such a case. Our attempt at Lima was also useless, since the four sisters had left France before the siege of Paris. Be that as it may, I can only thank you for all the efforts you have made to be informed of my position and that of the two principal Houses of our dear Congregation.

Our agonies began on 4th September, the day the Republic was proclaimed in Paris following the defeat of our army at Sedan and the imprisonment of Napoleon III in a German city. However, we have been relieved of the fear of this political change, it took place without bloodshed. The following days the VRF gave carte blanche to those Fathers and young brothers who wanted to return temporarily to their families or to some other house of the Province. It began with a sending of all the young student brothers and a

certain number of brothers of German or Prussian descent to Leuven. The police demanded this because of the circumstances: three German lay brothers were able to remain on a special authorization that the VRF had obtained from the governor of Paris, General Trochu. Four or five fathers and a dozen French students successively got to their homes or to some of our provincial houses. Only one, whose father was employed as a porter in the Novitiate house in Issy, let out to foreigners, remained at Picpus.

On September 14, as a result of the precaution taken by the government to evacuate all the neighbouring villages from Paris, to bring in an enormous mass of food supplies, to raze all the houses too close to the fortified enclosure, 180 national guards from the suburbs suddenly burst into our Motherhouse and have settled here until further notice; from that moment on, there were no more study rooms, no refectory, and so on. The next day, to our great terror, 720 National Guards with rifles arrived; the VRF had to give them the whole house of the Junior Novitiate, several dormitories, a few living rooms on the first floor and make several rooms available on the second floor, as well as the two long corridors of the big house. Thanks to the honesty of the principal leaders, the inhabited rooms of the transversal house where the kitchen and the workshops are located were nevertheless respected. A large quantity of straw was spread everywhere up to the chapel, so that these new guests can take their rest there. From that moment, there was no more chanting of the Office, no more bells, no more common exercises, except in the chapel for the morning and evening prayers; the rosary and the reading takes place for the lay brothers in a small room on the second floor of the transverse house; some people were eating in the kitchen, some in the scullery; as for the Fathers, they are obliged to eat in two shifts in two infirmary rooms. The four companies of National Guards eat by shifts in the refectory; their food was prepared for them by their respective canteens.

Very often, after a meal where neither wine nor brandy is spared, they sing the Marseillaise, loudly, and take a pipe in the yard and in the house, smoking next to or above the straw that serves as a bed. How many times did I think of our poor father and our holy uncle who feared fire so much? Judge for yourself if we slept quietly in the midst of these day-to-day apprehensions, the noise that all these people made in the various corners of

the house, the nocturnal comings and goings of those who were guarding the house. This state of affairs lasted for about two months; then half of the 900 national guards having been mobilized were required in the forts or barracks of Paris and our corridors were evacuated to the great satisfaction of those of our Fathers whose rooms were there. I do not speak of the sound of the drum and the bugles or the call of the daily workers; you easily get an idea of all this traffic.

Thanks be to God, we did not have a fire; but we inhaled tobacco smoke all day and night. Yesterday, however, these inconvenient guests began to pack up; it was more than time; I would not give a snitch of snuff for all these Parisian national guards; they are pretty run-of-the-mill. Nevertheless, there was only one sergeant major who had the audacity to insult VRF and threaten him with seizing the room. At the roll call, the leaders chastised him and the national guards of the company degraded him in full court, then drove him ignominiously from the house. But that's enough about this stuff.

On the 18th of September, Paris was entirely besieged by Prussians; but as they did not yet have their big guns to start the bombardment, they were forced to work on strongholds, barricades etc. protecting themselves from the cannon balls sent their way from our fortifications. They had to get through two or three of these fortifications before they could bomb the capital. But our marines who managed the guns took aim so precisely at the enemy's armoury that, up until the end of December, they managed to destroy the works of the Prussians and often dismantled their weaponry. Moreover, for the surrender of Paris our enemies relied more on famine than on the effectiveness of their field weaponry. Thanks to the quantity of provisions and well-organised rationing, the indispensable provisions lasted a month longer than originally expected. The bombardment of the three strongholds in the East, which began on the 28th December, was more intense on the first day of the year and lasted until the 4th January inclusive, without causing any serious damage despite the weight of the projectiles. On the 9th January the Prussians thundered against the three strongholds in the West, and at the same time from the heights of Chatillon their strongest arsenal fired shells at the houses which were in front of the left bank of the Seine; this lasted until 25th January. The scarcity of bread and horse meat led the

National Defence Government to seek an armistice that was signed on 28th January. During this time, Paris was able to start supplying itself by means of three of its railways least damaged by the enemy. Letters were able to circulate through Versailles without being sealed. Finally, peace was signed at Versailles on the 26th February; this peace costs us the loss of Alsace, a part of Lorraine, as well as more than five billion francs of indemnity payable until February, 1874, that is to say, in three years. During this period of time, 90,000 Prussians will occupy Champagne and will be fed there at the expense of the inhabitants. While the capital was besieged, the Prussians occupied successively 32 districts of our beautiful France, and there wreaked more or less havoc.

But, you will say to me, "tell us now a little about your privations and your sufferings." They were smaller than was generally thought in our provincial houses. From the 28th September, we began to dine on only one meat dish; by the 28th October we had no more supper. By mid-November it was necessary to eat horse meat, and still in small quantities. Two fat horses, dressed in silk, and killed a month apart were a great help to us, as were the vegetables from our garden which did not fail us at any time. Rye bread made an appearance towards the end of November; but at the end of December, we had to resign ourselves to eating black bread, thick and heavy. The analysis which was made gave the following composition: 1/8 of common wheat flour, 4/8 of a mixture of rice flour, barley beans, vetch etc.; 2/8 of water and 1/8 of straw or oats. I can assure you that during the month of January, although every individual was rationed to 300 grams, each one was satisfied with a thin slice of that bad bread which crunched like sand and became softened up in the soup. During the same month of January, every two days the butcher brought us 6 pounds of horse meat for 49 people, even there he often added in a good pound of bones. We cannot say that we suffered from hunger, thanks be to God; but the bad bread pretty much destroyed our stomachs. The VRF received some special care from the Superior, Mother Benjamine, during the final fortnight; he left for the province and he is still there, so much did our national guards lift his heart; it is likely that he will wait for the official news of their evacuation to come and join us, providing the revolutionaries of Paris do not continue with their

threatening attitude. As they have failed twice, during the siege, in their attempts to establish the Commune, and as they are in the minority, it is to be presumed that they will make a fiasco of their Red Republic. As for me personally, I have never been indisposed during the Siege; on the contrary, to stunt all ideas of fear or discouragement, I have worked harder than ever during these five months, although the firing of guns sometimes vibrates the glass of my window; all in all, I have not been less happy or less tranquil. For the rest, thank God, I am well, I still sing as I did when I was 25 or 30, I have no bodily infirmities, I still have a solid hand, good eye and foot coordination, though the body thickens substantially.

Before passing on news of the family, I allow myself to take advantage of this missive to bring to the knowledge of Fr. Paul and your own community that since last November we at Picpus lost three lay brothers namely: Fr. Gregoire Fanget born 1st March, 1804 in Saint-Cyr near Annonay (Ardèche) who died of smallpox on 7th November, 1870; Fr. Paschal Dubuy born 26th May, 1793 in Athis-Mons (Seine and Oise) who died a paralytic on 27th January of the current year; Fr. Moses Gouzarlingues, painter, born 23rd October, 1806 in Moularez (Tarn) who died asthmatic and hydropic on 11th March last. In addition, Fr. Casimir Peurd, born 14th March, 1796 in Mont-Saint Jean (Sarthe) died in Mann on 18th January of this year. Finally, Fr. Ernest Haake, born 29th April, 1830 in Mulheim, diocese of Cologne (Prussian Rhineland) died at Havre last February of the smallpox which he contracted from the patients he cared in a hospital in Havre. No need to remind you of the prayers ordained by our Holy Rules for all these deceased. La Serena will be the first of our overseas houses to be notified of these deaths; I probably will not be able to notify other houses until the end of this month.

Our cousin Anastase, who, at the end of July 1870, had gone back to the mountains of the Loire exhausted from his long stay in Rome during the council, was forced by the circumstances of the war to remain there for 7 and a half months. He told me in one of his last letters that he has no less than sixteen nephews under the flag; four are prisoners in Prussia, all the rest are in perfect health. He longed to return to the family of the Sacred Hearts; which he will do on the first day that the railways resume their normal

schedule. The Théolier family went on vacation during the month of August; the three boys returned to Cahors after the start of the school year; the eldest Henri spat blood for a month. As for Mary, she remained in the country; she collects rents from the house and carries the amount to the banker. She wrote to me at the beginning of September to tell me that according to the advice of her confessor, she is called to religious life. She begged me to introduce her to the novitiate at our Sisters in Paris. I told her that it was impossible for the moment because of the war. I urged her to go to Mende. Since then, she has not shown any sign of life. I think Anastase will see her before leaving the region. I am not sure if I was careful to warn you that their older brother, Jean-Marie, their guardian, died in the middle of last year. Fr. Marien has been silent with me for ten months although I sent him two letters to Sarzeau before the siege in Paris. Jean-Louis wrote to me at the beginning of this month to say that the winter was very rigorous in Mende, the thermometer marked 18 degrees in the valleys and 23 on the heights: everything froze in the cellars. He was due to leave for St Etienne with his niece Marie Besset who was going to join her sister Anna, a teacher in the commune of La Rivière, in the chief town of the Loire; he had recently received news from little Souhaye; his sister Claudine, broke an arm in two places; but she is more or less healed; the two youngest Bessets are in the army, they haven't taken part in any battle. The other parents are in good health. He has instructed me to tell you a thousand affectionate things.

Sr. Florentia Girodet, superior at Chatellerault, commissioned me to a similar task by sending me an image which I will pass on to you at the first opportunity. Bishop Deflacieux, Sister Marie-Thérèse Plasson, Sr. Stéphanie mistress at Saint-Servan, also asked me to remember them to you. I have no news of the young Etienne Dumas of Saint Chamond, who before this was a student novice at Picpus; I very much regret that his parents decided not to send him to our college in Graves; he would have shined in the fourth. I have written to his father; it will soon be fifteen days, but I'm still waiting for an answer. It is likely that you will have to do without the image this calendar year, having no desire to work for the King of Prussia; I am waiting until the Prussians have disappeared to have them signed and printed.

I have made three copies in ordinary ink, one for Mother Benjamine, another for our cook and the third for the cook of the Novitiate of Issy where, since the war, there has been only two fathers and four lay brothers, all the novices having left at the beginning of September. The chapel was hit by two shells that caused little damage; there were about twenty in the garden, but no one was hurt thank God. Finally, here I am at the end of my page.

My respects to Fr. Paul; warm greetings to Bro. Ramberte and all the nieces. I recommend myself to the prayers of the Community. Farewell.

Your very dear brother, M. Rouchouze secretary.

Chapter VII

FATHER FRÉZAL TARDIEU

North of Mount Lozère, the Lot and the Tarn Rivers spread out from the high plateau, from what one might call the water table of France since they are born side by side with Allier, the principle tributary of the Loire. These rivers feed the Garone. The Chasserac is just a stream but can become terrible angry and cause trouble even to the Rhone. The village of Chasseradès, situated 1,107 meters above sea level occupied the centre plateau. Its houses were grouped around the old Roman church that was next to the old Roman road; and although, in all truth, it could be said that when it rained there, France was irrigated, it was not the focal point of the country.

Frézal Tardieu was a true child of Chasseradès, fashioned from the same rock. Like the others, he was a modest man who preferred to be cloaked in silence; works speak for themselves. As modest as he was active, he had the gift of forgetting the good he did and ensuring that the works he founded or animated and which still lived on, were barely associated to him. It is important to state that we know little about the long stretches of his life, his family and his youth. Even twenty-five years later, the opening of his beatification process was held up as more research was needed and witnesses had disappeared. In truth, the inquiry moved ahead without vigour but happily the Archives had a more faithful memory

His family was very honourably known. Mr. Tardieu was the notary of the area and at the end of the Empire, he was chosen as Mayor. Four of his children took up the profession of teacher and, with the exception of a religious daughter, taught at Chasserades itself; one of his sons was in turn mayor and another deputy mayor. His mother, Françoise-Michel, was remarkably devout. In spite of the care of five children, she found time to attend Mass every day, and

even often attended the two Masses that were said in the parish church only a few steps away from her own home. During the day she also spent long visits before the Blessed Sacrament during the day. No doubt her maternal example made her son no stranger to an Institute devoted to perpetual adoration.

He had to complete his secondary education, without no guarantee of getting into the college of Langogne. He then entered the Major Seminary of Mende where he spent three years. One can speculate that it was there that he got to know the Congregation of the SSCC and Fr. Régis more intimately than the previous reports would have us believe.

Did he encounter any obstacles, or did he want more time for his decision to mature further? In August 1836 his mother died. Before the end of the school year, on 2nd June, 1837, he took the habit. The following month his father died. He was in minor orders and must have completed his theological studies, for strangely enough, it was during his novitiate on 21st December, 1838 that he received the sub-diaconate at Saint Sulpice from the hands of Bishop Blanquart de Bailleul, bishop of Versailles. He was perpetually professed in Picpus on 24th April, 1839. He took the name of Frézal, a 9th century bishop of Mende whose devotion was perpetuated by an abbey near Chasseradès. It is not known when he received the priesthood, probably shortly after the diaconate conferred on him by his own Superior General, Mgr Bonamic, on 4th April 1840 in the chapel of Picpus.

At the beginning of the 1840s, he was appointed director of the novitiate at Vaugirard. The post of director probably required flexibility. His attributions were not yet clearly defined and depended above all on the latitude and confidence given to him by the master of novices, for whom he was the assistant. Because of this kind of life and dependence, it was like a second novitiate. He could do

further studies and build on the knowledge hastily acquired in the seminary. Father Tardieu was to occupy this modest post three times and for seven years: first at Vaugirard, then at Leuven and later at Issy. In these repeated obediences coming from his Superiors, he saw the clear will of God. Endowed with a strong will, he adapted himself so well to this kind of life that one cannot guess to what extent this love of darkness and study which characterised him was a natural inclination or an acquired virtue, all the more so as there followed periods of abundant activity which seemed to come to him naturally.

At the age of thirty-seven, he still had the fervour and freshness of a novice as a letter to his eldest sister witnesses (2nd May 1841). Marie Tardieu, had just been appointed to a post near Chasseradès which brought her closer to her family. She urged her brother to spend a few months with the family who would all celebrate when he was home. In a somewhat naive way and echoing somewhat what a teacher or neophyte might feel, his answer revealed his characteristic unwillingness to compromise. He did not want to do things in half measure, he had given himself totally to God in profession and priesthood; he feared taking it back. Reflection: this silent one was not impulsive. He made his decision only after much thought during which he weighed the pros and cons. His feelings ran deep, but he kept them hidden in the effort to dominate them. Perhaps he knew his own weak point.

“Grave reasons and diverse circumstances stop me from giving in to your wishes and the movements of my own heart: 1) You know that I am a child of obedience. I am not master of my own life. I have superiors and I can only do what they say. Today I am in Vaugirard; perhaps tomorrow it may be judged to send me to Peking, after tomorrow to the extremes of the earth. I am ever obliged ever to conform myself to their will which is my rule, convinced that in doing the will of my superiors I do the will of God himself. 2) I would like, it is true, to ask permission to see you. They would consent to it perhaps. But I confess I don't have the courage to make this request. The step is slippery; I am afraid of taking back something of my will, which I have

consecrated entirely to God. I would not want to take responsibility for a step that may have the greatest consequences. You know that the relationship one has with one's parents is almost always directed by an affection that is all natural, all carnal, rather than by the spirit of God. You also know how much the saints feared them. Besides, it would be two or three months lost for me. Therefore, unless there is a real and powerful need, I would never dare to take it upon myself to make such a request. 3) In the establishment where I am, they do not give holidays. Finally 4) Not having a penny at my disposal, earning barely enough to provide for the expenses of my food and maintenance, I am too poor to undertake such a long and expensive journey.

I have not promised because it is not in my power to promise. I desire it without a doubt more ardently than you, but this desire cannot be my only guide. After all in whatever place we are, are we not all in the hands of God? He had separated us for his greater glory and will unite us when he wills it. Let us learn to suffer something for him, sacrificing even our most legitimate affections for him.

All that I can say to you, with all things considered, I believe myself (to be) the happiest of men. I have nothing, I possess nothing, and I am content, more content than if I had a great fortune. The person who lives contented with little, possesses all. For the rest, let the will of God be done. The illness that I have, makes one suffer but not die. Patience is its better remedy."

In twenty-four years, he made his one and only, albeit brief, visit to his homeland. "I have it by hearsay from my mother, his sister-in-law," his nephew wrote, "that during his visit he edified everyone by his kind words, his piety, his modest tranquil and happy comportment. He declined the care they lavished on him, sleeping on a hard bed instead of the one made for him. Those who saw him at that time spoke of him with only veneration."

After only three years in the Novitiate at Vaugirard, he was sent to Leuven on 3rd November, 1843, where a second novitiate had been opened. The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts was in a phase of

expansion. Bishop Bonamie,¹⁸ the Archbishop of Chalcedon had succeeded the Founder. Being a missionary himself, the Superior General wanted to give new energy to the mission in Oceania for which he had responsibility. The recruitment, more than abundant, was still insufficient. South America was also asking for brothers. Thus, the Congregation turned to Belgium and roused up the missionary spirit. Eighteen months after his arrival in Leuven, Fr. Frézal was confided with the leadership of the mission there. All the hopes rested on a man of thirty years of age, only a priest of three years. This hitherto silent man would go on to reveal himself as an active and bold leader.

The importance of Leuven came from its celebrated university which made it the intellectual and religious centre of Belgium. Those who would be the leaders of the country were educated there. To one charged with implanting and inculturating a Congregation that had its beginnings elsewhere and was relatively new, it made sense to look to the world of the university for support if not also recruits. It would not be sufficient just to wish to make some impact on this independent setting of professors and students independence, one must also set up opportunities, possess a personality which attracts people and even more have that imponderable thing that one calls popularity. How did this young foreigner, with no experience, straight down from the mountains of Lozère, come, in such a short period of time, to attain such real credit?

¹⁸ In his essay on schism, Antonius Hulselmans offers a brief critique. *“The Congregation, having elected Archbishop Bonamie as Archbishop of Smyrna, needed the assent of the Pope and also the consent of the bishop. So, they sent to Rome Frs. Sorieul (Alexander) and Vieillescasses (Francis de Sales) ... The Holy Father ... had no difficulty in granting their request ... Father Sorieul went to Smyrna to try to convince His Excellency Raphael Bonamie to accept ... He subsequently sent his resignation from the See of Smyrna. The Pope accepted ... and conferred upon him the title of Archbishop of Chalcedon in partibus”*. Cf. <https://www.sscpicpus.com/en/schim> (Accessed in December 2018).

With a lack of precise detail, one can rely on witnesses. Mr. Van Emen, well known on campus, wrote in *Leuven Past and Present* (page 505), twenty-five years after the death of Tardieu: “We knew this priest when he was superior. He was as remarkable a man for his qualities of heart as those of his spirit. It is also with a feeling of veneration that we recall the name of this holy and likeable religious who left in Leuven the most edifying examples of piety, devotion and charity.”

