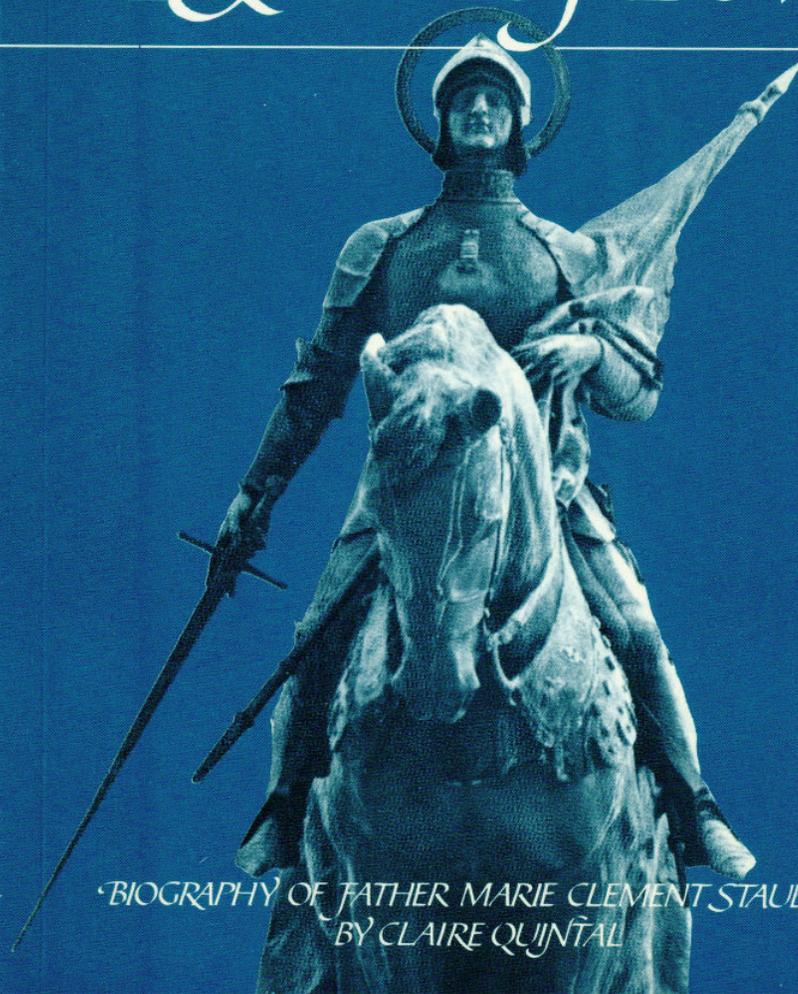




# HERALD OF LOVE



*'BIOGRAPHY OF FATHER MARIE CLEMENT STAUB A.A.  
BY CLAIRE QUINTAL*



# Herald of Love

Claire Quintal

1984

Claire Quintal  
HERALD OF LOVE  
*FATHER MARIE CLEMENT STAUB, A.A.*  
APOSTLE of the SACRED HEART and  
FOUNDER of the SISTERS of SAINT JOAN of ARC  
1876 - 1936  
Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc  
Motherhouse 1505, rue de l'Assomption Sillery, QUEBEC G1S 4T3  
IMPRIMATUR  
+ Bernard F. Law, D.D. Archbishop of Boston May 16, 1984

# Introduction

The history of the founding of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc is an inspiring story. It is a privilege for me to be able to write this introduction to a book which recounts the courageous acts of Father Marie Clement Staub, A.A., founder of the congregation, and the women who first united under his leadership to form a community dedicated to prayer, work, and sacrifice in the service of Christ, the Church, and the priesthood.

What faith, generosity of spirit, and perseverance were shown by the first candidate, Mother Joanna of the Sacred Heart (Alice Caron), the first superior general, Mother Jeanne of the Sacred Heart (Celina Benoit), and all those early pioneers who joined the community, first in Worcester and later in Quebec. What obstacles they overcame through reliance on God's help and through tireless, generous service.

Every reader will be impressed, I think, by the remarkable events narrated here from the life of Father Marie Clement Staub, A.A. God's holy will is done in our world in varied and often (to us) mysterious ways. The Lord's providence, His loving care for us can be seen at work in Father Staub's long and often arduous pilgrim way from his native Alsace through France and Belgium and then to England, the United States, and, finally, Canada. Time and again, external forces such as government hostility to the Church in France proved to be the occasion for new and fruitful apostolic activity in other places.

Through Father Staub's preaching, God touched the hearts of thousands of people in Europe and America. His promotion of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance led to an astounding growth in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The parish retreats and missions which he conducted were times of grace for all who took part. Indeed, the beneficial results of these apostolic labors can still be seen

today, almost fifty years after Father Staub's death.

No apostolic work was dearer to the heart of Father Staub than the founding of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc. The founding of the congregation, on December 25, 1914, was the result of Father Staub's parish mission labors. While preaching in the area of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, he met young women who were eager to live a consecrated life of prayer, sacrifice, and work. Miss Alice Caron (Mother Joanna of the Sacred Heart) and her companions received a call from God and dedicated their lives to the Church and to the priesthood.

For seventy years now, the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc have served the Church in an exemplary manner. Every bishop, priest, religious, and lay person who has come in contact with them has been blessed. My own ministry as priest and later bishop has been aided in countless ways by these sisters who live their religious lives under the protection of Saint Joan of Arc.

It is my prayer that the publication of this book may make the work of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc more widely known. May God grant a great number of vocations to this holy life of prayer, sacrifice, and consecrated service.

Thomas V. Daily  
Bishop-Designate Palm Beach, Florida  
Boston, Massachusetts September 21, 1984

# Chapter 1

Throughout history there have been some men for all seasons. There have also been chosen individuals whose efforts have worked wonders at a given time and in specific places. Joseph Staub, known to us as Father Marie Clement, was such a man.

Born in Alsace, in the year 1876, he was to die in Quebec in 1936, not quite having reached his 60th birthday. A short life, by today's standards, but an eventful one. A life during which he labored intensely to bring about God's Kingdom. The vineyard assigned to him by the Lord was to be the United States and Canada—an unusual assignment for a man born in Alsace. But then, there was nothing usual about this zealous man, this impassioned speaker, this pilgrim of the Sacred Heart.

He was devout from childhood and was to remain true to himself always. His early years in a deeply religious household were to bear fruit as he matured. The child here was indeed father to the man. A man, not so much for all seasons, as for all humanity: poor as well as rich; American as well as European; working men and women as well as consecrated religious. In his lifetime, through his extraordinarily successful efforts in preaching the devotion of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance, he would transform nearly a million souls into practitioners of sacrificial reparation for the sins of the world. These included working-class immigrants in parishes throughout New England, as well as the cardinal-archbishops of New York and Quebec.

The “generals” of his “Army of Reparation” for the Sacred Heart were the pastors of dozens of American parishes, but the “troops” were made up of men, women, and children who, having heard him speak “as though he had himself seen the Sacred Heart,” enrolled in the Archconfraternity and took to heart the need to do penance and pray to make up to the Sacred Heart for the indignities inflicted by an unfeeling hu-

manity.

If the pastors were generals, then he himself was the commander-in-chief. Yet he commanded as a gentle, loving father would, always responding to the needs of those about him. He valued discipline, but knew how to temper it with kindness. He was indefatigable, but he always recognized that this was a gift from on high for which to be grateful and not a sword to hold over the heads of others whose natures were not meant for vast undertakings.

If he saw a need, he attempted to fill the void. In so doing, he embarked on the great venture of his life—the founding of a religious community of women dedicated to the care of priests in rectories and monasteries. To this day, these sisters, by their lives of total devotion to the constitution he wrote for them, and by their loyal, loving remembrance of their founder, are living proof that indeed here was a man born both to serve and to lead others, and to do so in complete abnegation of self, with untiring fervor, fiery eloquence, and paternal benevolence. May his example reach out to touch and inspire those who read the pages that follow.

## Chapter 2

Born on July 2nd, Feast of the Visitation, Joseph Staub, known to us as Father Marie Clement, was baptized a week later in the parish church of Kaysersberg, a walled village located just a few miles from the historic city of Colmar in Alsace. Kaysersberg on the river Weiss, is located in a wine-growing region. Joseph Staub's father was a caskmaker, like others in this area where the proper storage of wine is of great importance.

Kaysersberg, though a small village, is fertile ground for greatness. Albert Schweitzer, the medical missionary who spent his life ministering to the needs of the Africans in the village of Lambarene, Gabon, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952, was also born there.

Joseph Staub was brought up in an area steeped in history. All about him were reminders of bygone days, Roman ruins and medieval remains. "What strikes the eye is its famous castle proudly perched midway up the mountainside," he wrote about his native town. Years later, Joseph Staub was himself to build a medieval-like fortress, high upon the cliff overlooking the St. Lawrence River in Quebec. In it he would house not lords, whose duty was to serve their country, but consecrated women whose mission was to serve their Church.

The founder of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc was born in a province located on the eastern edge of France, a territory whose people speak a German dialect, a land which has been loyal to France ever since its annexation in 1648. Born six years after the German victory over the French in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, Joseph Staub was a victim of war. Alsace had been taken from the French by the Germans, along with a portion of Lorraine, Joan of Arc's native province.