Fr. Wencelas Vincke who was his successor and saw him at work said: “Though Fr. Tardieu left Leuven after fifteen years, his memory is engraved in our hearts. All who knew him were his friends. He was connected with many persons notably professors and students at the University. A good many young people went to him to consult about their studies or the conduct of their lives and he did well by them in giving them good advice. He was also in good relationship with the diocesan clergy who are grateful to him.”

“He was very close to the scholarly and zealous professor Moëller with whom he cooperated in the founding of a society of University students. He provided the place for this newly born society to meet. Today this society still produces good effects.” On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Association (1878) its president, Mr. Leon de Monge emotionally evoked the memory of Fr. Tardieu wondering how his terrible death could have happened in of all places, Paris, France.

People spontaneously showed him confidence and friendship, less, it seems, for having seen him for a time on the benches of the University, than for having seen him at work among the children of the city. At the same time as he was leaving Paris, Bishop de Forbin-Janson, retiring bishop of Nancy, founded the Association of the Holy Childhood, in honour and imitation of the childhood of Our Lord. He called on Christian children to work for the salvation of

non-Christian children through their prayers, sacrifices and alms. Founded on a fortune of an annuity of 100,000 francs (25 million today), in the shadow of one of the greatest names in France, by a great Lord bishop, it would not have had enough connections whether with the Infant-God or the little Christian children or the little Chinese children, if Providence had not provided for it. Two years after founding it, Bishop de Forbin-Janson died intestate. What could have been a mortal blow to the work saved it. Its only resource was the public charity of the children, who had been asked to set aside a penny a month. Bishop de Forbin-Janson had retired to Picpus to be with his friend Fr. Coudrin, at whose funeral he presided and with whom he asked to be buried. So it was as a family possession that Bishop Bonamie took on the Association of the Holy Childhood. He reassured the associates, regularised the payments in December and May, oversaw the beginning and end of the catechisms, and undertook the publication of the *Annals*. The Fathers and Sisters of the Congregation were its most ardent promoters in France, South America and Belgium.

Fr. Tardieu had a rare spirit of faith and he understood that before you can have missionaries, one had to develop a missionary spirit in children; and before working for the Congregation, one needed to put oneself at the service of the church. Bishop de Forbin-Janson, whom Tardieu knew at Picpus, had already launched the work in Belgium and named Mademoiselle Evain as treasurer. Fr. Tardieu arrived on the scene to build up its spirit which had languished with the death of its founding bishop. He brought together the zealous treasurer and Madame Moretus de Bouchout, a young mother of a big and very influential family. Together they put together a plan. He was considered the ecclesiastical director whom one consulted and on whom one depended. "The three of us are agreed on the three measures to be taken in the interest of the work," Mademoiselle Evain wrote to Paris (*Annals* 1847, p. 180). And Madame Moretus proposed two centres, one at Malines for Flanders and the other at

Liege for the Wallons, with one director, adding: “Fr. Tardieu is of like mind in the request that I make of you” (*Annals* 1848, p. 28). The directors in Paris recognized the importance of their service and gave it prime place in their review: seven and a half pages in October 1846 and seven pages in September 1847.

The new work encountered lively opposition on the part of the directors and zealots of the Propaganda of the Faith. Fearing rivalry, Fr. Tardieu made a visit and wrote to reassure them by showing them that in the work of the Holy Childhood there was, in fact, a powerful potential to help draw future recruits for the Propaganda of the Faith. (Letter of 24th December, 1846 to Bishop Orlislayers, director at Tournai) For the first time, he wrote in Flemish in the *Annals* 1846 (p. 190). Thanks to the friendships that he had developed at the University, an article on the work was inserted at the expense of the editorial board and a great number was distributed (*Annals* 1849, p. 254).

Many centres in Belgium owed their existence to Fr. Tardieu (*Annals* 1852, p. 32). But Leuven was his favourite place. He himself explained his method “From the beginning I tried to propagate the work among people who enjoyed some wealth, but I was not successful.” A pious woman told him to talk with the poor. “It is their work; their hearts are open to compassion for the wearied more than those who weigh down on them.” “The progress has been greater than I could have hoped for. The many flyers I have distributed have been fruitful.” “Since the first days, four hundred poor who lack bread joined up with those who regularly give the offering on Sunday. That is to say that the poor understand it to be their work, the only one in which they can take part” (*Annals* 1846, p. 190; 1847, p. 392).

“Despite the prejudices which have not totally disappeared we were able to put together within the space of ten months 116 small groups consisting of 1392 associates and obtain a bank draft of 981.25 francs.” From January to May of the following year, he signed

up 300 new associates. He held a big meeting at the Primatiale de St-Pierre. No one remembered so many children gathered together. There was fear that the chapel would be too small because the mothers came along as well. In 1847, Leuven, which had not even been named before, figured at the head of the honours list of all the Belgium towns. The following years, it came third after Anvers and Brussels. The numbers were regularly increasing: 2,106; 2,241; 2,609; 2,658; 2,822. In 1850, Bishop Bonamie was discharged from overseeing the work of the Holy Childhood by Bishop Parisi who replaced him on an interim basis as head of the Congregation. From then on, far from refusing to stay on with the work, Fr. Tardieu got even more involved, as Fr. Tuffier did at Cahors and Mende. He even sent the enormous sum of 6,751 francs. For a work whose income capped at 150,000 francs, the percentage was considerable. In April 1854, there were 2,658 associates.

With Fr. Tardieu, there was neither a sparing of spirit nor time. If he gave himself so heartily to the work of the Holy Childhood, it was not only because he saw in it a work born in Picpus but also because it was a means of awakening children to the missionary apostolate and at the same time honouring the Infancy of Our Lord as prescribed by the Rule. He knew how to communicate the flame of mission to others. Fr. Wenceslas made a trip to Mende. Every step was a joyful occasion resulting in fruitful contacts. In Dijon, it was the superior of the college; in Lyon, the army chaplain; in Langogne, in Mende, everywhere, the work was taken up by priests, religious, laity from all walks of life, enlightened and won over to the Holy Spirit. Such was the disciple, such was the master!

It is the law of the apostle that his actions be crowned by trial. As the work developed, past efforts faded into the distance, present efforts were lost in the mass. Differences of opinion appeared and also a certain weariness. In Leuven another director was appointed. Fr. Tardieu did not cease to collaborate. In 1856 Fr. Tardieu

complained that his letters were left unanswered. The reply from the Canon, general secretary of the work, betrays the embarrassment, but contains the most beautiful praise possible: “Do not accuse us of negligence or indifference towards our founder or at least our devoted propagator of Belgium. Such an accusation would be ill-founded. Your letter, so interesting, is reserved for the *Annals*; it is deserving in every respect. Signed by us and relating very precious facts, it will have its turn. Since you established the work in Leuven, it has taken giant steps” (20th October, 1856). This official testimony confirms that of Fr. Wenceslas Vincke: “We can say that he is its’ founder in Belgium. At first the Work met quite strong opposition there, but he was not a man to let himself be overcome by difficulties. When he undertook a work, he devoted himself entirely to it and nothing could discourage him: thus, he saw his efforts crowned with full success in this undertaking which was his favourite work” (*Summarium*, p. 59).

The children talked with their parents about Fr. Tardieu who in turn came to him or wished that he would visit. “He always had a very sensitive and compassionate heart,” Fr. Wenceslas said. At Leuven, he was the consoler of the afflicted, of those who mourned the loss of their father, mother, spouse, child. He made it a mission to bring the consolations of the faith to sorrowing families, even those where he was not known.

These visits revealed to him the misery of the working-class population, hard hit by the economic crisis that was sweeping across Belgium. These poorly clad and under nourished children were so destitute that often they could not come up with their subscription of a *son* and asked to borrow it. They went neither to school nor church. His heart was moved with their material and spiritual distress. To welcome and aid them, he founded the *Association of the Holy Family* which he presented to Cardinal Sterchx of Malines. “On the solicitation of several charitable persons, we started on 13th April, 1856, with a meeting centre for the poor children in the area. In

accordance with the advice and consent of the Dean, the pastor of the parish chose to honour the first meeting with his presence. A year had hardly passed and already the place for these meetings had become inadequate. We can only receive 80 or 90 there at most.”

He opened the community’s chapel which he came to enlarge by joining the chapels of the Blessed Virgin and of Saint Joseph to the nave. He explained this to the cardinal: “We are determined to fix our chapel to welcome them. For that, we had to have another entrance from the street so as not to have the poor come through our house. They belong to the poorest and the most downtrodden class of our population. They come from all the parishes throughout the town. Could we end the meeting with the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament? This would be a great benefit for the poor children who never come to church.”

For this purpose, he formed a committee of generous women. One can see in the records that they distributed bread, shoes, clogs, handkerchiefs, rosaries, medals. They also taught catechism, had the children say prayers and sing hymns. He had to learn some Flemish. Although he did not know the language, he knew how to speak to their hearts and in that he was understood.

This foundation was not simply due to the response of a heart sensitive to misery. It found its source in the spirituality of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts and the thinking of the Founder. Later he spoke of this experience. On 31st May, 1867, he addressed himself to the Superior General: “Some Thoughts apropos Choir Brothers.” Since the Congregation was to be concerned with the work of reparation and social and religious renewal, Fr. Coudrin wanted that there would be a separate class, vowed to a state of contemplative life and to the free education of children: choir brothers had their place marked out for them in the work of the

Founders and it could only be taken by them. Thus, Fr. Tardieu connected with the plan of spirituality of Fr. Radigue.

This connection is evident again in the efforts which Fr. Tardieu made to establish the Exterior Association of the Sacred Hearts. He did not forget that his principal mission was to firmly establish the SSCC in Belgium and so expand at the same time both the spirit and the works. The Rule invited all superiors to double their community with a group of faithful imbued with devotion to the Sacred Hearts who, like them, would make adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. To achieve this, the General Chapter of 1843 tried to adapt the spirituality of Picpus which was at first thought to be exclusively for religious to the laity who were totally given over to other obligations in life. This effort was not followed up. In his time, Fr. Tardieu would take up the challenge. And since for him, devotion of the Sacred Hearts developed with the imitation of the four ages of the life of the Saviour, he assigned to the lay associate “the duty to retrace the four ages of our divine Saviour, by the sanctity of his or her life. The four ages are: his *childhood* - ensuring that children be instructed in the Roman Catholic faith and be brought up in the fear of God; his *hidden life* - fleeing the dangers of this world and by frequently rendering the homage of adoration to Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament; his *public life* - praying for the conversion of sinners, and the Propagation of the Faith and especially in making blessings of heaven descend on missions confided to the Congregation; his *suffering life* - supporting with patience all the crosses and adversities that come from the hand of God and from the mortification of the senses.” This tract in French and Flemish, carrying the imprimatur of Malines with the date of 18th November, 1855, seemed to have had two editions.

These diverse initiatives did not exhaust the activities of Fr. Tardieu. He recognized the importance of the press and publication. In 1856, the *Catholic Review of the University of Leuven* published two articles by him on the missions in the Sandwich Islands or Hawaii

(pages 281-291; 350-364). There was this preliminary note: “the documents on which we based this article are taken in part from a work on the missions in Eastern Oceania in German by the late Mr. Michelis... and in part from letters which came from those regions and finally from the *Annals* of the Propaganda of the Faith.” A final note gives some details of the missionary apostolate “of the more than sixty members who had entered the Leuven novitiate in the past ten years or so. At least twelve of those members do the work of God in these regions besides others who will go later to share in the work of their confreres.”

Later, ten years after he had left Belgium, his faithful friends at the University inserted a short article on *The missionary outreach in eastern Oceania* (1868, pages 115-117). The following year it included three articles of his (pages 553, 607, 672) *Notes on the Life and work of Fr. Caret* (Gambier). An offprint adds up to fifty-six pages. These articles were not signed.

These were not his first attempts. In 1853 Fr. Tardieu had published anonymously in two volumes recounting the history of the religious congregation, ‘Notre Dame de La Salette’. (*Histoire de Notre Dame de La Salette d’après les documents authentiques publiés jusqu’à nos jours, suivis d’une neuvaine et de diverses prières à la Sainte Vierge* (3 printing plates: Fonteyn, Leuven).

In the preface he explains why he undertook this work: “The event at La Salette is of the utmost importance and deserves the attention of every serious spiritual person. The august Mother of God appeared to two poor shepherds on the mountains in the Alps to announce to her people the chastisements with which it is threatened if it doesn’t return to God, if it doesn’t do penance, if it doesn’t return to the exercise of its duties which it has abandoned. As a messenger of peace, she comes to fulfil a mission of clemency and pardon.” “To make known the mercies of God,” he explained further, “is to work

to extend the Marian cult, to contribute - to the extent of our resources - to helping those deviated from the way of truth to re-enter it by showing them that the way to pardon is open to them. The goal that we propose for ourselves is to offer afflicted souls a source of grace and consolation.” He acknowledged in all modesty “this is just simply a compilation.” The *Catholic Review* of the University in giving a long account of the work regretted that the author did not indicate his sources nor give any great attention to the objections against the veracity of the apparitions (Vol. X, p. 248). The criticism was heard and the second edition (the first had been exhausted in one year) contained important additions (pages 355, 402). This same year (1854), a Flemish translation appeared.

The more activity there is, the more there are tests that ground the works of God and temper the souls of the saints. For Fr. Tardieu, the test came from where he least expected it. One of his co-workers complained to the Superior General that the diverse ministries to which Fr. Tardieu gave himself, obliged him to be out of the house frequently, hardly allowing him to live with the novices. These undeserved reproaches got under the skin of the young superior (he was thirty-three years old at that time). “I wish that someone would name another who is more with the novices than I. In other respects, my behaviour may be suspect, but in this regard I do not think so.” After this response, where one could sense his Mediterranean vivacity, he cited two examples: “I missed morning prayer three times because I went to say Mass at 5 am and twice because I was indisposed. I missed spiritual reading about ten times. I have almost never missed recreation.” He also explained his absences. “If there was a Mass at an inconvenient hour, I took it. By going myself to make the purchases, I made better deals.” With numbers to back him up, he showed that for nine persons, he spent 8347.36 francs (2.50f per person a day). Now with seventeen people, he was spending only 9507.16 francs (1.56f per person a day). (Letter 7th October, 1848).

A tougher test awaited him. It was less against his person than against the novitiate in Leuven. Some in leadership were reproaching him to have less resources because the novitiate in Leuven was costing too much. In their defence, it must be recalled that in the 1848 Revolution, Picpus was plundered a second time. The Council was pushed to the wall. It had closed the Novitiate at Graves, Aveyron, and was thinking of closing the novitiate at Leuven. The response of Tardieu could not have been more vivid: “It is not necessary to close Leuven. The letter I received was like a thunderbolt to me” (12th December 1848). And some days later: “The year that is now ending has been a very difficult year for many, for us very sad. I ask God above all else to deign to hold on to this house of Leuven, if that is his will” (31st December, 1848).

Tardieu carried the day, but this was only a delay. For two years, the threat endured. He pleaded with such passion and skill that he finished by getting the better of the argument. “All things considered,” he wrote on 4th May, 1850, “it seems to me that the house in Leuven can prosper and I am convinced that it will prosper with some sacrifices and a bit of patience. Consequently, I believe that it is advantageous for the Congregation to remain in Leuven. If the house were a drain and to no advantage, the question would be different, but, since 1846, the house has received thirty-three novices; of that number seventeen are already professed and seven are still in the Novitiate. They pay their expenses. We have never had it better whatever metrics you use. Moreover, for more than two years, the house has been self-sufficient. There were certainly sacrifices, to confine oneself to only what is necessary since one is not being religious in having all he wishes. In review, when after some considerable expenses to find a house and to sustain it, there was a sufficiency for the expenses, and, thus, now we have hope for the future. One cannot, without being inconsistent, close such a house.” To his disadvantage, Bishop Bonamie had used the rhetoric of numbers unwisely. You won’t find Tardieu napping. In talking business, the superior revealed himself to be the son of a

notary. He knew the language. Had not the placidity of Tardieu been a matter of perfect self-mastery?

However, one cannot be thirteen years superior of a house in a foreign land without using up one's credit. "I hear it said that you are no longer viewed well on the outside. Is this true?" asked Fr. Sorieul, a member of the Council, in January '55. Delegated to the General Chapter of 1858, he had asked not to be present because he was detained in Leuven for important business. At the end of September, he was recalled to Paris and named as the assistant director to Fr. Radigue in the Novitiate in Issy.

Among the fifty-two novices he led to profession, were Bishop Koeckmann, missionary to Honolulu, Fr. Gasper Zumbohm, Easter Island, Germain Fierens (Tuamotu), Eleuthère Sneppé (Marquesas), Pamphile de Veuster to Molokai (after his brother Damien died); Lambert Rethmann (Havre). How many would be able to say as Fr. Wenceslas said: "I have always been proud and happy to have had him as a Father. All those who came after to increase the family were also treated as children dear to his heart"?

A missionary novitiate which he saved and left in good shape, the work of the Holy Childhood spread throughout the whole country, a society for the support of the students, another society for the safeguard of poor children, an association to promote devotion to the Sacred Hearts, the spiritual direction of many souls: this balance sheet of his activities at Leuven justified fully the words of a Belgium priest on learning about his martyrdom "I would like to make myself heard all over Paris, making known all the good that Fr. Tardieu did in Belgium."

At Issy, he was able to rebuild his health which had never been great and which too much activity had undermined. For this friend of books and meditation, there was the possibility of taking up his cherished studies, a long time left aside, and of making a serious and

prolonged retreat. Discreetly, he continued his action on behalf of the novices from Leuven, all of whom had to finish their novitiate at Issy. From June to September 1860, he was able to prepare Damien De Veuster for the profession of perpetual vows which according to the testimony of the apostle to those with leprosy had marked him profoundly.

In October 1860, the Superior General, Fr. Euthyme Rouchouze made him a member of the General Council with residence at Picpus. He charged him at the same time with teaching dogma to the young professed who were preparing for the ordination of priesthood. In the absence of a career devoted to teaching, the new teacher brought, in addition to these two years of preparation, a solid cultural background, his contacts with the University of Leuven, his experience in the confessional and in leadership. His students knew how to appreciate his courses: “Gifted with exactitude and remarkable clarity, of good judgment, and having at his service an excellent memory.” He made the young people love what he understood and loved. His precocious maturity, in having been a superior for a long time, did not weigh down his forty-six years. He remained simple and youthful sharing recreations and walks.

Soon he had his apostolic work: to console the afflicted, a service to render, a good deed to perform. As at Leuven, a faithful community of the poor, the sick and sinners gathered around him. He reserved part of each day to the confessional where penitents did not leave him idle. Often as soon as he got back to his room, the porter would knock on his door. “I’ll be there,” he would invariably say despite his asthma, which made it painful to go up the stairs so often.

He only left the confessional at Picpus to celebrate Mass each morning at the nearby community of the Mother of God. “Despite his poor health, we saw him persist willingly to hear confessions for hours, coughing such that he could hardly talk, never agreeing to give

up. If he arrived sometimes and had to wait at the door despite the cold and his infirmities, he gave no indication of being impatient. His sweet smile and his serenity showed clearly that he had been conversing with Our Lord. He had the habit of saying that it was better to talk to God than to talk about God. He spoke very little and to hear him, one would think him incapable of anything. However, in the sacred tribunal, he proved himself fully engaged. He knew how to push souls to perfection.”

One would love to know more, to know what his interior battles were, his victories, defeats. The witnesses are not there, not by lack of veneration but because of his rare mastery of self and his discretion that hid him from others. His interior life did appear in this communication he had with a new seminarian which gives us his reactions in face of his illness and the constraints of religious life.

“It was during this illness that I was able to see through experience the truth of what I had taught so many times about the spiritual and even temporal benefits of the religious state. No, not in the best conditions imaginable, could I ever have enjoyed the same advantages, not counting the prayers that were being said for me every day in Paris and elsewhere and I could receive Holy Communion at least every eight days, brought to me at midnight by our VRF. As for temporal advantages, there was no one in any position in the world who could be the object of so much attention, so much care, so many visits from the doctor almost every day, nothing was spared to give me some relief or satisfaction. Alluding to one of his nieces who had just entered the convent: “Oh, as for her happiness I wish her to be a nun. But the vocation comes from the Good Lord. So I pray to him and will continue to pray to him to grant her this favour. Farewell, work seriously and conscientiously. Later you will reap what you have sown”.

To Father Tardieu one could apply, as one could to his three companions Frs. Radigue, Tuffier and Rouchouze, the words spoken by Bishop d'Hulst on the 25th anniversary of the massacre in Rue Haxo: “There are two kinds of martyrs: for some the glorious end is everything, for others their heroic life calls for a heroic end: they are among those whose life in some way deserved martyrdom.”

Chapter VIII

THE CONCIERGERIE PRISON

A crude way of the Cross began for the thirteen prisoners. It would last six long weeks. For four among them, the way would end with the pouring out of their blood on the heights of Belleville. On this Wednesday, 12th April, they were as yet only at the first station.

It was eleven at night. Seven wagons had been requisitioned and were waiting on the street. The prisoners were made to mount two by two. The armed Federates surrounded them on all sides as if they were children. The Federates had intentionally reserved an uncovered wagon for the superiors, Frs. Radigue and Tuffier. Without a doubt, they wanted a parade. Despite the late hour, they had hopes that the capture would not pass unnoticed. Night walkers were rare in this season. However, there was a group at the entrance to the Picpus property who did shout out “Good! put them to death.” While near the Bastille, a butcher boy let rip with “Kill all those pigs for me while you have them.” On the Pont-Neuf, at the top of Place Dauphine, some passers-by coming home late from a club, cried “Into the water! Into the water! Get rid of these rogue priests!”

The carriages were ordered to bring their clients to the Depot of the Prefecture. However, the Commune had brought so many suspects that it was impossible to imprison more people. The chief guard categorically refused to take charge of the new arrivals. “But we have the order for imprisonment signed by the Prefect of Police.” “Then take them somewhere else, to the Conciergerie.”¹⁹

¹⁹ Situated on the west bank of the Seine, the centuries-old building that once housed the kings of France became over time, the administration centre for justice, then the most famous prison during the Revolution and finally an

Was the victory parade going to fail pitifully on the banks of the Seine? Instead of the warm congratulations they were expecting, the gate was closed in their faces and they were sent from one prison to another. The prospect of a night spent on the banks of the river in the damp coolness, guarding these priests, did not incline them to niceties. Their brutal nature, hitherto badly contained, burst forth. The Fathers were later to confess that they had been disgusted with their words, in which ineptitude still prevailed over rudeness.

Situated on the banks of the Seine, the Conciergerie - with its high rectangular tower crowned by a crenellated parapet and its three large round towers, topped with pepperpot turrets - made for one of the most characteristic landscapes of old Paris. It was also one of the most historical places. When Victorien Sardou learned that the worn threshold of the prison, considered worthless, had been thrown into the rubble when the buildings were being renovated, he made this melancholy reflection: "My God! The whole of France has crossed this threshold to go to the scaffold". Queen Marie-Antoinette and Madame Élisabeth, sister of Louis XVI were incarcerated there, as were the Girondins, the Montagnards, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Marat and André Chénier. The Fathers of the Sacred Hearts had the honour of reviving the great revolutionary tradition.

It had been wrongly written that Archbishop Darbois was incarcerated at the Conciergerie. There were indeed two prisons on the Quai de l'Horloge. To the right of the twin towers in the direction of the Bonbec Tower was the Depot, a small temporary prison where one stayed during the time one appeared in court. The Archbishop of Paris, members of his clergy, Jesuit Fathers, were locked up in the Depot. Next to this cell prison, behind the César Tower, there was what was called the 'coachman's quarters', where foul-mouthed

historic site. All in all, the name is evocative. Cf. <http://cityguide.paris-is-beautiful.com/paris/monuments/la-conciergerie-lancienne-prison-du-palais-royal/3114> (Accessed on 26th December 2018).

coachmen were sent to reflect for a while. There were a few large cells there. A century earlier, the “*pailleuses*,” prisoners too poor to occupy the ‘pistol rooms’, (cells with more advantages) located on the first floor, were placed there. The prostitutes who were locked up that evening were rushed out to make room for the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts.

Midnight was ringing in the Clock Pavilion when the great door finally opened. In the smoky light of the lanterns, they crossed the Guard Room with its Gothic vaults supported by powerful pillars, then the Great Lower Room, this marvel of ogival art with four naves as large as a church. The majestic palace of Philippe-le-Bel was then just a dormitory where Federates and *cantinières* (women in charge of the kitchens) lay in a jumble. With hearts filled with disgust, they sometimes had to step over the sleepers or risk stumbling over them and receive a barrage of insults. The ‘rue de Paris’ led to a small, irregularly shaped courtyard. Under an arcaded gallery three rooms were open. Prisoners were pushed into them, formalities postponed until later.

The prisoners were exhausted but before stretching out on their hastily made beds, Fr. Radigue recited evening prayer in a loud voice, as he would have done a few hours earlier at Picpus if nothing had happened to interrupt their conventual life.

Used to getting up at 4:30am they were a long time awake when the guard came to open up and announce that they could go out into the courtyard and stay there until 5:30 p.m. when he would be obliged to lock them up again. It was none too early. Fr. Rouchouze who had been sick all night and the elderly priest, Fr. Dumonteil aged 77, suffered because they were not able to care for their urgent needs.

They were able to examine the location at leisure. The rooms were plain enough, humid, filled with saltpetre, disjointed flagstones. The irregular shaped courtyard was made up of old buildings, ill

matched, put up over a long time and on both sides they were bordered by this arcade gallery. On the top of the first side, there was a cornice with iron spikes to discourage any escape. Opposite the cells, the cells of Marie-Antoinette and Robespierre masked the apse of the chapel. In a corner, there was a fountain with its precious stone tables where so many aristocrats had washed their own linen.

The director of the prison had been dismissed by the Commune and replaced by a person named Deville. But the old guards were left at their posts with the added secret mission of defending the Palace of Justice. Deville was no fool. But knowing that he would meet with less support from the Communards, he had the wisdom to adapt. He proved himself to be upright and humane and of all the prisons of the Commune, the Conciergerie was the best administered.

Deville showed himself to be perfectly suited to the job, when around eleven o'clock the detainees were brought to him to complete the customary formalities. He had in his hand a list which was none other than the court order drawn up the day before by the so-called Commissioner Clavier. However, one of the guards whispered in their ears: "Be careful in your statements: there are Federates with us who do not wish you any good". They were registered according to the order in which they had presented themselves in Picpus - that prescribed by the Rule for all trips in community: first the dignitaries: prior, bursar, councillors, then each according to the seniority of religious profession. The registers bore the numbers 459 for Father Radigue; 460 for Father Tuffier; 461 for Father Rouchouze; 462 for Father Tardieu etc. In front of each name the reference: priest. The court order was signed: Raoul Rigault.

Clavier was too proud of his achievement to loosen his grip on that to which he owed his advancement. He appeared that same evening at the Conciergerie. He now wore lieutenant's stripes, a greatcoat and dragged a sabre, whereas until then he had been entitled

only to a cap and a tunic without patch or number. No doubt he expected to see his victims overwhelmed. He could not sustain looking at these men who, in full possession of themselves, communicated only irony and pity. He pretended to be interested in the Federates who were playing cards and quietly slipped away. Here we met one of the salient features of the leaders of the Commune that may have been due to the fact that no one had prepared them for the exercise of leadership: a mixture of brutality, arrogance and timidity.

A strange thing at first glance, but in the end it became quite normal: after living through the horrendous scenes in Picpus, this was seen by the inmates as a form of relaxation. “Our cheerfulness was so great that in any other circumstance I would have had scruples to be so cheerful with such abandon. We extended our recreation until nine and ten in the evening. (In Picpus, the great silence was set for 8.30pm). We joked about the pittance served in the Conciergerie and about the walls that were decorated with such graceful spikes. Fr. Tuffier and Fr. Tardieu excelled in maintaining this innocent joviality. We all thought that this would not displease the one who said: God loves joyful sacrifices”. Brother Lemarchand, whose testimony is all the more precious for its precision, commented on how taken aback even he was by Fr. Laurent’s profuse joviality.

There was only one sour note. One of the older brothers commented on how the younger priests could have avoided being exposed to this if they had been made to leave Picpus on time. Fr. Radigue, who in his role as Prior had taken upon himself the responsibility of guarding them, felt targeted. It would have been easy for him to excuse himself. Each of the priests left at Picpus was a chaplain to religious sisters. Their departure would have been judged severely by the faithful and regarded as an abandonment of their post. Besides, the young members had expressed their liberty to share the lot of their Prior. For his part, the author of this unfortunate comment protested that his

mouth had gotten ahead of his thinking. The incident was soon forgotten.

The gravity of their situation did not escape them. The threats of Clavier and his group, the cries of the people, and the proposals of the Federates had naturally oriented their thoughts to a violent end. The cells that housed Marie-Antoinette and Robespierre, located opposite theirs, reminded them that revolutions are not just little games of stripes and colours but generally terminate in bloody executions. Had not their Congregation been born under the Terror in order to raise up the ruins? Was not the Motherhouse set up in Picpus so that a vigil could be kept over the remains of the 1,305 victims of the guillotine who reposed in the small cemetery that formed part of their enclosure?

They expected the worse and prepared for death. One confessed in the parlour at Picpus; another in the wagon that had brought him to prison; others in their cell at the Conciergerie or in the covered prison yard. They suffered above all at not being able to say Mass. Fr. Radigue wrote to the Director asking that at least one of them be allowed to celebrate Mass on Sunday that the others could attend. Deville called him to his office. He apologised for not being able to accede to his request. Personally, he would like nothing better to satisfy their pious desire. But he needed special permission from the Commune. In fact, Raoul Rigault had sent a despatch note to all the prison directors on 25th March: 'The director of ... is forbidden ... to let Mass be said (tomorrow) Sunday'. Deville knew that Rigault was not joking on this subject. For want of the comfort of the Holy Eucharist, the prisoners used their relative freedom to continue their community life in prison and to say their prayers and read the rule together.

In the Way of the Cross, the sixth station leads us to meditate on the delicate gesture of Veronica, who comes between the crowd of soldiers to wipe the face of Jesus. There was one devout woman who

did not hesitate to compromise her situation and even her freedom to come to the aid of the prisoners. “The day after our imprisonment, as we were all together in the courtyard, we saw, around eight o'clock in the morning, a respectable lady come to a barred window overlooking our courtyard and offer us her services. She was the director of the laundry. Her offers were accepted, and not without need because we were lacking many things.”

Fr. Radigue gives us details of the menu: “At about half past eight, a cook accompanied by a guard, entered the courtyard with a pot of broth. We all had to come, armed with our bowls, in front of the guard house, to receive our ration; it was served to us in abundance. We received a loaf of bread for our day and were able to put some in our broth. There was a tap in a corner, from which water flowed freely. We went there to quench our thirst, and so ended our lunch.

“At three o'clock, following the same ceremony, we received a portion of beans, peas and rice into our bowl; that was our ordinary goings-on, except for Thursday and Sunday when there was a morsel of meat served which offered some resistance to the teeth. Our broth, which was habitually thin, was fatter these two days. I found nothing that was uneatable, but those who had only known plenty or were in delicate health would have suffered. For those of us who were old and infirm, we would also have suffered a lot if divine Providence had not sent this holy soul who supplied us with that bit extra to live on so that we could get through these days in the Conciergerie without much suffering.”

Even in prison, Fr. Tuffier never forgot that he remained the procurator of the community. He gave her his requests without dreaming of asking her name. “The venerable air of this person and her expressly religious concern to help the prisoners whom she had never seen, led us to call her the *prison angel*. When she returned at lunch hour to share provisions, the Procurator asked her to accept

this title. She did so with great grace, promising to fulfil the charge which the name imposed upon her! Her devotion was beyond all praise. Because of her, we received the food supplement which, due to our age and state of health, many of us needed. She brought newspapers to us and took it upon herself to bring us our letters and go to Rue de Picpus to learn what was happening.”

Through a letter which he received from her, Fr. Tuffier learned that she was the daughter, sister, wife and mother of officers. Her name was Madame d'Aubignosc. In recompense for her services, she recommended her son, Maurice to their prayer, a twenty-year-old bedridden captain injured at Montretout. She did so much good that she came under suspicion of the Communards. To escape arrest, she had to leave Paris.

But the Commune had not taken these thirteen soutane bearers from their religious house so that they could continue, even at the Conciergerie, their conventual life.

Chapter IX

MAZAS PRISON

Less than a week after their arrest, Monday 19th April, towards 3.30pm, those officially called hostages were forewarned that they would be moved elsewhere. “Where are we going?” “We cannot tell you.”

When they saw that it was no longer carriages this time, but police wagons, they realized that their lot would certainly not improve and that the Commune intended to treat them not as respected hostages, but as common criminals. They were going to be subjected for a month to one of the harshest penalties there is: solitary confinement.

Each police wagon contained ten narrow, carefully enclosed cells, separated by a corridor where the guards could stand. Fresh air entered only through a small grid placed in the double ceiling. The vehicles travelled along the quays on the right bank of the Seine. Half an hour later, they stopped at the Mazas prison.²⁰ Now destroyed, the prison stood not far from the Pont d'Austerlitz, opposite the Gare de Lyon on Boulevard Mazas, now Boulevard Diderot. It had only been built some twenty years before and was thought to be a model prison. It owed its reputation, not to its appearance, which was ugly and sad in itself, but to its layout. Everything worked together to envelop the prisoner in the most absolute isolation. Since it was thought that the common life of inmates was a school of vices where the more experienced taught the younger ones about crime, isolation became the only means to prevent contamination and, through salutary reflection, bring about their amendment.

²⁰ Despite praise for its innovative design of solitary confinement, the Mazas prison in Paris only existed for sixty years, from 1840 to 1900.

Six main buildings emanated from a central circular intersection very much like the spokes from the hub of a wheel. Each formed a division and comprised three floors of cells with walkways, on all sides of a grand hall. The prison was envisioned for 1200 inmates. At the centre of the intersection there was a platform flanked by columns on which there was an altar platform which, due to a chassis system, was visible from every cell. All was designed to impede communication among neighbours. As they passed around the platform, the hostages' hearts tightened. They were aware that here as elsewhere the Commune had suppressed Sunday Mass. The chaplain, an old man, had only escaped arrest by reason of the devotion of the warden's wife. There was an inscription which ran around the circumference of the rotunda: "There is more joy in heaven over the one repentant sinner than over the ninety- nine just who have no need of repentance."

A vast covered courtyard was used for walks. Around a central pavilion were small triangular courtyards, isolated from each other, where, for an hour each day, the prisoners could get some fresh air and exercise, without being able to communicate with each other.

The people of the Commune, who included a number of irregulars not unfamiliar with the law, knew Mazas by reputation if not through experience. They knew that isolation, especially if practiced with some rigour, could overcome the strongest resistance. So it was the Mazas prison they chose for those whom they considered their enemies: armed soldiers who had opposed their enterprise, the police who had watched their actions and thwarted their plans; the priests whom they especially saw, more or less confusedly, as their intractable enemies, those who opposed mysticism to mysticism, the mysticism of universal charity to the mysticism of class justice. Some of the Communards did not go so far. They saw in the priests a bargaining chip in case of failure. They thought that a good soaking in silence could only make the hostages more flexible and more malleable. Also crammed into Mazas, with the Archbishop of Paris, were the two people who worked

closely with him: his vicar general and his private secretary. In addition there were priests both of bourgeois parishes and popular parishes, vicars, seminarians, as well as religious of various orders: Jesuits, Fathers of the Sacred Hearts, Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, Brothers of the Christian Schools, Fathers of the Foreign Missions: one of them had gone to China with the secret desire to receive martyrdom there, and had only returned from it a few days ago to see his dream come true ... in Paris. At first glance, all these hostages seemed to have been chosen randomly, by chance. In fact, the secular and religious clergy around their archbishop formed a striking miniature of the Church in its various activities, with the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts representing the contemplative life.

The first historians tell us that before going to the clerk's office, the thirteen prisoners were gathered together for a few moments one last time. As per the accounts of the lives of the Martyrs, Father Radigue would have urged them to be ready for the approaching battle, blessed and embraced them before separating. The reality was quite different and no less beautiful.

The prisoners left their police transport only to be locked up in waiting cells that were as narrow and uncomfortable as the first ones, but arranged next to each other like bathing cubicles. A glance was enough for Fr. Radigue to grasp the advantage he could draw from them. More than ever he felt bound to those who were now doubly his brothers through religious vows and captivity. In the silence that followed the slamming of doors and the creaking of locks, he understood that all were there. Then, in a loud and intelligible voice, he renewed his priestly promises, repeating the formula which he first pronounced at the feet of the Bishop and in communion with the Pope when he became a cleric on the day he received the tonsure:

Fr. Radigue prayed: "*Dominus pars hereditatis meae et calicis mei: tu es qui restitues hereditatem mihi* (Lord you are my heritage and my cup. It is you

who give me my heritage).” He said again the words of Jesus in the garden of agony on the eve of his passion: “*Non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat (Not my will but your will be done).*” And added: “My dearly beloved fathers, I ask you to recite for each other every day the litany of the saints.”

After a long wait, but without communicating with each other, they were in turn led to the clerk’s office and search area. Again, they were registered according to the same order of precedence: prior, bursar, councillors and with numbers 823, 824, 825, 826, etc. but this time with the description: “Catholic priest”. The remand warrant was signed by Edmond Levraud.

Appearing first, Father Radigue questioned the clerk to find out the reasons for his arrest. “You wear the soutane, you are a priest and a religious, what more do we need?” And so that no one was unaware of it, he wrote in the margin: Catholic priest, a designation that he assigned to all thirteen new names. With the others the formalities did not drag on. However, the case of Br. Lemarchand intrigued the guards. He had indeed been arrested in a house of priests, he wore the soutane, he said he was a religious brother of Picpus: why did he persist in denying that he was a priest? He was called again to the desk and asked to give his name and profession.

“You are a priest?” “No, I am not a priest.” “But you wear the soutane?” “Because I am the sacristan in our chapel and so you can let me go?” “What do you want? We cannot do that.” “Basically,” added the brother, “they were sympathetic to me.” From there, the good brother had to apply all his candour to ensure his release.