As a result, Joseph Staub was brought up in conquered territory, in

a province whose people chafed under the rule of the German occupant. As a child, he learned their language at school. At home his family spoke the dialect of Alsace. Later, he would find himself having to learn French, the language which would have been taught to him from childhood, had he been born at any other time.

History, for children growing up in such a place, is not simply a series of events which have happened somewhere else on a distant continent, as it all too often is for American children. For Europeans, history is a reality, reminders of which are all around them. Dates like 1789, 1801, 1874,<sup>1</sup> which mean little or nothing to Americans, are associated in Alsatian minds with events which have shaped their own present.

Joseph Staub was raised in a province where to be God-fearing, honest, and faithful in all things is as natural as breathing; where to be strong in adversity, ardent, yet disciplined, are qualities expected of those whom God has chosen.

His faith was nurtured in a home built in 1576 which he describes as having been a humble abode, where a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus occupied a place of honor. Morning and evening, the family prayed before this statue. Years later he was to take leave of his family in this very room, before this same statue. Later still, he was to extend the cult of the Sacred Heart to the New World and to consecrate thousands of families to the loving Heart of Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup>1789: outbreak of the French Revolution; 1801: signing of the Concordat between Napoleon and the Holy See, which was never abrogated in Alsace-Lorraine; 1874: Alsace-Lorraine officially became part of the German empire. It was returned to France after World War I.

## Chapter 3

As the youngest child in a family of four children, Joseph was the object of much tenderness, not only from his parents, but also from his older sisters, Josephine and Marguerite. “It takes very little to make young children happy, especially when they are poor, as I had the happiness of being,” he wrote. This was a telling remark, indicative of the man who, when he pronounced these words, had seen close up, both rich and poor, and the “advantages” of having been born poor when one wishes to embark upon a life of total abnegation.

As a child, Joseph Staub mingled with the other children of the village, played their games, sang their songs, went to the local school, received his share of punishment for waking the neighborhood by blowing into the empty fountain pipe located at the center of the village, and for robbing the nest of a pair of falcons in the ruins of the old *château*. In a word, he behaved like all children, no matter when or where they are born.

Because he was an assiduous student, Joseph was appointed by his teacher, Mr. Limacher, to be on the lookout for infractions to the rule by the other students and report them at the end of each day. Having to inform on one’s peers is a difficult situation for anyone. Soon Joseph found himself in the middle of an out-and-out fist fight, and his notebook, in which he had duly noted all infractions, was torn to pieces. The departure of Mr. Limacher for a post elsewhere was a source of great relief to both Joseph and his companions.

At home, Joseph was a loving child, always eager to be of service, a joy to his parents, and carefully watched over by his elder siblings.

He had early on been chosen to become an altar boy and he performed these duties as he was to perform all others in his later life, with careful attention to detail and great seriousness of purpose. His

natural bent of carefully seeing all things through to their logical conclusion was to lead to amusing incidents in his childhood. One of these was, that having been taught, even as a child at home, the beneficent effects of holy water, Joseph decided one day that if blessing or crossing oneself with holy water was an excellent practice which could lead to sanctity, then drinking the same holy water would certainly be conducive to even greater holiness. Thus it is that Joseph and some friends of his, whom he had convinced of the brilliance of his idea, ran to the parish church where they proceeded to swallow as much holy water as they could by cupping the palms of their hands!

He was also very careful at Christmas time to build a beautiful manger. He took great pains to cut down small evergreens and different colored mosses, which he found under the snow, to copy nature's own hand. Many came to admire his handiwork and to pray at the manger. Joseph even collected small donations so that the following year his re-creation of the manger scene could be even more beautiful. Later, this same talent for setting a scene and for attracting the people of God for public prayer would be applied on a much larger scale in honor of the Sacred Heart, Saint Joan of Arc, and Saint Michael.

Joseph was a diligent student. He struck the assistant pastor, Father Jean Burget, as intelligent and deeply attentive at catechism lessons, knowing the answers to the questions put to him. Indeed, according to Father Burget, Joseph was the best student in his class. He could always be counted upon as an altar boy to serve Mass with "angelic dignity," in Father Burget's words.

Mr. G.S. Brinig, Joseph's teacher starting in the spring of 1890, also sang the praises of his young student. He wrote eloquently of Joseph's willingness to help him get acquainted with the ways of the school, of his industriousness, of his eagerness to learn. He was clearly the first of his class; no other student even came close. When questioned about Joseph thirty-four years later, Mr. Brinig stated categorically: "If one were to ask me who was my best student during *all* the years of my teaching, I would not hesitate to say, Joseph Staub."

No one was surprised when Joseph made it clear that he wished to study for the priesthood. Somehow he had always seemed to all who knew him to be an exceptional child marked out for a life larger than Kaysersberg could offer him.

He was almost fourteen, on March 23rd, 1890, when he made his

First Communion. He received the host from the hands of his pastor, Father Joseph Gerber. This perspicacious priest had already noticed the outstanding qualities of young Joseph. Indeed, he had chosen him to read, in the name of all the communicants, the children's consecration to the Blessed Virgin. It was a consecration which Joseph really took to heart, as the future was amply to demonstrate.

After his First Communion, Joseph, accompanied by members of his family, undertook the pilgrimage to the shrine of Notre-Dame-des-Trois-Epis.<sup>2</sup> The shrine dates back to the close of the fifteenth century, when the Blessed Mother appeared to a local blacksmith named Thierry Schoere. The Virgin held three stalks of wheat in her right hand and in her left an icicle. The icicle represented hailstorms and bad harvests, symbol of the punishment which would befall those who continued to lead a life of sin. The wheat symbolized the bountiful harvests which God would grant to those who practiced penance. A chapel, which became famous in the sixteenth century, was built on the site. Pilgrims came from countries as far away as Austria, Poland, Italy, and Spain. In order to reach the shrine from Kaysersberg, a walk of about two and a half hours, pilgrims had to climb two mountains and cross a plain in order to reach the sanctuary located high upon the mountain side. Tradition required that the pilgrims recite their rosary *en route*.

And so young Joseph Staub prayed before the altar of Our Lady, arms extended in the shape of a cross, in order to call upon the Blessed Mother for her help in this crucial decision. Yes, he would one day be a priest of God, of that he was absolutely certain, so long as God Himself willed it. The pastor was consulted as to where Joseph should study for the priesthood. Given the poverty of the Staub family, Father Gerber, the pastor, wrote to the Assumptionists, a religious community founded in 1850 at Nîmes, a city in the south of France, asking them to admit his most promising young parishioner into one of their schools.

The Assumptionists agreed, and Joseph prepared to leave his cherished Alsace for France where he would pursue his studies. His pastor taught him the rudiments of Latin; the assistant pastor taught him some French.

In October, 1890, Joseph Staub arrived at Mauville in Artois, lo-

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<sup>2</sup>Our Lady of the Three Stalks.

cated in the north of France. Two documents had preceded him. The first was the agreement, signed by his parents, to allow the Assumptionists to send their son to any one of their schools, not to insist that he come home to Kaysersberg during his school vacations, and the promise to take him back, should his superiors choose not to keep him. The second document was a letter from his pastor praising the young man's character, good conduct, and his serious intention to become a priest.

Joseph was not only leaving his home, his family, his parish, his native city, he was also leaving German-speaking Alsace in order to study for the priesthood in France.

The train ride to Paris must have been an exciting event in the young man's life. It was the first of many thousands of train rides he was to take throughout North America in later years as the promoter of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. His only living sister, Marguerite,<sup>3</sup> who had been sent to Paris at the age of sixteen to work as a seamstress, met him at the station. When, a few days later, he said good-bye to Marguerite, who had accompanied him to Mauville and left him in the care of the Assumptionists, it was the last time Joseph was to see any member of his family for six years. It was during this time that his father passed away, leaving his widow and three grown children: Clement, the eldest, the aforementioned Marguerite, and the youngest, Joseph, later to be known as Father Marie Clement.

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<sup>3</sup>Josephine died at age 19 when Joseph was 2 years of age.

## Chapter 4

These six years of Joseph Staub's life were spent in an "alumnate," the name given by the Assumptionists to their schools. Here young men of poor families, unable to pay for their education in a minor seminary, studied and prayed under the tutelage of Assumptionist priests. At a designated point in their studies, the students were free to choose the secular priesthood or enter the novitiate of any religious community.

The founder of the Assumptionist Congregation, Reverend Emmanuel d'Alzon, disappointed in finding almost no vocations among the sons of the rich students in his first school at Nîmes, had declared in 1871 that he would now look to the children of the poor for vocations. He was true to his word, setting up alumnates in various parts of France. Because these alumnates were entirely dependent upon donations, students, on their days off, were expected to work in the garden or cut wood for heating the buildings. Given the small number of students, the atmosphere within these alumnates was that of a close-knit family. This too had been the desire of Emmanuel d'Alzon. The annual month-long vacation was also spent at the alumnate.

Because Joseph's knowledge of French was very limited, he was sent to an alumnate which could offer him a more intensive course of studies—four years of formation instead of two—including the study of the Christian Greek and Latin authors, lectures on the history of the Church, and group recitation of the breviary. Joseph took to this life as though he had been meant for it from birth.