At Mazas, as in the majority of the prisons, the Commune had to leave all the original prison guards in place and be content to put their own men in key positions. The former guards knew how to distinguish between the newcomers and the prison’s usual common law criminals. For one week, one of the guards came every day to take Fr. Tauvel’s breviary and bring it to Fr. Tardieu, who had not been

allowed to take his. A few hours later he faithfully would come back to collect it and return it to its owner. Another guard would go through the galleries shouting out “Bread, bread?” On a signal from inside, he would open the hatch and give as much as wanted.

The Director installed by the Commune was a man named Mouton. Oh, how mysterious were the nominations for this improvised government! Nothing predisposed this pointy-head, a shoemaker by trade, to exercise this important command. There was nothing crisp about his appearance and his zeal was scarcely more than letter writing. Although Mouton did not hold back from criticising Garreau, his well-known colleague at the prefecture, for his great indulgence to the hostages, he himself showed himself flexibility in their regard. He had a weakness for wine which he indulged. He was the one who allowed the hostages contact with the outside world and also authorized the transfer of five of the SSCC to the infirmary because of age.

In reality, there was not much: a wooden bed instead of a hammock which one had to fold up every morning, a chair not fixed to the wall, a visit to the doctor. It was never a question of relaxing the detainees’ isolation. However, this was enough, to accuse Mouton of weakness and have him transferred to Saint Lazar, the prison for women. The transfer happened eight days after the arrival of our captives in Mazas.

Mouton was replaced by a “tough guy”, the locksmith Garreau. He was a young man not older than 24; but the 4-year sentence he had served in prison had given him, if not authority, at least the experience necessary for his new job. Always drunk, he was a nasty drunk. He only ever walked around with his revolver on his belt and a rifle slung over his shoulder. He began by bringing the guards to heel. He held them to his word. One can judge how much hatred he accrued in less than a month, because the first act of the guards, when

liberation came, was to shoot him, as one would kill a dangerous beast. Apart from the coarseness of his words: “They only have to die, it will be a good riddance. If they're not happy, we'll break their g...”, he could not be blamed for any real abuse. He was content to strictly enforce the rules, and thanks to the terror he exerted on the guards, the isolation order was enforced in all its rigour. More than one survivor confessed, and they were hard enough: “It was enough to drive you crazy.”

Full of arrogance in front of his subordinates, Garreau towed the line before his more or less hierarchical superiors, who were itching for the need to exercise their newly acquired power, if only by a measure of clemency. One of the thirteen detained, Fr. Louis Lafaye, had a nephew who was a medical student, and who was sufficiently linked to another student, Raoul Rigault, the all-powerful head of the Commune. His anticlerical rage launched the famous motto: “Death to ‘God is Good’ and to those who support this belief.”²¹ For once, however, he let his good side show and allowed his comrade to transfer his elderly and sick uncle to the Pitié Hospital. But such were the calls to hatred launched by the revolutionary newspapers that the hospital proved no less dangerous a place than the prison. Fr. Lafaye was subjected to all sorts of insults and vexations and someone even went so far as to fire two bullets into the room where he was.

The diplomatic corps, for its part, showed firmness and courage. Fr. Daniel Holtermann was of Dutch nationality. Mr. Von Zuilen, ambassador of the Netherlands, demanded his release and sent his *chargé d'affaires*, Mr. Vertemberg, to inquire at the Town Hall about the reason for his internment. They searched the registers and finding nothing, they were obliged to declare: “Arrested for unknown

²¹ “The Good God. As God is good” was a widely used expression of faith in the nineteenth century among Catholic Christians, for example in the life and writings of St. Julie Billiart (1751-1816). The Communards continue to hear in this phrase a reactionary and anti-revolutionary theme.

reasons". This was an admission that neither politics nor public order had anything to do with the case and that his priestly character had been the only reason for his arrest.

Fr. Séverin Kaiser was originally from Rhineland Prussia. At that time there was no such antagonism between the two countries. Both before and after the war of 1870, Fr. Séverin Kaiser and his two brothers taught in French houses. The United States embassy²² had taken German nationals under its protection. The secretary, Mr. Schmitt, went in person to claim his protégé in Mazas and, knowing the dangers he was running, took him to the Nycten household, a Belgian family, to hide him there. But that same evening, the young priest offered to minister in the Hospice of Enghien. Its chaplain, one of his confreres, was in prison. A French soldier was dying, and he was ministering to him. For communion, he celebrated mass along with his comrades. He had barely finished when a delegate from the Commune arrived. The Father had just time to flee. He returned to ask for asylum from the Belgian family. A small resting place was set up for the Blessed Sacrament and the family began adoration. When Fr. Kaiser left the hospital house a few days later, a few tears were shed when they saw the real presence of Christ disappear with him.

Other attempts to rescue the hostages failed because of a lack of knowledge of the world of the Federates. The Superior of the Mother

²² No sooner had he arrived in Paris to present his credentials than Elihu Washburne, the American minister in Paris, pledged to try to make a breakthrough on the hostage issue at the request of the Apostolic Nuncio, Bishop Flavio Chigi. He visited Bishop Darboy in prison and described his state of weakness well (Alistair Horne, *La Chute de Paris, Le Siège et la Commune 1870-71*. Penguin Books 2007) p. 355. Parisians really appreciated Washburne's presence because he did not leave the city throughout the crisis when the diplomatic corps and even the government escaped to Tours and Bordeaux. See also Christopher Gerard Kinsella, *La mission diplomatique du Nonce apostolique de Mgr Chigi à Paris 1870-71* (1974).

Cf. https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/1378/ (Accessed on 13th July, 2018).

of God commissioned one of her nuns to visit the prisoners and, in order to make it easier for her to go to them, thought to “disguise her as a woman of the world”. Even if the sister did not end up being openly denounced as a religious, such a disguise was ill-chosen, because of the hatred of the Communards for “those from above”. The assignment could not be carried out.

The choice of Madame Petit, the Community's butcher, was a happier one. Running a business after a long siege and in the midst of a civil war was not without its difficulties, which were compounded by the sudden death of her husband in those very days. However, not content with bringing them twelve baskets of provisions three times a week, she did not hesitate to go to Versailles to take some news to the Superior General and bring back some linen. Her actions brought her under the suspicion of the Communards. She was even arrested; it was the intervention of a client that saved her.

Thus, without leaving this account and without resorting to foreign sources, one can understand the atmosphere of hatred and contempt for freedom that covered Paris in the spring of 1871, and also the many acts of generosity and heroism it provoked in all quarters.

Chapter X

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

If the law of solitary confinement was the same for all hostages, it did not weigh equally on each one. A personality known to the whole of Paris, such as a parish priest or a headmaster of a college, had the ability to make connections with outsiders that a provincial who had just arrived in the capital could not. To knock on the right door and fall through the cracks, one needed a good deal of interpersonal skills and a serious knowledge of Parisian things. One could also more easily count on the complicity of the staff, who knew that once the good days were back, those helped would be grateful for services rendered and on bad days they would have long enough arms to pull them out of a bad situation. Some of the hostages even managed to obtain the Holy Eucharist.

This was not the case with the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. Picpus was the Motherhouse – for the administration and priestly formation – of a Congregation spread throughout France and into Belgium, America, and Oceania. Thus, the community had made its influence felt further away from Paris than in the city itself. Only seldom was the chapel at the Motherhouse visited by outsiders, other than by the people of the quartier, at that time itself little populated, and by people poorly connected with Paris. The local ministry undertaken from Picpus was sorted out in a milieu of cloistered religious communities.

The Fathers were all originally from the Province (France) and had only recently arrived in Paris. In Cahors, Poitiers and Leuven, where they carried out their ministries, their arrest would have caused a sensation. A network of mutual aid would have been spontaneously organised in their favour. In Paris, of course, the sacking of their

house and their imprisonment did not go unnoticed. But none of them was personally known. The community who remained in the house were rigorously held there, and later imprisoned. The sisters in Picpus suffered the same fate. This explains why isolation was more severe for them than for the other hostages.

Deliberately leaving aside the nine prisoners who escaped the massacre, we will present only the correspondence of the four who shed their blood for their faith. The letters were subject to censorship. Any overly strong expression of their Christian feelings would have been regarded as a provocation and thrown pitilessly into the basket. The inmates experienced this at their own expense. In order to have any chance of reaching their addressees, they had to gloss over their intimate feelings. Their deep spiritual life hardly seems to be visible. One has to *read between the lines*. In this regard, they were being faithful to their Picpucian vocation.

A priest, a religious who is accustomed to solitary meditation in his cell, willingly takes up the pen to fix his thoughts or to help himself take stock. For one who is obliged by the rule to spend three hours each day in the chapel among his confreres, this is more difficult. Besides, Picpucian formation places too much value on simplicity to be satisfied with an analysis of one's personal dispositions. It aims to turn its gaze above all to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary to pay homage to their love and to compensate them for human insults and forgetfulness. Although they were experienced directors of souls, at Picpus they practised only oral direction and very little written direction. For all these reasons their correspondence did not have the beautiful passages that made the letters left by some of their companions in captivity so attractive. However, they were not devoid of interest, and one such letter from Fr. Radigue merited this authoritative judgment from Father Virrieux, a historian of the Commune: 'One would think one was reading an epistle found in the writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch'.

Father Marcellin Rouchouze

Marcellin Rouchouze had been Secretary General for six years, which involved pushing a lot of paper! Writing did not cost him much. So, he was not upset to finally have some rest, a vacation in short. Besides, who should he write to? His sister had long since left for South America where she was Superior of the SSCC sisters in La Serena (Chile). He was pleased to have written to her the very day before his arrest: “So she will not have to worry about me”. His younger brother, who had become his Superior General, had died the previous year. Called to collaborate closely with him, he had gotten out of this delicate situation by confining himself to his office as archivist, which he left only to exercise a fruitful but unremarkable ministry in the retirement home, known as “Prince Eugene”

He broke the silence only once in prison to reassure an employee of the Magnin religious bookstore, whose skill and dedication in the business he had appreciated. Accustomed to drawing up the council meeting minutes which his role required him to attend, he described his cell in detail and not without a touch of banter:

“Mazas Prison 8th May, 1871.

On 17th April, at 3:30 in the evening, we were transferred by police transport to Mazas Prison with each of us confined to a cell of about 32 square feet, where we found the following: 1) a hammock to hang each evening; 2) a wool and horsehair mattress; 3) a pair of linen sheets - one strip wide; 4) two beige woollen blankets; 5) a table with drawers fixed to the wall; 6) a straw chair riveted to the table by an iron chain; 7) a tin-plated beaten iron can; 8) a tin cup. 9) a wooden spoon; 10) a spittoon; 11) a bowl for the toilet; 12) a birch broom without handle; 13) a grass broom.

“After having spent a week there and having done our housework as well as possible, five of us, being over sixty, had the privilege of being transferred to an invalid cell in the infirmary section, where each prisoner has a wooden bed consisting of a mattress, a mattress, two sheets - one and a half

strips wide - and two blankets. The table and chair are ok. Every evening when we are made to light our gas burner, we open the door hatch and leave it open all night, which doesn't happen in the other sections. Each cell has its own cesspit with an earthenware bowl.

“At 8 o'clock in the morning all the prisoners are served a thin broth in a tin-plated wrought iron bowl: this broth is fat twice a week, Sunday and Thursday; in the evening at three o'clock, a small portion is served, such as beans, mashed potatoes, lentils, rice, (we have a piece of cold beef on Sundays and Thursdays). Every morning, a round of bread is placed on a board fixed under the hatch. This pittance would be very meagre, if each prisoner were not able to receive some provisions either from the canteen or from outside. The butcher of our house brings us some food every two days.

“Each day we have an hour's solitary walk in a small triangular courtyard.

“With this system, Mazas is for me a real school of silence, where I can perfect my liking for philosophy. Besides, it would be wrong for us to complain about the employees, whether superiors or subordinates; all are full of propriety towards us: not the slightest inappropriate word...

“Meanwhile, I have been a prisoner for twenty-six days. The holy and adorable will of God be done in everything and everywhere. “

Fr. Rouchouze, Picpus, Mazas, Division 6, No 60

Note the last two phrases: “The holy and adorable will of God be done in all and throughout all” - the veiled words hardly hide the heroism. Teacher at Picpus, Enghien, Nivelles, Graves, superior, teacher again at Poitiers, secretary, prisoner: so many changes of surroundings in record time. None found him unprepared. He welcomed them all with an even spirit, for each time he saw the clear manifestation of the loving will of the One to whom he had bound himself in reciprocal love through obedience. This is what made his life so unified and gave it so much depth.

Thus, we can understand that other reflection of the historian Virrieu: “For the hostages to be happy in Mazas, they had to be of the race of martyrs”. Father Rouchouze was, as we have seen, from a family of saints. Good blood cannot lie.

Father Frézal Tardieu

Fr. Frézal Tardieu had for a long time doubled up on his ministry with a fruitful apostolate of the pen. But he had wrapped himself in silence. His humility forbade him to speak of himself. His native modesty had become even stronger during his long stay in Flemish country, where one does not like to parade one's feelings. In Mazas, he had another reason for holding himself in reserve. From the beginning of his internment he had written to one of his directees who found nothing better to do than publish him in *L'Univers*. The deliberately moderate letter took on the appearance of a protest because of its inclusion in the newspaper of Louis Veuillot, who was waging a hard war against the ideas and people of the Commune.

“The 13 Fathers of Picpus arrested on the 8th April have been detained since the 17th in Mazas”. One of them wrote a very simple and calm letter to a person he knew, which does not exactly indict him as a conspirator:

“It is from Mazas that I write to you. I am locked up here since Monday with twelve of my confreres. My cell is not very big as you can imagine but it would be sufficient were I free. I have never had as many people at my service as I have ever had since I was here. I would pass my time without much to annoy me if I had some books. I ought to say that someone offered me books here, but when a person does not have the books he ordinarily studies, he is isolated. I am calm and I sleep well because my conscience doesn't reproach me of anything. I am only ever occupied with my studies and my classes.”

Fr. Tardieu priest 3rd Division, 39

“Long live the Sacred Heart of Jesus!!!” This he wrote at the top of his first letter with three exclamation points in disguise of a profession of faith. Thenceforth he would show himself to be more discreet. In his brief letters in default of being a confessor of the faith, the reader encounters the man: his love of work and study, his simple tastes, his frugality, his sensitive heart.

“I was always told I needed rest, but when you saw the work to be done, it was not easy to decide when to rest. Now I have to rest and since I don’t worry too much, I think it’ll do me good” (13th May).

“I believe that if I was able to pursue my regular studies, I would be able to patiently endure the stay in my cell” (15th May).

Note that he is writing these lines after a month of captivity. If he complains, it is about the excessive generosity of his benefactors: “I would almost be tempted to make a small reproach to you. You want to treat the prisoner too well. You know that I like to have my wishes carried out a little, so here is what I desire. When they send me a little soup, one small portion is more than enough for me; I will always have a little cheese to add. Let the portion be small, I say again, for ordinarily I eat little. Wine, please only send me wine when I ask for it. Be assured that with you I shall not be embarrassed. I also have tobacco (snuff) that will last me for a long time. I don't care about money. I don't spend anything” (15th May).

There is no one more difficult to get through to than someone from Lozère. It is not that they hide things, but rather that they are quiet. A man is the image of the nature that surrounds him, struggling with the rigours of altitude as well as with the southern heat. In Fr. Tardieu this rare self-control was also and above all the work of divine grace. Beneath his apparent placidity hid a soul of fire.

In his papers after his death three prayers were found written in his own hand and composed by him. There is no indication of the

date. The paper, the handwriting, some of the allusions can be traced back six or seven years. But in one of them he asks for - is it a presentiment - the grace of martyrdom.

“I am here, O God to do your will; engrave your holy law within my heart and grant me the grace of doing always what is pleasing with you. O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, my God and my all, I adore you and give you thanks for the blessings of my creation, my vocation to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts....

Prostrate before you, O my God and covered with the blood of your Son, I offer you and consecrate to you all that I have, all that I am, my thoughts, my words, my actions, my infirmities, my illnesses, my possessions, my reputation, my life. You have given everything to me. I give all back to you to be used for your glory and for the salvation of my neighbour.

Grant me through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the grace ... to always do your holy will. Help me reach the perfection of my vocation according to the spirit of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, so that my joy may be perfect. Give me a firm and persevering good will and a profound peace. Let me walk always in your presence and find you in all things, and grant that I may constantly reach out to you out of love and gratitude and come to you with the palm of martyrdom so that I may praise you, bless you and eternally sing your mercies. Amen”.

God, who saved the world through the death of his Son and who always seeks out voluntary victims to continue his work of salvation, was going to take Fr. Frézal at his word and grant him, with the palm of martyrdom, the desired for peace and perfect joy.

Father Polycarpe Tuffier

Fr. Polycarpe Tuffier appeared very differently. As much as his compatriot presented himself as reticent, silent and in control of himself, Fr. Tuffier revealed himself as transparent, communicative,

champing at the bit. The original text of his letters was lost. One was from his holy cousin, Mother Reine, who had copied them by hand from the original for the consolation and edification of his family. The other, partial copy was thanks to a confrere who made the copy with a view to an eventual publication. One may well suppose that the confrere added some pious reflections of his own to make them more edifying. Let no one be shocked. This is a long-standing, well-established concept of history. Ancient authors looked more for profound truth than for authentic documents. In all good faith, the confrere would have reasoned that this is what Fr. Tuffier “would have written had he had complete liberty of expression.”

The error of historians comes less from any distortion of the truth than from their too narrow conception of holiness and martyrdom. Everyone goes to God and to death with his own temperament and with the light he or she receives. Gifted with a real penetrating intelligence and a very shrewd business sense, Fr. Tuffier preserved the soul of a child. To be himself, he needed to speak, to walk, to exteriorize himself. The silence, the isolation, the immobility in which he was condemned took away his *modus operandi* and deprived him of that clarity without which his upright soul could not make up its mind. Why was he arrested: was it for political or religious reasons? This question tortured him. This can be seen as the supreme test permitted by God to complete the total and unregretted gift of self he had made at the dawn of his 12th birthday.

He had no correspondent other than a young household of distant cousins. Their devotion was unflinching, but he could not expect from them the light for which he was searching. One phrase is revelatory. “The letters are sure to be read in the [prison] office but are less important when one writes about one’s business.” (5 May) We are warned: it is a businessman, the general bursar, who writes, not a priest, not a religious. From Mother Reine we know that since his marriage and arrival in Paris, her brother Charles had distanced

himself from any religious practice. Now, Fr. Tuffier himself sought to bring the young couple back to God. He believed that the best way to achieve this was to win their trust and to make them perform the gestures of Christian charity, whereas direct exhortations would risk antagonising them. A spontaneous reflection would more surely find the way of their hearts. The future proved him right and both sincerely and definitively returned to that God for whom their cousin was going to die.

Hence the important part that his questions have about supplies in this correspondence. It was a light subject for censorship, and he knew how to please the good housewife that was his cousin. He was extremely frugal in his own right, albeit a picky eater, but he had to take care not to forget that he was the bursar and more than ever felt responsible for the well-being of his brothers. “I did my best to get some food from the house. Nothing has come yet. Many of his friends are ready to die” (22nd April). From his prison he revived contact with Madame Petit, the butcher, who had just lost her husband and whose suffering had momentarily subsided. From his cell, he organised supplies, for one, a bottle of wine, for another chocolate or silver. Until the end, he maintained his concern, without forgetting the poor with whom he willingly shared his own meagre portion.