Excerpts from his diary of this period show him, even at this early age, intent upon perfecting his life style: "I have come to the alumnate to sanctify myself, to love my Jesus and Mary. The priest is a man of virtue. Jesus, Who has called us, says: 'At the alumnate I will teach you virtue, you will receive it in your heart, little by little; there it will grow

until the day arrives when your soul, having thus made progress, will be beautiful and ready for the priesthood!" The same entry in his diary has Jesus saying, "You will be prisoners for six years [at the aluminate] but there I shall be your consolation and your joy." Joseph Staub was evidently not merely an idealist. He knew full well that the six years ahead would be grueling ones. Mauville's dark walls had seemed to Marguerite Staub, Joseph's sister, like those of a prison. Indeed, life at the aluminate was extremely austere.

During those years of study and prayer at various locations, Joseph was, according to his diary, particularly interested in deepening his spiritual life. He seems to have been primarily concerned with retreats, meditations, and spiritual direction.

In 1894, the very year of his father's death, Joseph was clothed with the religious garb of the Assumptionists. During the annual retreat of 1895, he resolved to become an Assumptionist priest. By 1896, he had completed his course work in the humanities, at Clairmarais, another Assumptionist aluminate in northern France, where he had been known as "good Joseph" because of his great charity toward all his colleagues. In August of that same year, he was able at last to return to Kaysersberg after a six-year absence. One can imagine the joy of Joseph's mother and the rest of the family, to have their most promising member once again among them.

Joseph had left home as a fourteen-year-old; he was now twenty. One can only wonder what a mother's heart must have felt to see before her eyes her child become a man; better still, a man dedicated to God, intent on pursuing his studies for the priesthood, determined to become one of God's holy men, a saint in the eyes of his Maker. Marguerite Hertig Staub must have experienced an overwhelming joy and a sense of having done her duty as a Christian mother, in having freely made the sacrifice of separation from her beloved son, a sacrifice which had allowed him to dedicate his life to God's works on this earth. Joseph was deeply attached to his mother whose strength in adversity and great piety had inspired his youth. These qualities were to renew his fervor, strengthen his constancy, and sustain him through his own difficulties.

Already, as is attested to by his diary written during those six years at the aluminate, Marguerite Hertig Staub's son had taken to heart the need to perfect his character in the eyes of God. Some of the thoughts written down during those years of study give ample proof of Joseph's

seriousness of purpose and his perseverance in pursuit of perfection. In 1892, he was already writing: “I want to become a saint;” in 1894, he prays to the Blessed Virgin: “That I may become a saint;” in 1899 he states firmly: “I must be a saint.” There was great consistency in his prayerful intentions. This same young man who prayed alternately to the Holy Trinity for the Church, the pope, bishops, priests, and finally for vocations, would later ask his beloved Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc to pray on a given day for a distinct clerical category within the Catholic Church: the pope on Sundays, cardinals on Mondays, archbishops and bishops on Tuesdays, deceased priests on Wednesdays, secular priests on Thursdays, priests in religious orders on Fridays, with Saturdays reserved for future priests.<sup>4</sup>

Recent changes have been made in order to include missionary priests and permanent deacons in the above list. The new rule reads as follows: Sundays for the pope, Mondays for cardinals, archbishops and bishops, Tuesdays for missionary priests, Wednesdays for deceased priests, Thursdays for diocesan priests, Fridays for priests in religious orders, and Saturdays for future priests and permanent deacons.

After his twenty-day stay at home, Joseph went to Livry, a small town near Paris, to begin his novitiate in August, 1896. Joseph Staub was soon to become Brother Marie Clement. It was customary at the time in the Assumptionist community to choose a new name when admitted to the novitiate. In September then, Joseph chose the name Clement, a name dear to his family, one that had been handed down through the generations in the Staub family. Clement had been his father’s name, it was also that of his older brother. Attached as he had become to his new family, the Assumptionist Order, Joseph nevertheless saw fit to reaffirm his ties with his natural family for whom his affection and loyalty never wavered. To the name Clement, as if to sanctify it still more, he added the name Marie, thus reaffirming his profound attachment to Mary, Mother of the Lord.

In that same month of September, 1896, Brother Marie Clement started out on a pilgrimage to Rheims along with the other novices.

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<sup>4</sup>Recent changes have been made in order to include missionary priests and permanent deacons in the above list. The new rule reads as follows: Sundays for the pope, Mondays for cardinals, archbishops and bishops, Tuesdays for missionary priests, Wednesdays for deceased priests, Thursdays for diocesan priests, Fridays for priests in religious orders, and Saturdays for future priests and permanent deacons.

Symbolic of the life-long road that Christians need to travel in their quest for sanctity, the novices set forth that day, a red woolen cross pinned to their breast, having to beg for food *en route*, and refusing to accept money. Preceded by a cross, praying and singing, in bad weather as well as good, these latter-day Crusaders began their pilgrimage on September 8th and reached Rheims on the 17th, having slept where they could along the way. Rheims, that year, was celebrating the fourteen hundredth anniversary of the baptism of Clovis, the King of the pagan Franks. Clovis had been baptized, along with his entire army, in 496, by Remi, then Archbishop of Rheims. France's royal family thenceforth had been of the Catholic faith. It was in the magnificent gothic cathedral of Rheims in Champagne, that Joan of Arc, one of Brother Marie Clement's favorite saints, had witnessed the coronation of Charles VII in 1429. Joan's victories over the English had made this triumph possible.

The novices, upon leaving Rheims, were to return to Livry after a stop at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre in Paris. Thus, in this single pilgrimage were linked the two great achievements in the life of this Assumptionist: the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance, dedicated to the Sacred Heart, and the foundation of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc.

Brother Marie Clement's life at this time was one of study and intense prayer. Permission was even granted him to spend an additional hour and a half each evening before the Blessed Sacrament, from 9 to 10:30 P.M. In 1897, he was named *socius*, an intermediary between the novices and the novice master. He wrote in his diary that he hoped thereby to do all the good that he could "to those who surround me and make them happy."

It is worth noting that on many occasions, especially during this period of his religious formation, but also throughout his life, Brother Marie Clement would map out for himself a rule of life. This typically consisted of a long list of very precise resolutions. He noted that it was necessary to do this at retreat time, "when the Holy Spirit speaks to the soul," because later, "one's fervor may lessen" then, "one can reread one's notes and be renewed in faith and ardor." Brother Marie Clement added at the end of one of these lists of resolutions the further resolve, "to read them each day." He had copied these resolutions, which he kept on his person, on thin paper, in his tiny handwriting. His list of

resolutions for Lent 1897 reads: “If obedience will allow me:

1. I shall fast each day, except Sundays and holidays.
2. I will pray before the Blessed Sacrament each day.
3. I will take the discipline<sup>5</sup> on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
4. I will make six exterior mortifications each week.  
Each day, a short meditation on the Passion . . .”

At the end of his two years of novitiate, Brother Marie Clement put into writing what he had attempted to accomplish during this period of his life:

“To instill in myself an awareness of the Divine Presence.

*Love of Jesus Christ*—I dared to approach You, Jesus, often, and for long periods of time. I gave up my sleep to come before You and to become a member of Your court, along with Your angels, before the tabernacle; there, in silence, I listened to Your voice.

I tried to study Jesus and to find Him everywhere I went. I tried to study Jesus in my brothers.

*Love of the Blessed Virgin*—I will become even more closely a child of yours when I pronounce my perpetual vows. Oh, I wish to make this complete sacrifice of myself, once again through you.

*Love for the Church*—Jesus loves the Church in a sovereign manner. The Church nourishes Divine life within me. I must become a minister of this Church.”

Brother Marie Clement’s novice master in those years later wrote of his pupil: “His piety, the seriousness of his character, his spirited attitude in all things, his willingness, his docility, his edifying behavior were an example to us all. He was unstinting in his generosity.”

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<sup>5</sup>Discipline—a cluster of short, knotted cords used as a whip on one’s own shoulders and back.

At the end of his novitiate, Brother Marie Clement was assigned to pursue his studies in Rome. From October, 1898, to June, 1904, he studied philosophy and then theology in both Rome and Louvain. His diary for those years attests to the joy that Brother Marie Clement felt at being able to concentrate on his studies and to pursue his life of prayer in the silence and solitude of his room, “situated so near to our chapel, to the parish church of St. Gertrude, and to the Abbey of St. Peter. I have time to work away at my books. Saint Thomas Aquinas, what a treasure! I shall attempt to read all his works.” His principal resolutions at this time of his life can be summarized in two words: prayer and work. He adds in his diary, “I will be able to do good only to the extent that I shall be saintly and learned later on, and this is the proper time to become both. Forward! Conscientious and persevering work! I constantly hear Father d’Alzon saying to me: ‘One must study, and study a great deal.’”

By dint of hard work, Brother Marie Clement earned his bachelor’s degree in 1899 and his doctorate in philosophy in 1903. The following year he received a doctorate in theology.

Avid learner though he was, Brother Marie Clement did not spend all his time studying. Rome is such a fascinating city, especially for a young man whose heart and soul are entirely turned toward the Church in all of its glory. The grandiose architecture of Rome’s basilicas and sanctuaries, outward manifestations of the Church’s splendid past, a beauty that only Rome can offer, fills the Catholic soul with vibrant enthusiasm at the achievements of the Church.

To an impressionable, eager young man, Rome could also provide a multitude of exciting Church observances. Brother Marie Clement was present at the formal opening of the Jubilee Year of 1900.

That same year, he attended the anniversary of Leo XIII who had reached the venerable age of 90. In 1903, there was an audience with Pius X; in 1904, he attended the ceremony proclaiming the virtues of Joan of Arc. He was also present in 1904 at the ceremony proclaiming the heroic virtues of the Cure d’Ars. The enumeration could go on. Brother Marie Clement never let slip an occasion to be impressed by the happenings within the Holy Roman Catholic Church, events accompanied by all the pomp and glory which the Church, in its magnificence, can muster. He was later to make good use of the memories of these grandiose ceremonies, when the time came for him to organize

## *Chapter 4*

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processions and special commemorations to render more striking and impressive the truths of the living Church.

He also made a point of going to hear renowned homilists. Attentive to all the details of his priestly formation, he realized the importance of listening to great preachers for honing his own skills in the fine art of sermon making. Pilgrimages were also important to him. He visited as many sanctuaries as he could, in order to learn more about the lives of saints, the better to pattern his own life after theirs.

Brother Marie Clement, who abhorred improvisation, continued his disciplined approach to all things, even during his vacations. “My true rest,” he wrote, “is that which I will derive from prayer close to the Heart of Jesus, present in the Sacrament of Love. I will not let up on mortification. I will strive to speak of useful things . . . to edify my brothers by my example and devotion.”



## Chapter 5

In 1899, he was authorized by his superior to spend a few days in Alsace visiting his family. Unflagging in his energy, he wrote to his superior that, while in Kaysersberg, he had found time to teach catechism to the children of Father Burget's parish, and had given lectures on Lourdes, Rome, and the Assumption alummates. Tireless he was indeed!

In 1900, he visited Jerusalem with a group of pilgrims. During the sea voyage, he was responsible for some passengers in third class. In 1901, he did some teaching at Taintegnies, one of his *alma maters*. Then he started out in August of that year for Lourdes, to pray for the conversion of his brother-in-law, his sister Marguerite's husband, Thibaut Moritz. Having seen the sick cured miraculously, Mr. Moritz declared that he believed and wished to become a Catholic. He was baptized two days later by Father Emmanuel Bailly, the Assumptionist director of the pilgrimage. The summer of 1903 found Brother Marie Clement in Italy, at Mongreno, near Turin, where the Assumptionists were preparing to open an alummate, since all their French schools had been closed by the anti-clerical government of the Third Republic. The members of the community, Brother Marie Clement among them, pooled their energies in order to get the house ready to receive the incoming students.

In 1899, minor orders followed in quick succession for Brother Marie Clement. On the eve of his ordination to the diaconate, in February, 1904, Brother Marie Clement wrote, "I have just returned from my pilgrimage to the Basilica of St. Lawrence Outside the Walls. I felt I had to present myself before the dear and eloquent models who tomorrow will become my brothers and special protectors. I entrusted them with my consecration. May they obtain for me the humility, the

simplicity, the joyous and complete devotion which should characterize the deacons of the Holy Church.” Brother Marie Clement had also stopped at the Redemptorist Chapel of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and at St. Mary Major, “where I wished once again to present to my Mother tomorrow’s offering.”

But the truly great day was that of his ordination, on the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1904. For this most important event in his life, Brother Marie Clement had prepared himself with great care and profound humility. Before his retreat, which was to begin on the 9th of March, he wrote of “these blessed days of silence and adoration, when God will speak to us, and during which we can speak to God . . .” His thoughts written down at this time include the promise to Our Lord, always to be available in the confessional for the sick and the poor: “I understand the need for the heart of a priest to be compassionate and full of goodness.

One must not discourage, but always, after the necessary reprimands, encourage the penitent to go forward. I shall urge the more attentive souls towards greater things, towards more energetic sacrifices.”

When asked about his aptitudes, his aspirations, and wishes for the future, Father Marie Clement usually answered, “To obey; to abandon myself to obedience.” But he was, nonetheless, prevailed upon to state for what he thought he might be most suited. He thus wrote in April, 1904: “Teaching Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Gospels, the Psalms or Liturgy at the novitiate would please me very much, especially since this would serve to continue my formation for a fruitful apostolate.”

And indeed he was named to be assistant or sub-prior at the Assumptionist novitiate in Louvain where he taught Saint Thomas and the Lives of the Saints. Father Marie Clement could not have been happier. Teaching the second part of the *Summa Theologica* of Saint Thomas meant teaching the virtues, and this brought him great joy, since it enabled him to study even further and to comment upon such a rich and luminous doctrine. “What a privilege!” he was to exclaim.

In 1905, he was entrusted with the courses in hagiography, liturgy, and the study of the breviary. To his teaching was soon added preaching, hearing confessions, and the editing of *Assomption*, a newsletter for which he wrote in-depth articles. One of these treated the subject of religious vows; another described the requests of the Sacred Heart,

as stated in His apparitions. He took to heart the spiritual direction of the students entrusted to him, asking them to recite the rosary daily, a habit which he himself had practiced now for many years, exhorting them to be true to their vow of chastity. Knowing his enthusiasm, his superiors often gave him the opportunity to preach to the novices, a task for which he prepared himself carefully, through study and prayer. He also preached on a regular basis to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Louvain.

One senses that he was always ready to undertake with total dedication whatever his superiors asked of him. He wrote at that time, "I cry out to God that He may, in His kindness, maintain in the priestly heart of the religious that I am, the desire to give myself for His glory." His own aim at this time of his life, was to learn still more, to pursue his religious training in order to be better equipped to further God's kingdom. He was always careful to be totally disinterested, to safeguard the glory of Christ in all his endeavors. "My principle shall always be the following: Never do anything to be noticed, never omit anything for fear of being seen." In a letter to Father Emmanuel Bailly, his superior general, he wrote, "It seems to me that I am disposed to give generously of myself to whatever obedience will ask of me."

His local superior at that time, Father Benjamin Laures, when questioned later regarding Father Marie Clement in those days, said of him that he was an "excellent religious" who "contributed greatly to the spiritual formation of the novices." Some of the novices whom he taught in those years added how attentive he had been to their needs. As a professor, according to his students, his outstanding traits were the coupling of intense work on his part, with the demands he placed on his students to work just as hard. They told how, in speaking of the saints, he could be moved to tears. During recreation, they stated, he would return to the subjects taught in class; he spoke especially of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and to Mary Mediatrix. But this did not prevent him from being joyful in his own way, his cheerfulness nourished by an interior peace of heart. As a religious, he was an example of resoluteness, piety, and mortification. He ardently exhorted the novices to seek to be perfect. Whatever tended to diminish truth and devotion made him quite literally indignant. He voluntarily took part in their games and even organized some for the group.

Another of his students from those days described him thus: "Lately,

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when I reread his doctrinal lessons, it seemed to me that I could see the handsome radiant face of our professor, his luminous look, limpid like his soul, and almost hear once again the excited tone of his commentaries. His apostle's heart communicated to us something of the sacred fire of the love of Jesus Christ which glowed in his own heart. He was a man of conviction who lived his teachings."

He was always ready to help and encourage the novices, like an older brother placing himself at the level of these young men. Other witnesses of his life at that time relate how caring he was of each individual, going out of his way to encourage the most timid, telling them that there was room for everyone in the congregation.

## Chapter 6

The Assumptionist superior general, Father Emmanuel Bailly, decided to open a special house for the training of lay brothers in the year 1906. It was located in Gempe, near Louvain, in Belgium. The property had been a convent in the 18th century. The superior general's idea was to train the brothers in a separate house from that of future priests. For this enterprise he needed a man capable of empathy for these men, both the young and the not so young, and from different walks of life. These novices had earned their living before entering by working at various trades, and they wished now to learn how to be most useful in one or more of the multitudinous activities of a large institution.

Of all the men in the Assumptionist congregation at that time, Father Marie Clement was chosen as the one best-suited for the duties of novice master at Gempe. Knowing Father Marie Clement's background as the son of a cask maker, as well as his ability to single out individuals and help them prepare more fully and completely for religious life, Father Bailly named him to the post under the direction of Father Laures who remained at Louvain.

Prayer, Penance, Work—these were the order of the day at Gempe. These were goals which Father Marie Clement had set for himself from the earliest days of his own novitiate. He therefore knew quite well what they represented as aims and how fruitful they could prove to be as a way of life. Father Marie Clement was himself a man of fervent prayer, a man who spoke to God, a man who sought out all possible occasions to pray. The reader will recall that he spent each evening from 9 to 10:30 P.M. meditating in chapel. From his own novitiate forward, he lived always in the presence of God.

In 1898, he had set down for himself special intentions for each day of the week in his life of prayer and sacrifice. He was to use this same

approach with his novices at Gempe, knowing how well it had worked for him, realizing the benefits of a structured approach to all activities, be they spiritual or temporal.