He had another, very personal reason for writing. He had never been able to defend himself from a somewhat excessive fear for his health, which never stopped him from spending his energy without counting the cost. In Mazas, his fears took hold of him again, not without reason this time: congestion was waiting for him. “Fearing that my sanguine temperament could not support this existence, I wrote to the Prefect. I eat excessively little. If I ate, I would have congestion in my cell” (22nd April). “I have not been ill, but I have been suffering from the lack of air and exercise which my blood temperament urgently requires” (7th May). “Yesterday I was not well and without the walk to the great promenade I do not know what

would have become of me” (9th May). “I have not had any serious illnesses. But this position does equate to a long and painful illness” (12th May). Writing seemed to him to be an excellent healthy exercise to regain his physical and moral balance. “I am writing to you to relieve myself rather than for anything else” (6th May). It is in the light of this dual aspect of writing both as a ‘businessman’ and as a sick person fighting against congestion that he must be judged.

He insisted so kindly and affectionately on having letters. What a joy for the prisoner if at the hour of mail, he heard his hatch opening! What a disappointment if he was deprived of it! “Write to me every day until further notice. I've received no sign of life from anyone but you” (20th April). “I am waiting for a letter from you; don't disappoint my expectations. I look forward to hearing from you. Write to me often; later on, it won't be so necessary, but at the moment I want you to and I am asking you to” (26th April).

He sometimes feared that he had gone too far and been too demanding. But he had such a delicate way of saying thank you ... and of repeating the same thing over and over again that he was not held accountable. “Tell me how you are, and the cousin who will be more than a cousin in the future. She behaves like a real sister” (3rd May). “I really needed the letter you wrote me. I pity the little cousin for having to come to Mazas every day. We must not do more than we have to. We will have to limit ourselves to coming every other day. She must be feeling embarrassed to vary the menu a little. I pray to God with all my heart that he will bless you and reward you for all that you do for me. May God keep you healthy so that you can care for those who need help. As you say, Charles, it is only God who can get us out of here” (12th May). “How many errands I am causing you. But as I hope now that this will soon end, I do not dismiss you. I have need of you” (19th May).

Fr. Tuffier was too impulsive for the defaults and qualities that are his not to show up in his letters; But even more, the letters revealed the painful crisis of conscience that he was going through as the work of perfection that began in the joy of the novitiate was completed in the night of the soul.

A maxim that he repeated several times focuses us on the course of conduct that he set for himself as soon as he entered prison. “In this world we must do by ourselves what we are capable of and not leave everything to Providence. It was probably Providence who said: Help yourself and heaven will help you”. (13th May) This was certainly the experience of a man who had beautiful achievements behind him. But he was still unaware that the laws that governed the world of freedom no longer applied in the prison that from now on will be his. He will learn this the hard way.

As soon as he arrived in Mazas he wanted to clarify his situation: Why was he arrested? When will he be called before the investigating judge to find out what he is accused of? The very day after his entry he wrote to the prefect to ask for explanations. Two days later he saw a fine-looking old man with a white beard appear in his cell who, in addition to the red rosette with gold fringes pinned to his jacket, was wearing a red scarf with golden tassels. This was Jules Miot, a dangerous luminary and an elected member of the Commune who loved to walk around with his insignia in places where he once circulated in more modest clothing. (He was deported after the coup d'état in 1851). He was now gladly playing the Saint Bernard. Rigault, whose excesses would force him to resign in a few days, felt the need to throw ballast. He therefore instructed Miot to calm the prisoner down by making him believe that he was more powerful than he was. Miot succeeded all too well. The next day Tuffier wrote, “We have to stay in prison because of Versailles. He says our presence here prevents much harm” (22nd April).

Father fell for it. Since the Commune had responded so quickly to his call and delegated a high-level figure to talk to him and give explanations, it was clearly not religion that they were after; thus, he was not arrested for a religious motive, for hatred of the faith. He was only a political prisoner.

A political prisoner: this phrase, like poison, would act on the captive's morale and slowly undermine it. He wrote eight days later: "Don't be discouraged, walk, when it's for justice, for the law. (He does not say for God, for religion). Why all this? Let us be patient. Soon it will have been three weeks that we have been in solitary confinement without knowing the reason" (1st May). "Is the same severity to be found in our neighbourhood of Picpus! But there are no conspirators there. This confinement cannot last, because it is not based on any serious motive" (3rd May). "No one comes to question us. No one who tells us why we are here" (6th May).

Did the prison office communicate this letter to management? In the evening, the door of his cell opened and revealed the twisted silhouette of Garreau, carrying, as always, a revolver on the belt and a rifle over his shoulder. "I had a visit from the Director. He told me that we were not being held in solitary confinement, that we could read the newspapers, that we were there more like hostages than anything else, that if we were not able not receive the visit of our relatives and friends, it was because the negotiations had begun. In the end, this visit did me good. My God, my God, give me patience and resignation" (7th May).

He was happy to be able to talk, because for him living was talking, so he wrote to Miot and again received a visit. "Mr. Miot told me that we are nearing the end, that things could go no further; we were going to halt the fury of Versailles. These were his expressions". And he added candidly: "This is the first good visit I have had. This man seemed sincere to me and I trust that his words will be followed by actions. Oh,

how hard it is, especially when it's for people who will never appreciate it. Versailles is laughing at us! What are we to them, I ask you, dear cousin?" (13th May). He resumed the following day: "Mr. Miot's visit did much to restore me. If everyone was so reasonable, things might go differently. Today I wrote to him to thank him" (15th May).

There is no doubt about it. Poor Father let himself be caught in a trap. How could he not see the blatant contradiction? One cannot be both hostage and defendant, be the one who is destined to be used as a bargaining chip and the one whose trial is being heard. He was forgetting his history of the Church. The persecutors have always accused Christians of being political agitators, starting with Christ in his Passion.

If Fr. Tuffier had heard what Miot had said to the crowd after a visit to some political prisoners, he would have judged Miot less reasonably and sincere and understood that he himself weighed even less before the Commune than before Versailles: "The people are patient, they are resigned to bear the yoke and humiliation, but their revenge is all the more terrible on the day it bursts. Woe to those who provoke them and push them to their limits. Up to now our anger has been exercised only upon material things, but the day is approaching when it will react to those that seek to crush us; and the reprisals will be terrible." And perhaps Fr. Tuffier would have lent a less attentive ear to Garreau's boasting of the good things he did for prisoners if he had been able to guess that this same Garreau had put him at the top of the list for transfer to the Roquette. Without a doubt because Garreau judged Fr. Tuffier the most remarkable of all the prisoners he designated him the first on the list of those to be called on 26th May.

The last letter we have from Fr. Tuffier ends thus: "And to think that there is no end to all of this! Soon it will be six weeks that we are here without anyone telling us why" (21st May).

Up to the final days of his captivity in Mazas, Fr. Tuffier placed himself in the category of political prisoners. He was not aware, at least not fully, of having been arrested out of hatred for the faith. Not once did he put forward his identity as priest and religious to explain his imprisonment. His fundamental uprightness did not permit him to detect the lie and the double-crossing of the Communard. He only saw in the sufferings a test *allowed* by God but not a test *suffered* for God. The one is no more less fortunate than the other. To suffer for Christ and not to know it! The certitude of enduring the persecution for his Name and Person would have exalted him. His ignorance overwhelmed him.

From then on, his detention seemed like a slow agony. “How hard it is, dear cousin, how hard it is! But what to do? It's better to suffer than to be guilty. I suffer a lot, but God is there to support me (29th April)., You have no doubt been called to service. Mine is to always be in the same place (22nd April). We are given to hope that this state of affairs will not last long. God willing. Thanks to you my moral and physical sufferings have been somewhat softened (26th April). Nothing has changed in our position (27th April). Finally, this occupation involving such severity cannot last (1st May). There is no hurry to finish with us. Last Wednesday we have been held in solitary confinement for three weeks and there is no sign that anyone wants to question us. We haven't seen anyone except this member of the Commune who did not give me hope for a prompt freedom. My God! My God! Give me patience and resignation. Without the thought of God sustaining us, what will become of us? Submitting ourselves is all we can do and then submit again” (5th May).

It seems that the other letters that he was able to send to certain religious communities or penitents may have expressed his religious feelings more freely. The originals have been lost. Only dubious copies are preserved. He said to Mrs. Langlois: “Let us pray for one another. Let us accept the crosses that God sends us. You have no

doubt had days of great sadness in your life. You have borne them as a Christian. it is necessary that we, the ministers of a crucified God, participate in the cross of our Divine Master” (26th April).

“I don't know what the Good Lord has in store for me and what His will is for me. But if soon I had my freedom, I would go and ask you for hospitality for a few days. What did I achieve in the plan you had for me to grow in trust? But there again, I would not have participated in the Passion of Our Divine Master. And I am happy to have drunk a little from the chalice of his sorrows. One cannot be a minister of Our Lord if one does not go up to Calvary with him. (28th April) Only once did “business correspondence” with cousin Charles come to the surface. Again, this flight of lyricism took place between the announcement of the sending of money and a bottle of wine to a confrere.

On the 18th May he wrote: “We place ourselves into God’s hands. We trust in him having taken the steps recommended by prudence. This evening is the feast of the Ascension:

O quando lucescet tuus. (When shall that day arise, Oh God)

Qui nescit occasum dies! (Which ne’er shall set in gloom!)

O quando sancta se dabit. (When shall we reach that blest abode)

Quae nescit hostem patria!” (Where danger cannot come?)

Eight days later the day of his martyrdom arose, which in her liturgy the Church calls the day of his birth in heaven. These business-like notes, written to the devil to fight against disease, where ideas overlapped one another, were certainly not composed for posterity nor for edification. But does not this soul that suffers, moans, struggles and painfully seeks to understand where God is leading it, offer a no less interesting spectacle for the poor people and simple Christians that we are! We cannot always soar the heights. It is sufficient for our greatness that we are not forbidden,

Vowed by his vocation to honour and relive the mystery of Christ's agony in the Garden of Olives it is not forbidden to think that on the evening of a long life of faithfulness to grace, Fr. Tuffier was called to relive this mystery in a narrower way, and that, like Christ, in his own way he would have said: "Let this chalice be taken from me". Only to add, as Jesus did, "Let your will be done, not mine".

Father Ladislav Radigue

Fr. Radigue, on the contrary and with full clarity prepared himself for the supreme sacrifice. He had the invaluable advantage of being able to communicate freely - through one of his sisters who lived in Paris - with his Superior General and with his own, still living, father. Not for a single moment did he doubt that it was only his status as priest and religious that caused his arrest. He made it his filial duty to inform both of them and to hide nothing of his deepest feelings.

Fr. Radigue had a sensitive and affectionate temperament. He asked his sister and brother to carefully tell his elderly father about his imprisonment. "I am writing to my father and Octave. I don't know what to tell them. I am heartbroken when I think of my poor father's pain. He must raise his heart to God and accept the chalice ... I can't write. If I were to follow my feelings, I would hurt them too much."

The moment of depression was short. He quickly recovered and continued in a playful tone: "Today is the anniversary of my birth and baptism. Nanon Bobet who carried me to church (it was Ascension Day) told me that it was raining. Maybe that's why the rain gives me a headache. I would have been very impressed. There was a great feast and great bell ringing that day in the country. Today there is no more feast and no more bells. Let's hope it will not be without profit".

It was to his brother that he wrote first, taking a pleasant tone. “It is true that I have changed addresses, probably for some public purpose. I do not feel that it is for my own private purpose. I am in some very illustrious company, in the same household as the Archbishop of Paris, a privileged pavilion if you please which the delicate state of my health awarded me. And what is beautiful in this century of equality, is that my room is as lovely and well-furnished as that of His Excellency. I must say, however, that if I am in the midst of such figures, I do not enjoy their society very much. I lead a very withdrawn life. I only go out for one hour a day and that is for a walk on my own. One window gives me as much air and light as is desirable. The only drawback is that it is difficult to look out the window which only begins two and a half metres up from the floor. It is just a small inconvenience at a time when one would like to see what is going on outside. I admit I lack one essential thing: freedom, but for as long as it takes, there is more freedom here than anywhere else in Paris”.

He tried to adopt the same tone of banter with his father, but he quickly dropped it so as to unburden his heart. On such a subject one could not prevaricate. Besides, the old man knew of his arrest.

“6th May: I challenge anyone to prove that I was involved in politics. I love my country. I desire its happiness. It pains me greatly to see it given over to the horrors of civil war, after the misfortunes of foreign war. I pray to God unceasingly to deliver it from all these evils, to restore peace and prosperity and allow it to recover its rank at the head of the nations: there, that’s my politics and no one can take umbrage with it.

I see that only my status as priest and religious can account for such harassment; it is because of this that I was arrested. You will see me get out of here without a scratch, even honoured for having suffered something for God... I hope that God will take

count of my days of captivity and that in heaven, I will look upon them as the happiest days of my life.”

With his brother, he is even more explicit.

“Politics has nothing to do with my business. I am arrested as a priest and as a religious, therefore I suffer for the name of God and for religion. I am not, therefore, unhappy... I am convinced that you will see me massacred or shot. I would not have that chance. If it were given to me I would be delivered from my poor body that has made me suffer so much and I would leave for another world (where I will have to go soon) through the shortest and most advantageous door. There would just be a bad quarter of an hour to get through, but when that passes, what happiness!”

It is in the ordeal that a true leader is revealed. No doubt Fr. Radigue was being held in solitary confinement and could not have any communication with his confreres. He did not believe that this relieved him of his responsibility as prior. More than ever he was taking spiritual charge of the nine religious locked up in Mazas with him. He was sure to be speaking for them when he sent his Superior General this profession of faith, which has been compared to an epistle found in the writings of Saint Ignatius Antioch.

Mazas 3rd May, 1871

Most Reverend Father,

In the preceding pages, I have given you a cold analysis of what has happened to us, without telling you anything about our impressions, our moral sufferings, the dispositions of our minds and the feelings of our hearts. My beloved Father, there are things that everyone must feel and that it is impossible to express. How can we tell you about our feelings during those hours of anguish spent in the parlour of Picpus, the tears in our hearts as we left the Motherhouse, leaving it at the mercy of hate filled people, without knowing what our Brothers and Sisters had to fear from their hostile

*dispositions? How can we tell you of our feelings in the various circumstances we found ourselves in since our arrest? I could not express what I have felt, but what I must say is that all have been worthy and true disciples of Jesus Christ. All of them made their sacrifice to God with holy intrepidity; there was a bit of the *ibant gaudent* from the Acts of the Apostles (AA 5:41). I have confidence, Father, that you will not be ashamed of your children; they have done and will do nothing unworthy of you or of the society of which they are members.*

It seems to me, Father, that all this is no longer enough and that you wish to know something more precise about the deeds and gestures of your poor prior and about his present state. First of all, my beloved Father, I will tell you that my weakness has been subjected to a rather strong test; if, thanks be to God, courage has never been lacking, physical strength has often been lacking. You know my infirmities, a neurosis which I feel in my whole body and especially in my heart, which in ordinary times causes painful feelings at the slightest commotion; judge for yourself, then, what I have experienced in the midst of such painful circumstances, painful, even for those less impressionable than me. I believed several times that I was going to faint. Fortunately, the soul is still holding on a little to the body which is weakening. All this must tell you that my health is not brilliant, and that these days of my captivity cause me pain. But in the end, I am still living, and I shall get away with it, I hope, unless a bullet comes to stop me on the way.

*Do not conclude that I am unhappy; I can tell you, my beloved Father, I have never been happier in my life. I have experienced how good the Lord is, and what assistance he gives to those he loves for the glory of his name. I even understood a little more after having savoured it, the *superabundo gaudio in omni tribulatione* of Saint Paul (2 Cor. 7:4). Is it not true, Father, that in the eyes of faith we are not to be pitied? For me I find myself very honoured to suffer for the religion of Jesus Christ. I do not regard myself as a political prisoner at all. I do not want to have any other politics than that of my Saviour Jesus. So I am now proud to be in the footsteps of so many glorious confessors who have borne witness to Jesus Christ. I think of the glorious apostle Peter in Mamertine prison; every day I lovingly kiss a*

facsimile of his chains, which I am happy to possess. I think of the great Saint Paul, reading of his sufferings in Acts and in his Epistles. What I suffer is nothing in comparison; it is much for me, because I am weak. I go through so many other saints who are praised for suffering what I suffer, and then I wonder why I should not be happy for what has made the saints happy. The feasts of each day still provide me with encouragement. How can I complain when I read the office of St. Athanasius? And today, how can one not be glorious in carrying a little of that cross whose triumph is being celebrated?

I think of the Congregation whose members all pray for us; I think especially of you, beloved Father, who suffer as much as we do from our sufferings. I am joyful to take your place here and to know you are safe: you can comfort the family and lead it.

I'm trying to unite with the Holy Sacrifice celebrated in our chapels, to the adoring men and women who replace us at the foot of the Tabernacle. As Daniel turned himself towards Jerusalem, so I face in the direction of the altar in the Motherhouse and along with the members of my family who are in captivity, I adore.

Pardon me Father for all this verbosity; I am just happy to be in contact with you. A small word from you would make me happy. I think such might be possible by writing to me through my sister who comes to see me twice a week. She has a correspondent in Saint Denis for writing to the Province.

You could write to other Fathers by the same means. But those letters would be seen by the administration. Whereas mine can be remitted to me by my sister, I cannot tell anyone about them. I would like to be able, my Father, to give you news of all the prisoners at Mazas; I only know that they exist.

Bless us all dear Father; give my greetings to all of the family who are with you and at the Holy Sacrifice, remember the one who is, with a profound respect and a lively affection, your humble son in the Sacred Hearts.

Mystery of souls and vocations. According to the witnesses who knew them in captivity, the SSCC Fathers were recognisable by a strong family resemblance, which is explained by the somewhat closed life of the Motherhouse, but even more so by the identical formation they had received. The self-effacement of Fr. Rouchouze, serenity in Fr. Tardieu, restless fever in Fr. Tuffier, lucidity in Fr. Radigue. One discovers in each one a very original and personal way of conceiving and living their own vocation as children of the Sacred Hearts, which is, according to the Founder's expression: 'to enter into the interior suffering of the Heart of Jesus (to) repair the outrages he receives every day'.

Chapter XI

LA ROQUETTE PRISON

In a popular riot the most critical hours are always the first and the last. The nerves of the crowd, excited by the calls to revolt or by having their hopes disappointed, are on edge. Power passes from hand to hand. It's the time for revenge. It's panic.

As a result of the sentiments caused by its first defeat, the Commune, as we have seen, passed a law regarding hostages, ordering 'for any execution of a partisan, the execution on the spot of a triple number of hostages'. We also know from the perspective of the Commune, which proclaimed itself atheist and was committed to combatting Versailles, champions of Catholicism, that the priests were the hostages of choice.

Until then, the most solid heads of the Commune had kept enough political sense and humanity to resist the daily provocations of clubs and newspapers. But to forge an instrument of death is to run the risk of seeing a madman use it.