Father Marie Clement valued penance because of its redemptive qualities. He was also aware from personal experience to what extent penance, deprivation even, can push one to greater heights, and can extend the limits of the individual soul's possibilities. Furthermore, he was conscious of the fact that penance, being concrete, is at the disposal of each soul. It has a formative value for everyone, for the uneducated as much as for the intellectual, because penance can be adapted to individual states of existence and of mind.

At the age of 20, Brother Marie Clement, always with the approval of his superiors, had added to his daily regimen a short meditation on the Passion, a Way of the Cross in chapel, giving himself the discipline, penances in the dining room: meals eaten on his knees, kissing the feet of the religious there, depriving himself of his afternoon snack.

He also realized the value of silence, its ennobling quality because it enables the individual to concentrate, to become introspective. Father Marie Clement viewed the observance of silence as one of the major paths leading to sanctity.

## Chapter 7

Father Marie Clement was an incredibly hard worker. He had made up in tenacity in his early years as a student for his lack of knowledge of French. He had always undertaken everything with intense energy, recognizing the importance of grit in making certain things possible. He knew also that achievement is seldom the product solely of inspiration. He was well aware that accomplishment is not automatic, but the result of difficult beginnings and sometimes slow-moving stages before concentrated effort can be crowned with success. Apprenticeship for life as a Christian, he was convinced, must be accompanied by rules to be learned, a discipline to be incorporated into one's way of life, an example to be followed, human models, either living or dead, in whose "presence" an individual can learn to become a true follower of Christ.

Father Marie Clement's experience, gained in the formation of brothers for a life of dedication to God through manual labor, was to serve him in good stead when later he was to found the community of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc.

For the present, he realized the importance of the task entrusted to him. He was never, in any case, to take anything lightly. But, true to his innate sense of unworthiness before the task at hand, he felt the need to marshal heaven to his aid. Thus he decided to place the new novitiate under the protection of the Sacred Heart. In this choice of the Sacred Heart as Protector of the brothers' novitiate can be seen to what extent there would always be continuity in Father Marie Clement's undertakings. The very impressive accomplishments of his later life had their beginnings in his youth, the foundations of his maturity had their origins in the days of prayer and concentrated efforts of his early years.

Father Marie Clement viewed the Sacred Heart as the true Superior of Gempe, the brothers' house of formation. "Oh, how this thought

gives me assurance, confidence, and hope," he wrote at the time. It is interesting to note also that the day chosen for the official opening of this house was the 21st of November, 1906, the anniversary of the Presentation of Mary, anniversary also of the death of Father Emmanuel d'Alzon, founder of the Assumptionist Congregation. Proof again that Father Marie Clement was already a past master at securing the protection of all those in heaven who had a special interest in the success of the work he was about to undertake, and were, therefore, most likely to intercede on behalf of the enterprise. There is a picture of him taken at Gempe in those years, showing him with his brothers. Behind the group stands a statue of the Sacred Heart.

Father Marie Clement never play-acted. To have a special Patron, to dedicate the house to Him, meant that the Sacred Heart would be at the center of the life style of the house, that He would be enthroned in each heart, and not only have His place of honor upon the altar. One realizes to what extent he was consistent with himself; one sees the logic behind and within all of his undertakings, and one is impressed. On the day of the official dedication of the house, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament took place in mid-afternoon. "I wanted my first act to be the consecration of this newly born undertaking to the Sacred Heart of Jesus," wrote Father Marie Clement.

The statue of the Sacred Heart, surrounded by flowers, had a place of honor above the altar. In a letter to his superior general, Father Marie Clement wrote at that time, "Thousands of times we repeat invocations and acts of love in honor of the Sacred Heart. We observe the First Friday of each month with great fervor and austerity. We faithfully observe the holy hour from 11 P.M. to midnight [on the eve], as well as [make] Communions of reparation. We practice the mortifications and penances that the Sacred Heart of Jesus has asked; and all this takes place in total silence."

Regarding penance and mortification in religious life, it is clear that Father Marie Clement was a strict taskmaster, but all witnesses agree that although he expected a great deal, he never demanded more than he himself practiced. Indeed, he always did much more himself than he asked of others. Consequently, he was able to report, in a letter to the superior general, that his novices were displaying great enthusiasm, much generosity, and true docility of spirit and heart.

Within a short period of time, the number of brother postulants dou-

bled. Many who, while the house was still at Louvain, had seriously thought of leaving religious life altogether, had changed their minds and stayed on at Gempe.

Father Marie Clement reported on the activities at Gempe in the periodical *Assomption*. What strikes the reader in his article is the extent to which Father Marie Clement was familiar with *all* the details of the house, down to being aware of how the printing press and the book-binding functioned. He could lead others because he obligated himself to become knowledgeable regarding their activities, and thus knew full well the difficulties of the various tasks he assigned. He did not neglect details, knowing their importance on a day-to-day basis, realizing that worthy projects can fail for lack of attention to all aspects of a given undertaking.

Testimony abounds to the fact that the best brothers the community was to have, came out of the house at Gempe, where Father Marie Clement had known how to combine training in the various trades, useful in the different houses of the community, with a very solid, very serious religious formation. It is evident from Father Marie Clement's letters of those years that he was totally absorbed in the task assigned to him, as he proved to be throughout his lifetime, wherever holy obedience sent him, and whatever work he was assigned to do.



## Chapter 8

After two years as superior of the Augustinian Brothers of the Assumption's house of formation, Father Marie Clement was assigned, in November, 1908, to become the founder and first superior of an Assumptionist aluminate in England. True to himself, and with that consistency which was an abiding trait in him, he dedicated his new apostolate to the Sacred Heart, while still aboard the ferryboat, as soon as he saw the English coastline.

During the following months, Father Marie Clement preached devotion to the Sacred Heart everywhere he went. He was happy, as he put it, to establish "new oases for the Sacred Heart." Soon, more than fifty London families had enthroned the Sacred Heart in their homes.

Father Marie Clement's enthusiastic nature, his habit of giving himself totally and with great ardor to whatever seemed worthy of his attention, were, however, to call forth words of caution from his superior general. It is from his own letter of reply to Father Emmanuel Bailly that we learn this. In it, Father Marie Clement wrote, "Thank you for your remarks regarding the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Father, I have never wanted to practice this devotion more than, or extol it to the exclusion of all others! Can we not, on the contrary, find here a means to reinforce our other devotions and to orient them in such a fashion that, far from being absorbed by it, they can coexist in mutual harmony, upholding and supporting each other? In my letter to you, I only wanted to point out to what extent simply making known the desires of Our Lord and the promises made by Him are deeply moving for any soul wishing to give Him the consolation of turning towards His Heart and doing something for His Kingdom. . . that all of this impressed people and greatly attracted souls, that I myself had been struck by this, and that it had done me much good also."

Upon his arrival in London in November, he had preached to various French religious communities established there. Within ten days of his arrival, he was learning English. By the following June, Father Marie Clement was able to preach his first sermon in English, on the Divine Heart. He would continue his preaching in English, evidently with a certain degree of success, since in July three Protestant women came to ask him to instruct them in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

By August, however, he was recalled to France, to Lourdes, where he participated in the national pilgrimage to that celebrated shrine. It was there that Father Marie Clement learned that his superiors did not feel the English climate to be propitious for a man who had suffered since childhood from a throat ailment. He returned briefly to London and to Ireland in order to preach the retreats he had accepted to do. In October he would leave London and England for a new assignment. Thus ended nearly a year of work in England.

Although the projected foundation of an aluminate in England was not to be realized at this juncture, Father Marie Clement's experience in England was to prove to be eminently useful for undertakings which he would bring to fruition in the following years. In England, Father Marie Clement had come in contact with different religious mentalities; he had learned English sufficiently well to be able to preach in the language; he had studied the constitutions and customs of a number of religious orders of women to whom he had preached retreats. His papers include twelve different sermons on the Sacred Heart and a series on Joan of Arc on the occasion of her beatification in 1909. These sermons were preached by him with great enthusiasm and conviction. Wherever he went, whether preaching in English or in French, Father Marie Clement always impressed his listeners with his own deep convictions, beliefs which he was always able to transmit by virtue of his saintly life and his remarkable powers of expression.

## Chapter 9

From 1910 until his death, Father Marie Clement was to be the fervent, energetic, and highly successful apostle of the Sacred Heart, principally through the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance. His devotion to the Sacred Heart, as we have seen, dated from his childhood in Alsace. A statue of the Sacred Heart was a focal point of the family's combination living room-dining room. This very statue can be seen today in the museum established by the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc at their motherhouse in honor of their father-founder.

Alsace was a region deeply devoted to the Sacred Heart. Shortly after the French Revolution, Father Miih, a famous homilist at the Cathedral of Strasbourg, had preached this devotion with great success. Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat (1779-1865), foundress of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, was to propagate this cult of the Sacred Heart in her academy in Kientzheim, located not far from Kaysersberg. As early as June, 1871, some five years before the birth of Joseph Staub, all the parishes of the diocese of Strasbourg had been consecrated to the Sacred Heart, at the request of the bishop.

Father Marie Clement's devotion to the Sacred Heart was further deepened by his knowledge that Father Emmanuel d'Alzon had, as a student in Rome in 1835, joined a society of secular priests, approved in turn by Popes Pius VII, Leo XII, and Gregory XVI, whose object was to propagate devotion to the Sacred Heart. The Assumptionist community was in the habit of entrusting to the Sacred Heart all its major undertakings: for example, in 1883, the transformation, from a monthly to a daily newspaper, of *La Croix*, which the Assumptionists continue to publish to this day for the French reading public. As early as 1881, all Assumptionist activities were consecrated to the Sacred Heart on an annual basis.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart in the Catholic Church can be traced back to the Middle Ages. It grew out of a special devotion to the pierced Heart of Christ crucified. From the 12th century onward, texts abound which refer to the open Heart of Jesus as the refuge of souls, the font of divine abundance, and as a symbol of love, calling for love in return. It is with Saints Mechtilde who died in 1298, and Gertrude who died in 1302, that devotion to the Sacred Heart began to take the form which we know today. Saint Gertrude has been called “the prophetess of Divine love,” through the Sacred Heart.

Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622) wrote abundantly about the Sacred Heart. And, as it happened, it was to Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), a member of the religious community founded by Saint Francis de Sales in 1610 with Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, that the Sacred Heart would appear. Saint Margaret Mary, a Visitation nun, was to be the propagator of today’s renewed devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Throughout his early life, Father Marie Clement referred again and again in his letters and in his diary to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, through Whom and with Whom he hoped to perfect himself and do all within his power to bring about the Kingdom of God. His personal “Resolutions.” which he carried with him everywhere he went, contain the following statement: “Endeavor more and more through all things in life, but especially by means of my spiritual exercises: meditation, Mass, breviary, examination of conscience, prayers, invocations, pauses each hour, *to live in union with Jesus in His Sacred Heart, under His active presence and influence.*”<sup>6</sup> Thus, many seeds had already been sown in Father Marie Clement’s own soul regarding devotion to the Sacred Heart before he was to meet Madame Edith Royer on September 7, 1909 and, as a result, become a herald for the Sacred Heart in the United States and Canada.

The meeting between Father Marie Clement and Madame Royer, the visionary, was to impress him deeply and set his life on a new course.

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<sup>6</sup>Father Marie Clement himself underlined these words.

## Chapter 10

Who was Madame Royer? Born in 1841, Edith Challan-Belval, Madame Royer, was the eldest of the six children of a profoundly religious couple. The family was an aristocratic one which had lost both title and fortune as a result of the French Revolution. Edith was brought up, however, in comfortable circumstances in Aisy, a village situated where the provinces of Champagne and Burgundy meet. Her father, a learned man who had given up his career as a professor in Paris in order to administer his father-in-law's estate, taught Edith Greek and Latin, right along with her two brothers. Even as a young child, Edith Challan-Belval is said to have been on very close terms with the Child Jesus and the Blessed Mother, believing naively that this sort of relationship was quite common for those who remained in the state of grace. She had, as a child of six, pronounced the vow of virginity "without knowing what it meant," as she was later to write in her autobiography, planning throughout her adolescence to enter a religious community. The family decided otherwise.

When Charles Royer, then aged twenty-nine, asked for Edith's hand in marriage, her family, in spite of her objections, saw fit to favor the marriage, going so far as to submit her objections to the pastor of Montbord who also happened to be Charles Royer's uncle. In answer to the priest's direct question as to which community she felt called to enter, Edith replied that she was hesitating between the Benedictines and the Carmelites. "In that case," retorted the old pastor, "the problem is resolved. The fact that you are hesitating between two types of religious life is proof that you do not have a vocation."

So it is that Edith Challan-Belval, in 1860, then aged 19, having been released from her vow of virginity by the Archbishop of Sens, married and eventually became the mother of four children. There

followed, for a period of a few years, a less intense life of penance and prayer, although one totally devoted to her new duties in which she excelled, as in everything else.

She was later to view her marriage as an act of infidelity. Her husband, a devout man in his own right, was highly respectful of his wife's life of prayer and penance. Madame Royer would subsequently say that she found her true vocation when she heard an interior voice say, "Be My spouse by crucifying yourself." From then on, it was through penance for the reparation of the sins of mankind that Madame Royer was to honor the Sacred Heart.

Three facts should be noted here: that Madame Royer was called by God to practice rare forms of penance; that Madame Royer practiced these penances as a married woman; and that, far from suffering from the austerities which she imposed upon herself, it was when she was forced to stop her extreme forms of penance that Madame Royer fell ill. Those around her, who feared for her health, even for her very life as a young mother, especially during her pregnancies, tried to prevent her from going too far, but illness always resulted whenever she stopped chastising herself. She was restored to good health as soon as she was allowed to resume these penances.

For Madame Royer, penance did not signify a commonplace sacrifice. The Sacred Heart, who appeared to her many, many times, exacted much from this favored soul. In 1867, when she was still only twenty-six years of age, she obtained permission from her confessor and parish priest, Father Lalourcey, to wear a hair shirt and to chastise herself. To this, she soon added drastic forms of fasting, as well as an iron belt and bracelets. As the penances dictated to her by the Lord increased in severity, Madame Royer's confessor began to be concerned, even frightened by what he deemed to be excessive, and so he forbade her to continue. She did as she was told, but shortly after stopping, Madame Royer began to feel very weak, her heart began to throb, her limbs to feel numb. Her circulation was so poor that she received the last rites. The next day, having felt a powerful attraction to resume her penances and thus performing them once again, she almost instantaneously found herself cured.

Some weeks later, a similar phenomenon occurred. Her confessor having renewed his refusal to allow her to persist, she was once again to fall ill and recovered her health only upon resuming her life of rigor-

## Chapter 10

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ous punishment of self. At one time, she spent more than fifteen days without rest. She either knelt in prayer or lay in a prostrate position, her arms outstretched for long periods. During this same time, she ate almost nothing and fasted for many days until five in the evening.

She wrote that by 1868, the Lord had asked her to sleep on a board as well as on a cross, her feet tied together and her hands attached to the arms of the cross. The cross was placed upon the board. On the central portion of the cross was a penance belt upon which had been fixed iron points, the crosspiece had bracelets to which had been attached very sharp shackles. She was later also to add a band which she wore around her head and to which had been attached small, sharp spikes. Two young women helped her in this. Both of them were in her employ: one as the teacher of her children, the other, a maid who had been in the service of her parents and had thus known her since childhood. They were also required to flog her until she bled.

She could not possibly continue to live this way without her husband's knowledge. When he realized what she had been doing, she was obliged to reveal to him all that the Sacred Heart required of her. She did so with such calm and simplicity that her husband, deeply moved, allowed her to continue her life of penitential suffering. The two children she bore during this period of time were both born in fine health.



# Chapter 11

During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, which lasted only a few months, Madame Royer had predicted the defeat of France and, among other things, the captivity of Emperor Napoleon III and his death in exile. Stunned and humiliated by this crushingly unexpected turn of events, French Catholics thought once more of building the shrine requested by the Sacred Heart in His apparitions at Paray-le-Monial to Margaret Mary Alacoque in 1689. According to the apparitions, the church was to be built in reparation for the sins of humanity. Central to this renewed desire in 1870, at last to build such a place of worship, was an association of prayer and penance. Thus, all the while the Basilica to the Sacred Heart at Montmartre was under construction, beginning in 1875, the establishment of an association of the faithful devoted to prayer and penance was also seeing the light of day.

As early as 1870 and 1871, petitions had been sent to the Holy Father, Pius IX, to consecrate the entire Church to the Sacred Heart. On Easter Sunday 1875, a decree making this official and authorizing the Litany of the Sacred Heart was published by the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

In 1873, the very year of the granting of official permission to build a basilica to the Sacred Heart on the hilltop of Montmartre in Paris, many important pilgrimages of reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus were organized throughout France. Their destination was Paray-le-Monial where Margaret Mary, who was to be canonized in 1920, had lived as a Visitation nun, and where the Sacred Heart had appeared to her on numerous occasions.

The most famous of these apparitions was that of June 16, 1675. Our Lord appeared to Margaret Mary on that day showing her His Divine Heart and indicating precisely which devotions she should prac-

tice in a spirit of loving reparation: “First, you will receive Me in the Blessed Sacrament as often as obedience will allow you. In addition, you will receive Communion each First Friday of every month. You will rise between 11 P.M. and midnight and prostrate yourself for an hour with Me, your face touching the floor, as much to appease divine anger by asking mercy for sinners, as to soften in some measure the bitterness that I felt at having been abandoned by My apostles. And during this hour, you will do what I shall teach you.”

At the pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial, in 1875, Madame Royer was among the thousands of pilgrims gathered there to honor the Sacred Heart. She was later to write of having sensed the presence of Margaret Mary at her side, but that she had not dared to look at her. Margaret Mary spoke to her on this occasion of the need to form an Association of Prayer and Penance and its importance in propagating the devotion to the Sacred Heart. She insisted upon the need to correct the misconceptions regarding this devotion. A deviation in the practice had crept in. It tended to seek out Divine Love while forgetting penance and immolation. “The Sacred Heart,” Margaret Mary said, “was asking that God’s justice be appeased and that Our Lord, surfeited with scorn, be consoled.” Thus, devotion to the Sacred Heart would now include reparation for humanity’s ingratitude and indifference to the love of Christ.