On the evening of Sunday 21st May, the Versailles troops began to infiltrate Paris through the gates of Le Point du Jour, Auteuil and Sèvres. Two columns were engaged, one in the direction of the Butte de Montmartre, the other towards Sainte Geneviève of the Pantheon. A third was cleaning up the banks of the Seine. The Commune could no longer escape the immense jaws which were inexorably closing in on it. Its' days, its' very hours were numbered. Thus, in rage it implemented the plan of desperation that it had voted on the day before: burn Paris, massacre the hostages.

In order to burn down national palaces, public buildings, shops, entire neighbourhoods, to destroy forever the finery and glory of the centuries, to rival Nero's burning of Rome, a powerful organisation must be set up. The transport of huge masses of oil, its judicious disposition, required a certain amount of time. To kill priests, held as hostages, very little was needed: an order, a few hours, a few fanatics.

It is absolutely certain that during the day of 22nd May, the order was given by Ferré, the General Security delegate to shoot the hostages locked up at the Santé. Did the same order apply to Mazas? Some witnesses say yes. But Director Garreau made representation that an order of execution in a house of detention was contrary to all precedent. His time in prison had given him, if not the study of law appropriate to his status, at least the practical knowledge of the elementary rules of the rights of people. He knew that he was taking a risk and that he could not invoke any other excuse. There existed elsewhere a prison for the condemned: La Roquette.²³ They ought to be transferred there. They gave in to his representation.

Coming up to three o'clock, the Procurator of the Commune, Raoul Rigault according to some, Da Costa, his substitute, according to others, carried out the order of the Committee for Public Safety that had been countersigned by the delegate Eudes. The order was as follows: "Immediately transfer to the Roquette prison, the hostages including the Archbishop, the different priests, Senator Bonjean, the

²³ More specifically La Roquette consisted of two prisons, La Grande and La Petite: the latter was for women and the former was the prison from where people were either exiled or put to death. In the 48 years of its existence, from 1851 to 1899, sixty-nine people were executed in the street in front of the prison. The Commune's request for fifty people to die would however prove too much for the prison to handle, hence the ignominious march to Haxo Street for a public lynching.

Cf. http://www.francegenweb.org/wiki/index.php?title=Prisons_de_la_Roquette
(Accessed in December 2018)

spies and police, and any who might be of importance at the Roquette.” Garreau, quite content to hand over a rather dangerous task to a colleague, led the two senior figures to the office where together the three companions consulted the list of transfers. Finally, they eliminated three names: Fr. Crozes, who was too popular in the quartier of the Roquette, and two Polish priests; and without any more modification, they recopied the prison ledger.

A guard immediately went up to warn the prisoners to be ready to leave. “Where?” they asked. He gave no answer. At about six o’clock they were taken separately to the clerk’s office to be processed. The clerk gave them the statutory summons: “Do you have any claim to make?” Unfamiliar with prison regulations, the hostages paid little attention to them. Yet it was their death sentence that they countersigned with their negative answer, duly recorded. In fact, as one of the survivors noted, “Mazas prison is a remand prison. When one leaves it, a sentence has been handed down either of release or conviction. In the latter case, the convicted person can appeal or sign an appeal for clemency. If he makes no appeal, it is because he accepts the judgment. I did not know that a death sentence had been passed on me.” In any case, there was no jurisdiction of appeal, let alone a petition for clemency. The judgments of the Commune were final. The clerk, Cantrel, thus wrote next to each name: “Transferred to La Roquette by order of the Committee of Public Safety.

To clarify the transfer, a few of the hostages were given a small piece of cardboard bearing this simple expressive word: “Condemned”. No doubt taken by surprise by these mass condemnations, the supply of cardboard boxes was quickly exhausted. Besides, what more needed to be said? The very name La Roquette evoked a tragic end: it was the prison for those condemned to death.

The hostages had little time to express their joy at seeing each other again after five weeks of separation. They were waiting for the

transport that Da Costa had requisitioned at the nearby Gare de Lyon. He had found only two "*tapisnières*", wagons covered with canvas and open at both ends, so that those being transported in them could be easily seen. He hadn't even bothered to put benches in them.

While Archbishop Darboy was mounting the first wagon with the aid of a chair, Fr. Tuffier was able to make contact with his secretary Fr. Petit. "Why are they transferring us to La Roquette?" He asked, instinctively probing for reasons to hope. "To have us under their hand and make it easier to prosecute our case when it pleases them." "Ah!" he replied simply.

Fr. Tuffier then saw Fr. Tauvel, the youngest of the Picpus detainees, and, in his own expansive way, embraced him warmly and exclaimed "Now that I have the consolation of seeing you in good health, I can die content."

The loading over, they still had to wait while the guards revived themselves at a refreshment stall. Despite having an escort of about fifty armed Federates, the wagons were not assured of getting there safely. After the Boulevard de Mazas, they had to cross the Faubourg Saint Antoine, traditionally the nerve centre of any revolution. The Archbishop's wagon, quickly recognized, was copiously jeered: "Death to the clergy! Let them be cut into pieces! No need to go so far! Get down! Let's deal with them at once."

To prevent the crowd from lynching the prisoners, the escort had to work hard. Da Costa had to dismount from the seat he occupied near the coachman and take the horse by the bridle, whatever substitute he might have been, to make his way through the raging crowd. The second carriage, in which the Picpus Fathers were, seemed to contain only smaller game, and so passed by unnoticed.

The procession avoided Place Voltaire, judged too dangerous, and travelled less populous streets, Rue de Charonne, Rue des Boulets. The third street, Rue de la Roquette suddenly widened to form a square where the well-known prisons, the Petite and the Grande Roquette were built.

A first courtyard gave access to a sort of vestibule where the reception, the visiting room and the guardroom were. Beyond this, a second, larger courtyard was framed at the back by the chapel, and to the west and east by two buildings consisting of a ground floor reserved for workshops and common rooms and three floors of cells. Each floor formed an independent section that was isolated at each end by an iron grille. A third courtyard followed where the infirmary and the cells for those condemned to death were located. A double ring of walls, 10 metres high, enclosed the whole and delineated a double walkway.

When the doors of the Grande Roquette finally opened, Da Costa and his helpers breathed: their cargo had arrived safely. The hostages were piled up in a waiting room, a roll call was made to see if anyone was missing, and they went to eat in the Director's office and stayed there for a long time. There was a serious problem: "At this late hour, where would the newcomers stay?" Nothing had been planned to receive them. A radical solution was found. A section for common law prisoners who were still there was evacuated, to house the 'priests'. This would make supervision easier, as well as the execution of the Commune's projects. This mixture of premeditation and improvisation always seemed to characterise this regime!

François, the new Director, longed to see up close these senior clergy, the soutanes, the Jesuits in particular, whom he had only ever glimpsed from afar in his little wrapping shop. It was from there, it seemed, that he was destined for high office: having learned to build

white wooden boxes for packing was he not also an expert in the art of 'locking up' the enemies of the Commune?

In fact, nothing predisposed this modest craftsman to occupy the delicate post of Director ... Small and skinny, he certainly did not stand out. So he tried to make up for his lack of natural presence by a showy outfit that inevitably provoked a smile: red trousers, red scarf so widely spread that some prisoners saw a vest, a red tie, a cap decorated with four silver stripes, a hanging sword, a revolver. He naturally displayed convictions no less red than his fancy clothing. Always drunk, he possessed the eloquence of insult: "For 1900 years, these '*calotins*' have been annoying us! It has to end! None of them will get out of here alive," he said to a lay hostage, Mr. Chevriau, headmaster of the high school in Vanves. François had been sentenced to four months in prison in 1857 in an obscure public meeting and reoffended in 1870. But even more than his revolutionary convictions, it was known that he could be counted on for his blind obedience in high places. Ranvier, one of the more solid heads of the Commune, had well gauged him by nominating him.

Little acquainted with the running of the prison, François soon searched for a second-in-command in whom he could have total confidence. He found that person in Romain who went from being a third-class supervisor to brigadier general. This jump over five steps in the hierarchy inflamed his zeal. Always lightly shod, he was present everywhere, as elusive and self-effacing as his boss was cumbersome and conspicuous. He knew, in his own way, how to keep an iron yoke on the other guards who remained at their posts. These were, without a doubt, the elite of the prison guards and showed on occasion that they did not confuse the newcomers with their usual clients.

Was it disdain for form? Was it calculation? Was it because François was so sure of the fate reserved for the hostages that he left as little trace as possible of their passage? Whatever the case, none of

the prisoners passed through the clerk's office and none of the formalities guaranteed by the law were completed. François was content to read the list that was handed to him, barking out the names, and reading with a solemn slowness. He could not resist the pleasure he had promised himself, to make them parade before him; then, softened, he apologised for receiving them so badly. When asked by a few people to show them where the toilets were, he had a bucket brought to them, that was placed in the middle of the room: "that's all we can do for the moment". Even afterwards, in Section 4, the hostages didn't get any better. Once again, there was close surveillance, leading to hateful bullying, accompanied by excuses and bad reasoning!

The interminable wait did not end until around ten o'clock in the evening. They were then lined up, one after the other. One guard with a smoking lantern took the lead, another closed the march, and they went in procession to Section 4 on the first floor of the west building. The cells were open. As one passed in front of a door, a hostage was randomly pushed in, a turn of the key locked in the unfortunate man and so on to the next. There was no light. Only by groping around did one find the bed, sometimes a blanket, but not always a sheet.

At dawn, they made a quick survey of their quarters (2.5m x 1.50m) and an inventory of the furnishings. An iron bed without a table or chair and not the slightest utensil, not even a traditional water jug. In contrast, there were fleas and abundant bedbugs as well as multiple proofs of recent occupation and of a hasty departure.

If the cleanliness was doubtful and gave the impression of a badly kept house, on the other hand the isolation was singularly sweetened. Each window let light into two cells and a large slit in the wall allowed one, if not to see one's neighbour, at least to talk to him and even slip him small objects. A bigger surprise, than the very clear broth served in a chipped terrine accompanied by a stump of a spoon,

came at eight o'clock when the doors of the cells opened for common recreation. The inmates could not believe their eyes.

This was the recreation one could only imagine after five weeks of incarceration and being kept in the dark. Prelates, parish priests of some of the “chic” and popular parishes, vicars, seminarians, Jesuits, priests of the Foreign Missions, religious of Saint Vincent de Paul,²⁴ Picpus fathers fused as if they had always lived together. In turn, the priests and religious went to greet their Archbishop and share news. Fr. Radigue presented the community to him assuring him that it was an honour for them to share in his trials, Archbishop Darboy responded “for my part I do not say that I am happy to see you here in this sad place, but I am consoled by the feelings that you express.” The prelate, suffering as he was, lost none of his courage and his graciousness. He had a kind word for everyone. He said to Fr. Carchon, who was showing him his newly grown beard. “What do you want? The Commune does not have enough confidence in me to give me a razor, and I don’t have enough confidence in them to give them my head.” The joy was expansive, the tone so raised that the guards wanted to lower it. “Pay attention! Your behaviour is having a bad effect on the boss.”

François, who knew for certain that they were destined for an imminent massacre, could understand nothing of this cheerfulness. He suspected some obscure machination and was furious that he could only oppose it with impromptu rallies and parades.

But often the conversation took on a more serious tone. Fr. Radigue met Abbé Guéibels, priest of the parish of Saint Eloi, of which the convent of Picpus was then a part, on the walkway and

²⁴ Fr. Matthias Henri Planchat, rsvp (born in 1823). His cause was first presented (1897) as the principal servant of God along with the four SSCC members. Fr. Planchat was the first priest to join the brothers of St. Vincent de Paul.

asked him what impression their arrest had produced in the neighbourhood. The abbot replied bluntly: "Everyone thought that religion was targeted at those who had consecrated themselves to God". "That's right," said the Fr. Radigue. "For my part, I would have been humiliated if our Congregation had not had to suffer in the crisis we are going through. By leaving us aside, the Communards would have insulted us more than all the mistreatment they have burdened us with."

Chapter XII

THE FIRST FRUITS OF BLOOD

The Fathers of the Sacred Hearts, 10 in number, formed the largest and most homogeneous group. Father Perny, a former missionary from China, left this testimony of them: "From the outset, they seemed to me resigned to the will of God. From that moment I judged that these excellent Fathers of Picpus seemed to share the simplicity and innocence of a lamb. Together we spoke of the missions in China and Oceania.

Eager for news and coming from the provinces and feeling somewhat lost in the midst of the Parisians, they anxiously questioned President Bonjean, a senator of the Empire, who was imprisoned with them. "The crisis we are going through," replied the old man seriously, "reminds me of the dangers I faced at sea. In the middle of the storm, the rudder slipped out of the pilot's hands. We would be lost if the hand of God did not support the ship on the water. He alone is currently our resource. How good it is to surrender into his fatherly hands."

There was no lack of time to pray, meditate and reflect on events. The nights were long at La Roquette. The last or rather the only meal was taken at three o'clock. Provisions, especially bread, were scarce and the management knew the proverb: 'those who sleep forget their hunger'. So, after a short break, the prisoners were locked up until the next morning.

On taking leave of his brothers, Fr. Ladislav said to them cheerfully: "Admit that it is good to have been at the Mazas to learn to appreciate the words of our evening prayer. "Take care of the poor, the prisoners, and the dying."

Fr. Tuffier added: “If God delivers us, there will be a very special bond between us, having had the happiness of suffering together”. He had just recited the first Vespers of Our Lady of Help of Christians where it says: *Ecce Maria spes nostra* (Behold Mary, our hope). A glimmer of hope shone in his eyes.

However, the second night Tuesday, 23rd May through to Wednesday 24th was agitated. The shooting was getting closer. Alarm bells sounded. The sky took on a strange purple hue. The Commune – with its back to the wall - had issued the insane order to set fire to the Capital. Monuments and Districts had been divided among men and women (*pétroleurs*) who had been given the orders to set them alight. The Legion of Honour, the Conseil d'État, the Tuileries, the Louvre Library, whole streets were burning. Paris seemed like a vast inferno in the night.

At first light, even before the 6 o'clock bell rang, the hostages could see clouds of smoke so thick that the sun was obscured. It looked like a solar eclipse.

Fr. Ducoudray told Fr. Tauvel. “It is the Tuileries that are burning”.

And like the latter, he expressed his hope of celebrating Mass the following Sunday, the feast of Pentecost, since he had not had the consolation to do so for the Ascension: “Yes”, he replied, in a grave tone, “at Pentecost we will go up to the altar, or we will be in heaven”.

This was a prediction that was going to come true differently for each of them. Yielding once more to the optimistic side of his temperament, Fr. Tuffier said to Archbishop Darboy: “Another day, your excellency! It will not be too long now.” “No,” he responded, “it will not be long, but good.”

Meanwhile the regular army was advancing through Paris. The Commune was forced to retreat to the town halls of the XIth and XXth arrondissements. Some leaders thought it was time to leave and put their precious personnel in safer places. Panic had already seized the Federates. It was necessary to strike a great blow, one that would be capable of distracting the attention of the masses and galvanising their courage.

In the morning an agitated crowd called for the execution of Captain de Beaufort, one of their own, who had been falsely accused of treason. They made threats and demanded that Ferré and Delescluze, who had set up their offices in the town hall in Place Voltaire, XIth arrondissement, execute the 4th April Decree of the Hostages. Gustave Genton, a woodworker who had been pressed into becoming an examining magistrate and Fortin, his secretary who was to become his son-in-law, seized the opportunity to play a leading role.

Genton was anxious to make sure first of all of the assistance of François, with whom he had lunch, and of Vérig, who was allocated responsibility for guarding prisoners. After leaving the table, François, frightened by the responsibility he felt on his shoulders, but unable to avoid it, went to the café to seek comfort. This was how Br. Constantine Lemarchand, the brother sacristan, learned of it shortly afterwards. It was not uncommon for some brothers, because of their humbler way of life, to attract peoples' attention and gain more trust than the Fathers. His cell neighbour was a man called Greff, a double agent, a friend of François whom François was trying to save. François had summoned Greff to his office.

However, in the face of opposition from some communards who demanded his skin, François had to send him back to his cell in spite of himself. In breaking down, Greff sought support from Brother Lemarchand: "The Director told me that we are all condemned to death," he declared, throwing himself on his bed. "I would never

have believed that these scoundrels would go this far. François is looking to save Fr. Deguerry and the Archbishop. If he succeeds, they will be greatly obliged to him.”

Around six o'clock Fortin went to the clerk's office with an order signed by Ferré and written in blue pencil; it specified: ‘Six of the main hostages, especially the Archbishop and President Bonjean’²⁵. François pointed out that he could not execute a blank order. Fortin returned to the town hall to have it completed. But the stubborn dwarf Ferré, upheld its substance and demanded its immediate execution.

Meanwhile Genton, with the help of Edmond Mégy, had recruited the firing squad, young fanatics and some odd old men. There were only about fifteen of them, as Laschais, the *cantinière* of the 66th arrondissement, had forbidden her men, who had volunteered, to get involved in this affair. They needed six names. As there was no register, but a simple list, Genton grabbed it, Bishop Darboy was at the head. He took the three names that followed: Bonjean, Fr. Allard, a former missionary and recently appointed chaplain, Frs. Ducoudray and Clerc, both Jesuits and teachers at the famous Ste Geneviève school. He skipped a few names and chose the eighth, Abbot Deguerry, Parish Priest of La Madeleine, well known for his ties with the court of the Tuileries.

It was half past seven in the evening. Suddenly a troop burst into Section 4. They were François, Genton, Fortin, Mégy, Véric, Romain and about twenty men, who gladly sounded their footsteps and the butts of their rifles. Some crossed the corridor in a hurry and went to

²⁵ Louis Jean Bonjean, born poor in 1804, became president of the Court of Appeal. With the archbishop, he would have been much appreciated as a hostage if the proposed exchange of hostages had been genuine. Cf. https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Bernard_Bonjean (Accessed on 26/12/18).

occupy the second staircase; the others stood in front of the cells, watching mockingly through the hatch, making stupid jokes.

Ramain brandished the list given to him by François. He opened one door: “Are you citizen Darboy?” “No,” came the answer. He opened the next door and asked the same question. “Present,” answered the Archbishop without raising his voice.

Ramain ordered him to come out and wait for him in front of the small staircase. After several times, to save himself the trouble of searching and to save time, he shouted aloud: “Bonjean”. No one answered “Bonjean”, he impatiently repeated: “Wait a moment, I’m getting dressed”. “You’re fine like that. Come out.”

The roll call continued: “Allard, Ducoudray, Clerc, Daguerre.” There were six. The troop disappeared down the stairs. An anguished silence now filled Section 4. “It’s 93 all over again,” was the thought of more than one hostage. Each one prayed in his narrow cell, getting ready for the next call. Of the Picpus Fathers, only one had a view of the parapet walk. That was Fr. Tardieu who occupied No 20, on the same side as Archbishop Darboy, who stayed the first night in No 1 and then at No 23, hence the confusion. The others were in the inner courtyard: Fr Radigue in No 27; Fr Tuffier in No 29; Fr Rouchouze in No 35 ...

A long time passed. Towards eight o’clock, the first deafening volley sounded. It was followed by a second volley and then some isolated shots. Far from any prying eyes, in the second walkway, at the corner of Rue de la Folie-Regnault and Rue de la Vaquerie, the murder was committed.

Together, officers and soldiers, investigating judge and prison governor, went to celebrate their first act of vengeance at the café with a contrived cheerfulness. Meanwhile, their accomplices boasted about their prowess: “Justice is done. We have earned our fifty francs.

It was me who gave him the coup de grâce. He was being shielded, that one, he didn't want to die. He got up three times and I was already starting to get scared. He wanted to give me his blessing. But it was me who gave him the blessing”.

François feigned companionship with them. He first wanted to avoid responsibility. He had the names of the hostages hastily copied into the entry and exit register and cynically inscribed in front of the names of the six people shot: ‘Left to be handed over to the examining magistrate’.

Then accompanied by Romain, his handyman, the trembling Garraud, the accountant, Rohé, the one-eyed kitchen boy and a few others, he went up to make an inventory of the cells. It was past eleven o'clock. François went to the wrong cell and entered No 24. The prisoner, Fr. Bécourt, parish priest of Bonne-Nouvelle, overheard Romain's reflection: “He will be in the next batch.”

The hostages believed there would be a new crop of victims. Ever alert, they heard the accomplices talking, bickering or showing their displeasure. The booty seemed meagre. They made a bundle of linen, books, papers: “Burn all this rubbish,” ordered François.

Together the execution team returned to the walkway and to the still warm bodies, exercising their greedy hands among the bloody wounds, and emptying the pockets. To go faster, they ripped off the buttons and tore the clothes. One of them ripping the silver buckles off the Archbishop's shoes, hurt his finger. “The s...,” he cried; “even dead, he still finds a way to hurt me”.

While this awful tragedy was unfolding, what were the feelings of their fellow prisoners? Fr. Tauvel left us a moving confession that Fr. Radigue had made to him the next morning; “When I heard the call last night, I was at the window having taken off my soutane and wearing only my overcoat to breathe more easily because of my heart

disease. At that moment I put my soutane back on, wanting to offer the sacrifice of my life with the clothes I wear at the altar.”

He added: “During the night I experienced a terrible agony”. Certainly, there was no lack of natural causes to account for this moral ordeal. But was it not permissible to also see in this a mystical purification through which Christ wanted this child of the Sacred Hearts to participate more fully in his agony in Gethsemane? It was indeed one of the characteristics of Picpucian spirituality to honour the interior suffering of the Heart of Jesus in his Passion through perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament both day and night.

What we knew about the interior life of Fr. Radigue and his attraction to adoration permitted such an interpretation. But by a very divine sensitivity, his agony was extended, for on the very day of his execution, he would have a long journey to make on foot.

“And now,” concluded Fr. Radigue, “I go to say my good-byes. What did not take place today will happen without a doubt tomorrow.” He was only off by a day.

Chapter XIII

FIFTEEN ARE NEEDED

There were still 529 detainees at La Roquette that evening, of whom 167 had been locked up for common law crimes and offences. The other 362, and in first place the surviving hostages (33 ecclesiastics and 22 lay people), knew that their fate would be settled in the next few hours.

They had seen six of their companions brutally torn from their cells at the end of the day and from the walkway they heard the muffled shots of the firing squad. Through their walls they guessed that cells were being searched and they could hear the disputes that ensued. How far they were from the glorious martyrdoms such as those recounted in the Breviary, or popularised in the stained-glass windows, with the full deployment of the judicial system: court, interrogation, profession of faith; it is ironic to note that whilst the revolvers were being aimed at the victims - who would be shot under the cover of night in some sordid cul-de-sac – it would not be long before their executioners would end up pointing their guns at each other.

The young seminarian Paul Seigneret, (he was not yet 24 years old), during his long seclusion in Mazas, had courageously prepared himself for martyrdom – something he wished for and regarded as a special favour of God. But he did not hide his horror at being shot in the neck like a dangerous animal or even lynched by a drunken crowd. He was of the same race as his elders and in him, as in Fr. Radigue, heroism went hand in hand with a trembling sensitivity.

Using straightforward language Fr. Planchat, the precursor of the apostolate to the peoples, said quite bluntly: “We are indeed hostages, and so good to be shot from one moment to the next.”

Spontaneously the hostages made Thursday, 25th May, a day of retreat and preparation for death. They confessed and exhorted each other to the supreme sacrifice. Fr. Radigue's confession to Fr. Tauvel is referred to above. Br. Lemarchand tells us how he led a dispirited Paul Seigneret to his cell where together they recited the rosary. As he returned to his cell, reassured, his young companion quickly wrote on his notebook this moving letter to his parents: "I am leaving you for a better life.... I will die repeating the *Te Deum*. Soon we will be reunited to love each other eternally."

Alone, Fr. Plachat surveyed the corridor, awaiting potential clients. He had the consolation of leading back to God the secret agent Largillère who, as a new good thief, would become on the morrow a sharer in his passion.

It was a day of respite for the hostages. It had started off badly. At the time of the morning soup, the one-eyed kitchen boy had arrived accompanied by Roché, the clerk of the young offenders' prison opposite who was quite drunk from the libations that had followed the massacre. While the kitchen boy ostentatiously wore Bishop Darboy's pastoral ring and filled the terrines with gestures as if he were anointing them, his sidekick strutted around with the pastoral cross that he had decorated with various medals.

One wouldn't want to denigrate the men of the Commune. On the contrary, one would like to see in them strong adversaries. But among the actors in this drama, what is most surprising is the absence in so many of them of human qualities. Hence the rapid and total collapse of the Commune. Hence also its crimes. Far from being the expression of the downtrodden of Paris, anonymous but qualified craftsmen, rebellious but idealistic citizens, the Commune's leaders were too often failures, more inclined to become cornerstones of cabarets than builders of a new, just and fraternal world. One would even be tempted to blame the poor quality of the wine: it no longer

boosted the combatants; they were sinking into stupidity, as this heroic-comic incident shows.

The director François had stored away a case of Orsini bombs, as delicate as they were dangerous, which he intended to use wisely and in an extreme situation. The 206th Battalion, which guarded La Roquette, was commanded by a Captain Vérig. He was the type of rogue who had cut ties with his notoriously Catholic family in order to follow his militant Communard girlfriend. But in the Commune milieu, he had no other mandate other than being an incorrigible drunk. He demanded that the box be opened in front of him, distributed the bombs to his men, took several of them himself from the pockets of his tunic jacket, and staggered off to the kitchen. The inevitable happened. A bomb fell and exploded, wounding a cook in the leg. Francis showed, this time, a fair amount of firmness. He locked Verig in a cell where the regular army would eventually shoot him. This episode had been recounted a day earlier than it happened to give an idea of the entourage and the atmosphere of La Roquette.

Friday the 26th didn't look good. The weather was dark and rainy. And like a bird of ill omen, Superintendent Clavier of Bel-Air-Picpus returned. It was not yet seven o'clock in the morning when he presented himself at the clerk's office. This time he wore the uniform of the federated officer more confidently than at the Conciergerie. And obviously he had gained importance. He was accompanied by two secretaries and an embryonic staff, consisting of a captain and a lieutenant of the 275th battalion.

He demanded that François, pointing his revolver at him, hand over one of the hostages, the famous banker Jecker, who was occupying Cell 29 of Section 4. He was accused of having financed the Mexican expedition, sold cannons to the enemy, and squandered public funds. It would appear that the intentions of the visitors were less than pure. He was pressed with questions about the origin and

the amount of his fortune, as well as the place where he hid his loot. The banker protested: it was all a legend, he had ruined himself there. In spite of this, he was shot in the back in a deserted street called Rue de Chine.

Several other detainees, both civilian and military, were shot by rival gangs. Fr. Tauvel clearly heard a call: "Help! Help!" followed by a shot. The settling of scores was beginning. Those in charge were overwhelmed. This was the prelude to the denouement, the moment also when obscure, ambitious or crazy, over-heated characters tried to play a leading role.

It has sometimes been alleged that an order from Delecluze, a member of the Commune of the XIth arrondissement, a delegate of war, prescribed the massacre of the hostages. That said, it is a well-known fact that the execution of the infamous Decree of Hostages of 4th April had been demanded several times by extremists and the murder of Bishop Darboy and his companions set a precedent which made it easier to authorise.

It seems that it was Jecker's execution by Clavier and his gang that precipitated events. Staff Colonel Gois, known as the Sewer Grill, had recently been appointed to preside over the Court-Martial. His first concern was to recruit a firing squad; his men, hardliners known for their violence, wore a red stripe on their caps. He was eager to step forward and use his firing squad. To reinforce his escort, which he considered insufficient, he hastily rounded up some of General Eudes' 'Enfants Perdus', who could be distinguished by their green uniforms and their soft Garibaldian hats, and a few other enthusiasts.

Gois ended up with Clavier and the two presented themselves at La Roquette towards three o'clock followed by a group of some sixty men.

“Fifty hostages and immediately,” he said, without preamble. In seeing him reappear a few hours later with an escort of fanatics, François should have expected the request. But faced with the magnitude of the demand, he was appalled: “Do you have orders?” “Orders, here they are,” Gois cut in, firing his revolver. “We need priests, gendarmes... and spies”. “Yes,” he replied, staring at the director, “there are some little gentlemen here whom I am particularly interested in.”

At these words, François turned pale. He felt personally targeted, for among these “spies” was one of his dearest friends, Greff, whom he had tried without success to help escape the previous days. He could not find his lists. Certainly, he was not faking his emotions. But perhaps calculation was not absent. He must have known that the name of his friend, locked up in Section 4, appeared after those of the “priests”. Thus, he deliberately presented the list of gendarmes. “How many?” asked Gois. “Thirty-six,” replied François.

Gois mechanically took the list. His mind was elsewhere. He thought his troop was very weak. He looked at his accomplices: “That’s good,” he said, “now let’s see the list of priests.”

Gois went through it slowly, making mental calculations. Thirty-six gendarmes, four spies...with ten priests, that’ll do the maths. “Write,” he said to one of his secretaries. At first, he manifestly dictated the heads of the list and then his choices appeared random.

Why out of the 26 clergymen detained in Section 4 did he first designate the Picpus Fathers? Their residence was in an out-of-the-way area where their discreet ministry was exercised only among other religious communities, they were certainly the least known of the hostages, and if the Commune wanted reprisals, they were the least representative: their names had not gone beyond the walls of their religious house. Why, out of the ten Picpus imprisoned at La Roquette, did he choose the 4 councillors of the Superior General?

Their position did not appear in the registers. Should we, like Vuillaume, attribute the designation of “those of Picpus” to Clavier, the commissioner of Bel-Air-Picpus? It was he who had searched Picpus, carried out a thorough interrogation and arrested them. As we remember, he had come to taunt them at the Conciergerie and now he was taking over the direction of operations. Gois didn't know anything about the Picpucians. Everything leads us to believe that Clavier told him the four names.

Both lists were of priests. François called his confidant, Romain, the staff general. “Go find the gendarmes”. And handing him the lists of priests and police, he said “but for the latter, you go yourself.” Romain passed on the order concerning the gendarmes to Picon, his sub-brigadier, and quickly climbed to Section 4. “All here, gentlemen,” he shouted out.

It was close to four in the afternoon. Recreation had been extended. Some small groups were still in the corridors, but several had returned to their cells. They responded to the call. Romain unfolded the paper, then pausing in suspense. François had given him the list of another section. He shrugged his shoulders and went back down. He returned after a while, placed himself in the centre of the corridor, facing the “water room”: one couldn't give it another name, for there was no toilet in the cubicle the size of two cells and lit by a window.

“Be careful. Answer the call of your names. I need fifteen!” This time he had a list written in red ink. Nervous, he threw away the cigar which he chewed and called out the first name. “Tuffier!” The man at the end of the corridor came running up: “What's the matter? What's the matter?” he asked, in keeping with his habit of always repeating his words. “Get over there,” Romain said, pointing to the window. “Radigue!” Red with emotion, the Prior joined his bursar in silence. “Tardieu! Rouchonze!” “Rouchouze”, answered the one summoned. “Don't mutilate my name.”

One can understand the emotions of the other five Picpus priests and of Choir Brother Constantin, as they heard the four leaders of the Congregation named. The youngest, Fr. Tauvel left us with this sharing: "I envied them for being judged worthy of suffering for Christ, and I was tempted to cry out to the Prior like the deacon, Saint Lawrence to Pope Sixtus 'Father, where are you going without your son?'"

Romain continued the roll call, stumbling over the names: "Olivaint, Bengy, Caubert, Sabattier, Planchart, Seigneurer". "It was like the proclamation of the elect", said one witness, "so happy and proud they were to hear their names spoken". "There were neither complaints nor reclamations," said another, "no embraces or blessings, but the simplicity, the calm, the silence which gave the scene its most august and solemn character."

The roll call ended with the calling of three secret police, Romain counted them and recounted them. He announced fifteen of them and now found only thirteen. He had made a mistake. The list had only fourteen names and one of them, Greff, was absent. He knew why: the director was trying to save him. He put the hostages in two lines.

"Now, follow me."

Fr. Tuffier pointed to his slippers and asked if he might go and put on shoes. Fr. Radigue and others wanted to get their hats. "Why?" replied Romain, "You will have no need of them." And then in a faked naturalness, "Have no fear. You are to go down to the office." "But we are afraid" interjected one of those left, Abbé de Marsy, "We have reason to be." Another said: "If we go down to your office. we will never come up."

With complete presence of mind, Fr. Tuffier slipped his wallet containing the entire fortune of the community to one of the

remaining confreres.²⁶ The latter only had to take it to the office and get a receipt for it. Perhaps a minor detail but one that offered a distinct difference between the two confreres. One feared rightly for his life, the other having passed through three prisons did not hesitate and risked everything to save all the possessions of the community. Truly, the Lord had chosen the best. “We followed them with our eyes as long as was possible. We listened, believing at each moment that we were going to hear the fatal shots.”

In the courtyard were already a hundred men. Sub-brigadier Picon had misunderstood Romain's orders and with the 36 gendarmes, he had brought down 40 peacekeepers, 16 artillerymen, all the soldiers of the second platoon. He had even assured them that they would be released. They had all gone down in a hurry, except for a few, including a gendarme who smelt a trap. Gois was impatient with the delay and raged against the guards. But at the sight of the mass of men assembled in the courtyard, he became frightened. He calculated that his escort would barely cover half of the prisoners and that the gendarmes and peacekeepers were an elite group. He became furious with Romain, who hastened to bring up the peacekeepers and artillerymen. He sent the gendarmes to the clerk's office, where they joined the ten priests and the four agents of the secret police. There were only thirty-five gendarmes, but he was careful not to say so. The account is there.

My slippers! my hat! Behold the final words we have from our brothers! They were certainly not unaware of their fate, even less did they have any false hope of deliverance. Rather, they were concerned to die with dignity, in clerical dress. Let us not forget that we are at the end of the empire; the ecclesiastical hat was *de rigueur* for all outings and ceremonies. And so they went out on one of the hills overlooking Paris to celebrate their last Mass, a bloody Mass, where

²⁶ Fr. Laurent Besqueut ssc.

this time they would be more totally *offerens et oblatio*, priest and victim, in the image of Christ immolated at the gates of the city on the hill of Calvary. My slippers? My hat! Simple words if ever there were, but words that expressed a whole life of fidelity that prepared them for the supreme sacrifice.

Chapter XIV

THE ASCENT TO CALVARY

The hostages came out of La Roquette two by two, the gendarmes first, the priests next, and the secret police last. The “Enfants Perdus”²⁷ and the Federates, who were stationed under the trees on the terrace, immediately surrounded them. They had to do their utmost to protect them from the crowd, which, deliberately stirred up and annoyed by the long wait, welcomed them with an array of insults, bombarded them with various projectiles and tried to break the roadblocks.

Gois surveyed the march, made all the more difficult by the rabble. Observing an old priest who dragged his leg, he cried out: “Get a move on,” giving him a shove.

Fr. Tuffier, who had only slippers on his feet, could hardly keep up with the footsteps of the gendarmes. Was this the moment that Paul Seigneret gave him his arm? This is the picture that the witnesses have retained, a venerable priest supported by a young cleric and walking together to death.

Somehow the procession started and went down Rue de la Roquette towards the Père Lachaise cemetery. Then turning left, it took the outer boulevard of Ménilmontant.

²⁷ Les Enfants Perdus. An interesting phenomenon of war through the ages, is how young people (all kinds of backgrounds, all kinds of reasons) connect with the advancing army, being both interested and wanting to help. In the days of the Commune, such soldiers were mainly employed by Émile François Eudes (1843-1888). At first Eudes’ involvement in the revolution was intellectual. Later, and as a member of the Blanquist party he was elected on to the Commune’s Central Committee. He finally became a military man (General) and was very involved in the Commune’s last stand.

A man on horseback preceded it by about fifty metres and stirred up the rabble. At number 90, workers of the large water factory of Seltz, attracted by the shouts, took up their positions at the windows. The horseman harangued them: "These are the prisoners we took this morning. The hour of justice has come for them. We're going to shoot them. The people of Belleville and Ménilmontant have well deserved this reward for their devotion to the cause of the Commune."

A mob was forming. The horseman was hoping for something better. The boulevard seemed too vast to him. He made the procession turn towards the Chaussée de Ménilmontant, narrower and more populous, where the demonstration would, he thought, be greater.

A barricade forbade access. It was guarded by the 74th battalion who were under the orders of Captain Dalivous. The crowd remained silent. In the midst of the crowd, the gendarmes, in step and rows, gave an impression of strength. Was Gois afraid? He ordered the commander to lend him a hand. Captain Dalivous directed his section. His men persistently interrogated the gendarmes, to the point where Gois had to intervene, striking one of them with his sword.

The horseman was right. The crowd grew as they went along. However, it was not abusive. The priests prayed and encouraged their companions.

At the crossroads of Puebla there were more barricades, a new stop. Federates came running towards them. They had been dislodged from their positions that very morning by the regular army. They breathed vengeance and spoke of executing the prisoners on the spot. From all sides there were shouts of "Down with the *calotins*! Death to the priests! Death to the spies! Death to the gendarmes!"

The women were the most animated: "If I had them," said one of the furies, "I would do away with every last one of them". The horseman then had to calm the crowd. He was berated. "None of

that weakness, let's get it over with right now," someone shouted. Although now 500 strong, the escort was in danger of being overwhelmed. So, they hurried to get the procession through Rue de Puebla and Rue des Rigoles.

The town hall stood at the corner of Rue des Rigolles and Rue de Paris, opposite the Church of St Jean-Baptiste. It was the stronghold of Ranvier, who at that time had become, if not the chief, then at least the soul of the Commune. He had recently retired there with his staff and with many of those involved in burning the Tuileries and the Hôtel de Ville. The procession entered the courtyard of the town hall through a service door. Alerted by the shouting, Ranvier appeared. He had a short interview with Gois. Then he said: "Shoot them all, but I don't want it to be at the town hall."

Once more, the crowd would be deprived of a spectacle which they had been promised and which they felt they deserved. A cry of protest went up. Deferring to the voice of the people, the Council announced that it was going to deliberate. To calm things down and gain some time, they poured drinks generously from a nearby cellar.

After a quarter of an hour, the verdict was announced: "The hostages would be shot on the ramparts". The order was signed by Ranvier. The condemned were given another quarter of an hour to draw up their wills.