Already, in the 17th century, Saint Margaret Mary had spoken of this lack of gratitude on the part of human beings for the Heart of Christ devoured by love for His creatures, yet forsaken by them. An Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance, dedicated to the Sacred Heart, was needed to obtain the salvation of the Church.

## Chapter 12

Madame Rover's own account of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to her, over a period of many years, are set forth in a lengthy document she addressed to Pope Pius IX in 1873. In it she states Christ's message to the world through her humble person and insists upon the need for an association of prayer and penance: "His Heart is consumed, overflowing with love, with a desire to deliver us, but the justice of God still keeps His hands tied, is still opposed to it; He asks His friends, He beseeches them to help Him by forming, in union with His Sacred Heart, an association of prayer and penance, to appease the anger of His Father, to remove the obstacles which stand in the way of His desire for mercy."

By 1894, after many false starts, the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance finally received the approval of Pope Leo XIII. He elevated it from a national association, linked to France and to the need felt by French Catholics to do penance after the defeat of 1870, to the dignity of an Archconfraternity open to all Catholics. The Archconfraternity thus became an association seeking to group together souls united in the sufferings of Christ Jesus through prayer and penance. These souls, consecrated to the Sacred Heart, sought to atone for their own sins, for the crimes of individuals and societies, and for all the wrongs committed against religion and the Church. The aim of the Archconfraternity was to continue the work of redemption, to expiate the sins of humanity, and to work for the sanctification of souls.

Such an organization, particularly if it hoped to be world-wide in scope, needed apostles. Someone had to spread the word. A priest was needed to make known the Archconfraternity in the United States and Canada. Its French center, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre, needed a missionary to carry the message from Paris to

North America.

Madame Royer had learned to be patient and long-suffering. She had been assured in her visions that one day an apostle would be sent to her who could and would expand the Archconfraternity beyond the borders of France. She herself could not do this. One of the admonitions of the Sacred Heart to her had been to remain forever figuratively “buried beneath the shroud upon which the Divine Master wishes to elevate His throne.”

In writing to her confessor, Father Lalourcey, she was to include him also in this anonymity. “We must remain unknown,” she insisted. She was thereafter to be referred to only as *la Sainte Âme*, the Saintly Soul.

## Chapter 13

All the activities consecrating France to the Sacred Heart took place just before the birth of Father Marie Clement. He was to come face to face with Madame Royer on the morning of September 7, 1909, more than thirty years after the establishment of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance at Montmartre, and some fifteen years after Pope Leo XIII, in 1894, had established it as an Archconfraternity for the universal Church, endowing it with special indulgences.

The historic meeting between Father Marie Clement and Madame Royer, at the home of the latter, had been arranged by Cecile Grenierboley. Mademoiselle Grenierboley had been so singularly impressed when she met the Saintly Soul that she had felt the need to do everything she could to spread the message of Madame Royer's providential mission. In so doing, Mile Grenierboley had spoken, among others, to an Assumptionist friend of hers, Father Marie Auguste Leclerc, who was himself imbued with great devotion to the Sacred Heart. Already, in 1903, he had gone to the Basilica at Montmartre with a group of young men from Brittany so that they might consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart. Although he was himself a devotee, he sensed that he did not have the type of personality needed to organize an association on such a vast scale. So, Father Marie Auguste looked for someone in his community who had such skills. Father Marie Clement was his choice. Father Marie Auguste contacted Cecile Grenierboley who promptly wrote to Father Marie Clement sending him documents on the Archconfraternity.

Father, who at that time was still at Gempe, answered her in March, 1908, indicating to what extent he felt at one with her desire to make the Sacred Heart known and loved. "I have read all that you sent me with great attention and I was deeply moved. I am at present meditat-

ing on a plan to establish, here in our dear novitiate, an Archconfraternity affiliated with the one at Montmartre. When I have the opportunity, I will congratulate Father Marie Auguste at having guided you so well. You speak of the *Confidante* [of the Sacred Heart] regarding the story of Montmartre. You seem to know her personally. More details on this subject would please me greatly and would help me to accomplish some good.”

That same month, Father Marie Clement wrote to his superior general asking for permission to establish the Archconfraternity at the novitiate in Gempe. His letter went unanswered. In late April he reiterated his request, adding new arguments in favor of the Archconfraternity. The answer was no. This was very likely simply a matter of prudence on the part of the superior general, Father Emmanuel Bailly. Undeterred, Father Marie Clement continued to ask Mile Grenierboley for additional information. His letters indicate to what extent he was interested in the Archconfraternity, but he expected to encounter “objections and difficulties.” “Assuredly, the Sacred Heart will not allow me to triumph without having to fight,” he wrote on March 15, 1908. In the same letter, he added to what extent he aspired to give to his “life as a priest and a religious, this mark of the Apostolate of the Sacred Heart through the Most Blessed Virgin.”

Unable, for the moment, to be affiliated directly to the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance at Montmartre, because of his superior’s prohibition, Father Marie Clement wrote that solemn prayers to the Sacred Heart were, nonetheless, being said each evening during the month of June, that complete silence was the rule each Friday, and that a holy hour was observed from 11 P.M. to midnight each Thursday during June.

He would have liked to obtain a statue of the Sacred Heart directly from Madame Royer, realizing the effect this would have in stimulating his novices to even greater heights of fervor. He planned to use this request as a “pretext” (he himself uses the word) for writing directly to the visionary. His first letter to her is dated April 2, 1908. In it, after introducing himself as a religious, an Augustinian of the Assumption, he writes of the novitiate which he heads, and adds, “From the start, we chose as our ideal to love the Divine Heart *à la folie*<sup>7</sup> and in order

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<sup>7</sup>To distraction.

to achieve this, to learn to know Him and serve Him as best we can by accomplishing all of His wishes.”

He tells Madame Royer how he hopes to establish the Archconfraternity in the novitiate chapel, that he has encountered some obstacles, but that he has not abandoned his project “for so little.” He writes how much his novitiate of the Sacred Heart at Gempe wishes to become a “very small vein in the great artery of Montmartre.” Finally, he dares to add his request for a statue of the Sacred Heart of Montmartre, a statue, incidentally, which had been fashioned from the description given by Madame Royer herself, based upon the outward appearance of the Sacred Heart in His many apparitions to her.

According to Madame Royer, the Sacred Heart appeared to her with His arms outstretched, not “stiffly, as on the cross,” but rather as if to show “the tenderness of a father, wishing to reunite, to embrace His children; who calls to them, awaits them, invites them.” She had described in some detail the physical aspect of the Sacred Heart, particularly in His apparition to her of 1873: “When the Divine Master appeared to me, He was standing, dressed in a dazzling white, loose-fitting robe which reached His feet, covering them almost entirely. A sort of cloak covered His shoulders and fell across His arms, reaching down to His feet at His back. All of this was also as white as sparkling snow. At the center of His breast, I could see His Heart ablaze. He asked that this image of Himself be shown in all the churches, upon an altar, and That all the souls who love Me, come there to pray in unison, but especially that they unite in an Association of the Sacred Heart, which should be called the Association of Prayer and Penance . . . to help appease Divine Justice.”

Such is the statue so well-known to most Catholics—the Sacred Heart is dressed in loose, flowing robes, pierced heart ablaze, forehead showing the marks of the crown of thorns, hands and feet wounded by the nails hammered into them, crushing the dragon of evil at His feet, where lie the instruments of His Passion: the crown of thorns, the nails, the whip, a chalice even, symbol of the blood He shed upon the cross and continues to shed for us all at daily Mass. This statue was to become a familiar sight in churches and homes throughout the United States and Canada, due to the charismatic preaching of Father Marie Clement.

In June, 1908, Father wrote to Cecile Grenierboley that “if God

*Herald of Love*

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grants us life we will make Him [the Sacred Heart] known with holy enthusiasm!" Father Marie Clement's "holy enthusiasm" was to be so effective that between 1912 and 1928, in the United States alone, 324,695 persons would enroll in the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance which currently numbers nearly a million members.

## Chapter 14

The first meeting between Father Marie Clement and Madame Royer so deeply impressed and moved him that no obstacle would henceforth stand in the way of his obtaining the necessary authorization from his superior to establish the Archconfraternity in his novitiate. It is from Cecile Grenier-boley's account of the meeting that we learn about these details. At the end of his private interview with Madame Royer, Father Marie Clement came for Mademoiselle Grenierboley who had spent the time praying in Madame Royer's own private chapel. She writes, "My pen is powerless to recount the marvelous scene: the face of each of them radiated with holy joy and they showed such profound mutual respect that they seemed to be trying to outdo one another in a contest of humility. Father seemed sorrowful at having to leave the holy company of Madame Royer." Mile Grenierboley adds, quoting from another visit which she had witnessed between Madame Royer and a missionary who had exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful it is to see a saint!" I can say that I have seen something even better: I have seen two saints together."