It seems that this clause was only a manoeuvre intended to give a semblance of humanity and legality to this monstrous and illegal sentence, because no trace of these wills was found.

The procession went out this time through the main door facing the Church. It was 5 o'clock. One last time the hostages were able to greet their Master for whom they were about to die and whose ascent to Calvary they were reviving at this moment. They had already been

promenaded for a whole hour under the jeers of the crowd. Once again, they resumed the way of the cross.

For a long time Fr. Radigue had commented to his novices and his brothers on the article of the preliminary chapter of the Rule: Finally, we must recall, as much as we can, the crucified life of our Divine Saviour by practicing with zeal and prudence the works of Christian mortification, above all by restraining our senses.

For him and his confreres these words took on their full meaning: to retrace, that is to say, to follow in Jesus' footsteps.

The respite given to the hostages at the town hall was not wasted time for the mysterious impresario knew how to improvise such a sinister and solemn stage setting. Since the crowd demanded a show, they would get their money's worth for their pain.

The cortege entered Rue de Paris, now de Belleville. A *cantinière* on horseback led the way. She was small, fat, and quite ugly. She wore a sailor's suit and a Phrygian bonnet. Some wanted to deny the fact and claim that the episode was fictional (Vuillaume d'Hérisson). But too many witnesses saw her. She was accompanied by three other riders, carrying red flags and from time to time she would say: "Long live the Commune! Death to them!" Behind them came a few bugles sounding the popular refrain: "There's a drop to drink up there! There's a drop to drink!"

Was it that drunkard Gois who had worked them up? He walked behind the posse in Federate uniform: Cap, a quintuple silver braid, polished boots, red belt, sword by his side, a revolver.

Clavier followed wearing his tunic jacket and red belt. He had come to see the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts whom he had arrested, knowing they would die. He had a young *cantinière* by his side, a Garibaldian officer and several others.

Behind a group of Federates of all kinds, (Zouaves, Marines, Artillery, Infantry, Vengeurs, Enfants Perdus ... the prisoners advanced in the same order as before: gendarmes, priests, secret police, surrounded by Federates with fixed bayonets. The size of the escort slowed down the procession. An ever-increasing crowd followed the cortege or accompanied it on the sidewalks. Once in a while a fanatic succeeded in breaking through the cordon to accost one or other of the victims, lunging at him and showing him his weapon. "This is what I will use to take you down later".

Mobs formed on doorsteps and club orators took up the slogans of the hour: "The justice of the people shall be exercised against these traitors." Some women couldn't help but express their pity. "The poor people. This will not bring luck to Belleville."

"Where are they being taken?" asked one of them in the vicinity of 229 "To heaven," replied one of the officers, who immediately rushed to a porch to borrow civilian clothes, so that he could join the escort company. Fr. Tuffier was again dragging his leg as he climbed up Belleville: "Giddy up!! You with the white head, can't you take it any longer?" shouted an officer at him and striking his back with the flat edge of the sword, he bid him hurry up. They were provided with music to walk with: it was the least they could do to keep up with the beat.

At 253, it was another old man, Fr. Rouchouze, who was attacked. A dimwit wanted him to cry out "Long live the Commune." "I would like to pay for this old man", said a young boy aged 15 or 16, pointing to one of the hostages.

Once more, spirits got heated. Two gunshots were heard. No one was hurt. In sight of the Romainville gate, the cortege was obliged to turn right into Rue Haxo. They were not going to the ramparts as was said. In front of a wasteland, the riders stopped their horses. Gois shouted at them: "A little further. To the sector."

In the language of the Commune, the name ‘Second Sector’ was given to a collection of small pavilions and gardens, which were certainly not warlike and revolutionary, but rather the symbol of order and peace. Together with the town hall of Belleville, it was the last bastion of the insurrection. Parent had set up his headquarters there the day before. A veritable pack of officers had followed him and were staying nearby.

Parent had just been appointed, or rather he appointed himself as Minister of War to replace Delescluze, who had been mortally wounded at a barricade. He was barely thirty years old. For want of other experience, he had half a dozen convictions: “He was one of those who grows on the rubbish of defeat,” wrote Lissarragay.

He showed himself here to be deplorably weak. Addressing the members of the Central Committee who accompanied him, he said “If you have any influence, now is the time to intervene. This killing must be prevented. It would be up to you to do it.” Parent did not insist and remained in his house.

‘General’ Eudes also occupied a pavilion overlooking Rue Haxo. Knowing from a good source that all was lost, he was thinking of anything other than compromising himself. However, he risked an eye when the cortege arrived. The officer who seemed to be in command from the town hall of Belleville recognised him by his felt cap. “These are the hostages of La Roquette. Where should we take them?” “You’re the one who brought them,” replied Eudes curtly, “I don’t have orders for you.” “But I have written orders from Ranvier” said the officer.

“In that case,” concluded Eudes, “you’ll have to go to the sector command”. And he slipped away as Parent had just done, both of them playing, without their knowledge but with rare truth, the role of Pilate in this new Passion.

Out of as much calculation as cowardice, the officer silenced a loudmouth who was perched on a cart and waving a red flag, haranguing the crowd. The officer could not hold his indignation any longer and shouted. "We were expecting to find a court martial here. What to do?" "To death! To death! Long live the Commune!"

This was the full answer given to the officer who undoubtedly wanted the justice of the people to manifest itself in a more dignified way. However, when one has imprudently aroused the anger of a crowd, to speak of disciplining it is to want to channel the storm.

A gate prevented access to the Second Sector, facing Rue des Tourelles. With one push a brigadier made it give way. Gifted with a herculean strength, he positioned himself at the entrance and as the priests passed in front of him, he punched them hard. "I hit them so hard," he boasted afterwards, "that my hand was blue."

But he did not touch the gendarmes, no doubt he was less sure of their reaction. After this delay, Fr. Tuffier seemed to have recovered and walked with more determination. But still distracted, he stumbled at the entrance. The brute's punch sent him rolling on the ground, face down. A rifle butt forced him to get up. In turn, his young companion, the seminarian, was thrown to the ground. As he was slow to get up a young, mean boy of about twelve said: "Wait a little and I'll do your business for you." But he was not, as has been said, dragged to the place of execution, almost 150 meters away.

Entry to the Sector was by way of a long tree-lined driveway of about 80 metres which led into courtyard that was longer than it was wide. About 15 pavilions bordered it. In the middle of the courtyard stood the clock pavilion, so named because of the small clock tower that dominated it. A wooden balcony adorned the single floor. This pavilion had been assigned to command. Beyond it, connected to the driveway though separated by a wooden lattice, was an abandoned park with a pool in the centre. Two gates connected the park to Rue

Borrego, which ran alongside it. There had been plans to extend the pavilion and build a ballroom. Only the cesspit was finished, and the earth removed from it formed a small mound, attached to a four-metre high wall. The walls under construction were only about fifty centimetres high.

Anger can be blind. It had to be recognised that on this day, 26th May, 1871, one could hardly have found a more appropriate setting for the drama that was unfolding: a courtyard where the hostages would appear, a balcony from which the sentence would be proclaimed, a vacant lot where the firing squad and the soldiers of the escort would take their place, while on the other side of the pool the crowd gathered. Finally, there was an enclosed area, a sort of stage enclosed by high walls on which the bullets could ricochet. Not even the mound of earth reminiscent of Calvary is missing. Adding to all of this the air of an abandoned park one is reminded more of a passionate massacre than a judicial execution.

According to someone reporting to the 6th war council, “it seemed that the gentle and serene attitude of the condemned, the touching aspect of the way they looked without hate and without fear, made the assassins hesitate a moment. Despite the excitement and the cries for death from the farthest reaches of the crowd, for several minutes they didn’t dare touch them. Finally, a Federate officer got up on a carriage and gave a discourse, another climbed on the wall of the vacant lot which goes to the courtyard and read a paper. An immense clamour arose at the same time as a great agitation swept the crowd.

Many testimonies have since supplemented and corrected the reporter’s account. One last time the two tendencies of the Commune clashed. The moderates would say: “We must not dishonour our cause. Can we not keep them prisoners?” In fact, they had already lost their

cause when they made them leave La Roquette and exposed them to the insults of the crowds. The extremists held the decision.

“They won't finish it, these idlers,” said a 19-year-old *cantinière*, pointing to the pavilion where the officials were discussing the issue. “Cowards, aren't you going to start?”

Finally, Lieutenant Colonel Demurat, commander of the sector, appeared on the balcony. He read the sentence of Ranvier condemning the fifty hostages to death. There had been no court martial since he was simply referring to the decision of Ranvier in complete defiance of what Parent wanted.

“To death, to death.” The cry was shouted out once again and even louder. In the meantime, on reaching the courtyard the crowd invaded the park, some clinging to the gates of Rue de Borrégo, some were already climbing up on the walls.

“To death, to death.” They repeated, echoing the cries of the men who were on top of the depot omnibuses that were stationed nearby.

The gendarmes, who until then had held out some hope, finally understood that all was lost. They took their money and letters from their bags, got rid of their wedding rings, and handed them to their guards, asking them to hand them over to their families. Such a natural gesture aroused only a sneer from their executioners. They laughed at their simplicity, and some went so far as to tear up their farewell letters and break crosses, medals and souvenirs before their very eyes.

Perhaps it was this episode that gave full meaning to the Rue Haxo drama. This was far removed from the eternal dispute that exists between the individual and the policeman who he likes to see beaten. Nor can we speak of a lost or manipulated crowd that took its anger out on the police. It would be too little to say that the crowd was roaring – more or less justly - against the “established order”. One

is faced with a declared revolt against all human and divine rights. It was for this reason that the gendarmes were associated with the priests and massacred with them. There, on that day, the Commune threw off its mask and showed its true face.

The scum of society had its revenge: The testimony of Captain Dalivous could be accepted: “The crowd that snatched the hostages from my hands, was made up of individuals from the bourgeois, federates, women dressed in nationalist guard uniform, a few children aged fifteen or sixteen and fifteen soldiers from the Federates Infantry.” Numerous witnesses confirmed it: “The crowd was made up of all kinds of people with sinister intentions, some armed with pistols, others with sabres, hunting guns, rifles, sniper rifles and batons”. (Pyat)

Who ordered the firing? The first reports denounced “a *cantinière* wearing a white hairnet. She would have been the first to move forward and cry out: “No pity for Versailles. These are the assassins. No more ‘*calotins*’, no more gendarmes.”

And at close range, she discharged her revolver at the priests.

The War Council retained the intervention of ‘Captain’ Dalivous, a roofer by trade. Standing on the small wall of the dance hall, sabre clearly visible, he called out to the crowd. “Wait, don't shoot yet. Wait for my command.” Others claimed that ‘Colonel’ Gois, the wine clerk, pushed the hostages forward ten by ten. “Face the wall!” he would have said to the first group, who were gendarmes. “Never!” their Sergeant would have replied.

Without denying the participation of Gois, Dalivous and the *cantinière*, it seems that it was “Colonel” Bénot, a butcher-boy, who gave the push to begin. Coming out of a nearby pavilion, he broke through the crowd shouting “To Death!” and unleashed the massacre.

Eighty-five years later, it is difficult to reconstruct the exact timing of those hours of folly. Too many had interest in either lying or being silent. However, the same words converge in all the accounts: disorder, confusion, slaughter, savagery. At first only some guns were fired. But soon everyone joined in the melee. Captain Dalivous from his small wall fired without cease. Some other officers (Bénot, Gois?) discharged their revolvers, recharged, and borrowed rifles from others. There were moments of respite, such as the time it took the next group of hostages to get to the recessed area. But the blood lust made the killers more impatient. Even before the hostages were actually lined up, there was firing from below as if one were firing on rabbits. Soon they were firing into the pile of bodies. Pyat, the usher's clerk, member of the Commune, and an eyewitness declared: "Everyone was firing, hitting, a frightful scene, savage."

To make things worse, someone had the idea of jumping the small wall that separated them from the hostages! It became like shooting at pigeons in flight. One or other gendarme in panic played along with the comedy. The priests – there remained three – energetically refused. "I am willing to die to confess my faith; I do not wish these antics."

One would like to know the final gestures, the last words of the victims. Too few friends were able or dared to mingle with the crowd and penetrate this stronghold of the Commune. At least we are sure of the following episode.

A Sergeant Geantry (the same one no doubt who had responded "never" at the order to turn one's back) courageously presented his chest to a Federate who with a ready insult, was aiming at him. An old priest with white hair and a shade taller than the others was seen to fall in an attempt to guard the Sergeant with his body.

"Three shots for that one," shouted the women who had slipped in the front row among the killers.

Struck head on, the Father fell, then raised his arms as if to continue his gesture of protection.

“That’s the old man asking for mercy now. “

Again, the guns went off. The priest suddenly slumped. In a compulsive movement, he straightened up and crawled to the wall as if to seek a way out. A young man rushed towards him and discharged his gun on him at close range.

“Did you see this scoundrel who was still running on all fours?” I washed his mouth with my rifle”, he said to his comrade who, not to be outdone, turned the old priest over with his foot and gave him the finishing stroke.

A shrew rushed in and tried to tear out his tongue. “So that he doesn't talk stupid anymore.” “But I didn't succeed”, she added regretfully. So out of spite she urinated on him.

Tradition has recognized Fr. Tuffier as the old priest whom the rioters hounded. He alone matched three distinctive signs: he was wearing a soutane, his stature and his advanced age.

Besides, he was not a good walker and on this day he only had bad slippers.

He was often distracted. it is no wonder he stumbled as he entered the sector. And we know that vivacity was the most salient feature of his character.

Regarding Fr. Sosthène Duval, a Mr. Vast, one of his relatives, a cousin, gave testimony. He had come to Rue Haxo to find out any information about Fr. Sosthène whom he thought had been massacred with his companions. He had the corpses removed from the pit. He noticed, among others, a very strongly built priest, his face disfigured and covered with insects that had to be washed away. He

was recognized by the scapular of the Sacred Hearts he was wearing. Why were these insects on him alone, if not because of the profanation of his corpse?

Only Brother Marin Fouquet expressed a doubt. The head of Tuffier had been the most respected whilst the head of Fr. Rouchouze was the most mistreated. It was Rouchouze who felt impelled to protect the gendarme. But this doubt came very late, almost forty years after the events. And given the state of decomposition of the bodies and the circumstances, there was no autopsy or medical examination.

The killing had been going on for about 20 minutes when the last hostages were taken. After that, there was a general rush. As the reporter to the Council of War wrote: "Officers, soldiers, women and children walked and stomped over these throbbing bodies, from which blood still spurted out. They wanted to see if they had all breathed their last breath. And when they thought they saw a remnant of breath or a supreme convulsion, they would strike again with a rifle butt or a sword. One body bore the marks of 69 blows, another 72.

"It was a real human mess." All around, the earth, soaked by the storm of the day before, and trampled all over had become a quagmire and with blood a cesspool. People leaned over the corpses and searched without repugnance. A watch taken from a priest was on display. A little girl strutted around with an ivory rosary she had passed around her neck as a necklace.

It was getting dark and rain was threatening. The sky took on a pale, sinister hue under the reflections of the fire. Shrubs broken, fences overturned, the park seemed to have been ravaged by a hurricane. A sailor, sticking his bayonet into a priest's hat, gave the signal to leave, proposing that his group go for a drink. The enclosure emptied quickly, while the cabarets filled up. "The orgy of blood was to be followed by the orgy of drunkenness. Killing made you thirsty."

There was a lot of boasting in the speeches, where garbage was mixed with cynicism: all added to a climate of hatred.

“The priests have a hard life! What work it was to wipe them out.” “They should all be massacred, right down to the last one.” “Good work there, boys, great day for the Commune!”

“All this is nothing yet,” concluded one Staff Officer, “but tomorrow when there are thousands, it will be something.” Some, and not the least, made no secret of their disgust. The commander of the 11th Sector, Lieutenant-Colonel Demurat, entered a café and was served a drink. “I understand fighting in the street, but murder! I did everything I could to prevent this killing. Unfortunately, my efforts were in vain”.

The story is told of a convicted strangler who refused to carry out a killing and underwent the same plight as the hostages. “Am I to shoot those who do not deserve it as much as you?” One tough fellow said simply: “No, this is not a crime. This is the justice of the people.”

Would he have closed his eyes in the same way if he had known that ‘the members of the Commune who remained in the sector were thinking more of escaping through the Prussian lines than supporting combatants who were still fighting?’ The occupied zone was in fact so close that once the firing had ceased, one could hear the Prussian brass band play dance music.

As the fumes of euphoria began to dissipate, it was necessary to think of burying the corpses: the government army was approaching, and the people of the district expressed their fears of an epidemic. There were so many bodies that one didn't know what to do with them. Digging a sufficiently large trench required real work. Besides, these vigilantes could not be expected to have more respect for the dead than they did the day before. To become gravediggers would have been seen as a comedown. They discovered an unfinished

trench, removed the rubble covering it and threw the fifty corpses there in a jumble.

A road worker, Léon, who lived nearby at 89 Rue de Haxo, described the scene that he witnessed: “I fell in behind a guy who had red trousers. He had with him four others. They did the work of fetching the hostages and bringing them to him. This individual had a knife in his hand and was stripping them. He searched them and I saw him look into their pockets. He was making sure that these men had nothing. What he found on the bodies he handed to a fellow on his right who placed it in a little box of white wood. He had still seven to bury when an individual brought a body to the edge of the trench. Then he pushed it in with his foot and said: “I’m leaving now.”

No less realistic was the account of one young lad. “There were two, one took them by the feet, the other by the head. They swung them for a moment and then let them go into the trench.”

Since Calvary, all the witnesses to Christ have been like their Divine Master, scorned and tortured in their souls no less than in their flesh. Here in Rue Haxo, after having been flooded with insults all along that painful way, their bodies were violated. They had been escorted to their deaths by a military band. They had groaned at the accents of an enemy fanfare. Now they lay in a jumble under a dance hall. But their sepulchre too would become glorious.

Epilogue

(Editor: *The Prayer of Solomon becomes the Prayer of the Church*)

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
and no torment will ever touch them.

In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,
and their departure was thought to be a disaster,
and their going from us to be their destruction;
for though in the sight of others they were punished,
their hope is full of immortality.

Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good,
because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;
like gold in the furnace he tried them,
and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.

In the time of their visitation they will shine forth,
and will run like sparks through the stubble.

They will govern nations and rule over peoples,
and the Lord will reign over them forever.

Those who trust in him will understand truth,
and the faithful will abide with him in love,
because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones,
and he watches over his elect.

The Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9 (NRSV CE)

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased from 10.5 million to 13.5 million (15.5% of the population).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of older people, and the Government has set out a strategy for doing so in the White Paper on *Ageing Better: Our Future, Our Choice* (Department of Health 2000). The White Paper sets out a vision of a society in which older people are able to live well, and to contribute to society. It also sets out a number of key objectives for the Government, including:

• to ensure that older people are able to live well, and to contribute to society;
 • to ensure that older people are able to live independently, and to participate in society;
 • to ensure that older people are able to live in their own homes, and to receive the care and support they need.

The White Paper also sets out a number of key actions for the Government, including:

• to improve the lives of older people by ensuring that they have access to the care and support they need;
 • to ensure that older people are able to live independently, and to participate in society;
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