Two months later, on the 21st of November, 1909, Father Marie Clement's new duties had been decided upon. Henceforth, the United States was to be his field of action. Before his departure, he was once again to request from his superior that he be allowed to preach the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance. The answer was quick in coming, "You will fail miserably." Father Marie Clement's own reply has been recorded, "Either the Sacred Heart has asked this of me or He has not; if not, I bow to your decision. But if He has asked this of me . . ." "All right then," replied his superior, "you have my authorization."



## Chapter 15

In retrospect, it does not seem surprising that Father Marie Clement was destined to come to the United States and then to Canada. First as a student, and then as a young priest, his vocation had already taken him from Alsace to France, from France to Belgium, from Belgium and France to Rome, from Rome to Belgium again, and then on to England and Ireland for a short period. In spite of an initial reticence at coming, due to an almost total ignorance of the New World, and because of his involvement in the religious activities of the Old World, Father Marie Clement was to find here both the wherewithal to achieve great things for the Church and a spiritual and moral climate well-suited to his own temperament.

Clearly, here was a man who could adapt to different ways of life, even to a new language. Had he not, at age fourteen, learned French in order to pursue his studies, and adapted to French ways, he the villager from German-occupied Alsace? Had he not been chosen to set up the first separate novitiate for Assumptionist brothers, he the cask maker's son, become a priest? Had he not been selected to go to England and there learn English in order to study the possibility of setting up an Assumptionist aluminate on English soil, he the man who knew no English? And having learned English, was not our man destined to use this new tool for the good of Holy Mother Church?

It would seem that his superiors were inclined to think so, since in 1909, finding himself in Rome for his annual retreat, he was invited by a fellow Assumptionist, who was leaving for the United States, to accompany him. Father Marie Clement's retort: "But America means nothing to me" did not deter his colleague who mentioned the idea to the superior general. Father Bailly seems to have been inspired by the suggestion, to the point of reiterating the possibility to Father Marie

Clement. The answer was to be expected, given the surprising nature of such a prospect which had never crossed his mind: "But nothing in my past has prepared me to go to America!" He was forgetting that nothing in his past had prepared him to go to France as a boy of fourteen, or to England, for that matter, as a grown man.

When, a few days later, the superior general again broached the subject, which had evidently been on his mind, Father Marie Clement replied, "Father, do not ask me if I want to go to America. If you ask my opinion, I will answer that I have no attraction whatsoever for that country. If you wish to send me there, you will break my heart, but that is of no importance. I am a religious, I will go."

On October 28th of that year, just three weeks before, Father Marie Clement had written to his superior from St. Etienne in France, that he awaited his final decision regarding his future occupation. On November 21st, Father Marie Clement noted in his diary, "All right, I'll go! I pronounce my *Fiat*<sup>8</sup> as well as I can, but what a feeling of dejection . . . What will ministry there be like? But I must not hesitate."

For someone born and trained in Europe, the United States could, in the year 1909, seem a sort of exile, away from the centers of Catholic learning, far from Rome, at the outer limits of the Catholic world. The religious who came to these shores from Europe could legitimately feel themselves to be missionaries. To a man like Father Marie Clement, with an enterprising nature and a natural eagerness to get on with things, being sent to the United States could not fail to be interpreted by him as a removal from the center and heart of Assumptionist activities. He realized all too well that the effectiveness of his ministry would be considerably hampered by his meager knowledge of the English language and of American culture. He spoke about his heaviness of heart to his novice master who was later to write of this interview, "I reassured him as well as I could, telling him that he could not imagine all that awaited him in the United States: a vast field of action where his zeal would work wonders. I did not know then how prophetic my words would prove to be."

Father Marie Clement was aboard the *Venezia* when it sailed from Naples for New York in December, 1909. The first Sunday at sea found him giving the homily at Mass to an audience composed mainly of Ital-

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<sup>8</sup>So be it.

## *Chapter 15*

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ian emigrants. Father was at peace with himself. Having accepted to leave his cherished Europe for the United States, and notwithstanding some misgivings as to the type of work he would be asked to do, he was willing to look forward. Futile regrets were not in his nature. Yet, upon his departure, he could not guess that France was not to be the place where his life's work would be accomplished. He imagined himself spending a few years in the United States to "complete his priestly formation and to perfect his English," as he wrote to Cecile Grenierboley. Until the year 1912, Father Marie Clement hoped soon to return to Europe. But it was not to be.



## Chapter 16

Father Marie Clement was destined to spend some twenty-six and one-half years in the New World. The United States and Canada were to be the scene of his most active, his most fruitful years. Aged thirty-three when he arrived, he was to die at age fifty-nine, having achieved two noble goals: establishing the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance on this continent and founding the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc.

His superior general had said of him, "He will do something beautiful in his life." Indeed, he who had written that he wished not only to be a holy priest, but also an untiring worker in the service of God and the Church, a generous son of "Assumption," using all his personal talents and abilities to that end, was to accomplish *many* beautiful things. He never once looked back. Having given his life to the Church, every act of his was to be one of total dedication and vigorous work.

Initially, his activity was focused almost entirely on the establishment of the Archconfraternity. Father Marie Clement's special talents as a preacher had become known and, as a result, he was asked to preach throughout New England and in Quebec. He was an eloquent speaker whose enthusiasm and convictions were communicated in a direct manner to those who gathered to listen to him. He both impressed and moved those who heard his sermons. His own inner strength was brought home to his audiences, energizing them, renewing their faith and inspiring them to go forward as missionaries of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Although Father Marie Clement's English was still very rudimentary, and, in spite of the fact that he suffered all his life from a throat ailment, he would, in a few short years, succeed in preaching regularly, in English, to hundreds and thousands of people and to enroll them in the Archconfraternity.

By the end of the year 1909, Father Marie Clement was at Assumption College in Worcester, founded by the Assumptionist Order, in 1904. Their congregation having been legally banned from French territory by an anti-clerical French government, the Assumptionists had arrived in the United States looking for a means to carry on their principal apostolate, that of teaching.

Given the existence in New England, at the turn of the century, of a population of some 500,000 French-Canadian immigrants, in the textile and shoe-manufacturing cities of that region, it seemed logical for the Assumptionists to open a college in Massachusetts where the greatest number of French Canadians was living.

Worcester, in 1910, had a large French-Canadian population, grouped in four parishes, where French, rather than English, was used during religious services. At that time, there were nearly 300 parishes throughout New England, established by and for French-Canadian immigrants. What a splendid opportunity for Father Marie Clement to be able to preach in French and to hear confessions in French, as he would for so many years! His faltering knowledge of English was, therefore, not to prove to be a major obstacle in those early years.

Although assigned to the Worcester community, Father Marie Clement was not to be a teacher. His role, from 1910 to 1914, was principally that of a retreat master, going from one religious congregation to the other, and from parish to parish, spreading Christ's message. One day of each of these retreats was always reserved for the Sacred Heart.

On the very first Friday of January, 1910, not very many days after his arrival in the United States, Father Marie Clement preached about the Sacred Heart and the Archconfraternity, in French, to the good people of Chicopee Falls, near Springfield, Massachusetts. Of his first contact with this ethnic group, Father wrote to Cecile Grenierboley, "What beautiful and good souls are hidden in this parish! What a joy it was to be able to bring them consolation, strength, and light—chains shattered, broken wings healed. During Mass, I had the joy of consecrating the host which they came to adore and through which the Heart of Jesus will sanctify souls." He was clearly overjoyed about this first experience in a New England parish. The people of Chicopee Falls now knew about the First Friday devotion.

In addition to these parishes where the communicants were them-

## Chapter 16

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selves recent immigrants from French Canada, or the children of immigrants, there were, in New England, communities of men and women religious from France who had established houses and schools in various cities in the region. These communities of religious, like the Assumptionists themselves, had been forced to leave France and find other countries where they could continue to teach without harassment from the government. One of these religious orders, the *Filles du Saint-Esprit*,<sup>9</sup> from Saint Brieuc in Brittany, had opened a provincial house in Hartford, Connecticut. They invited Father Marie Clement to preach a series of retreats. At their close, 103 sisters had enrolled in the Archconfraternity, each of them eager to spread the good word in the various parishes in New England where they staffed the parish schools.

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<sup>9</sup>Daughters of the Holy Spirit.



## Chapter 17

In January, 1910, Father Marie Clement became chaplain at St. Anne's, an orphanage in Worcester, Massachusetts, staffed by the Grey Nuns of Montreal. These sisters had dozens of children in their care. Father, with his usual zeal, prepared short but substantial instructions for the children at every Mass that he celebrated. In one way or another, mention was always made of the Sacred Heart. On the 19th of March, Feast of St. Joseph, his patron saint, the sisters had prepared a special celebration to honor Father Marie Clement. He spoke to the children about the Archconfraternity and on the Feast of the Sacred Heart that year he introduced the older children and the employees to the rules governing membership in it. A large number of them enrolled then and there. Thus, among the first to enroll in the Archconfraternity in the United States were children and working-class men and women. Father Marie Clement would thereafter refer to them as his first battalion. The children's behavior, as a result of their enrollment, improved so greatly that the sisters were much impressed and said so in their reports to their mother-house in Montreal.

Later, when the superior general of the community arrived from Montreal to visit the Worcester establishment, the sisters lost no time in recounting the beneficial influence that membership in the Archconfraternity had exerted upon their youngsters. After hearing a lecture given by Father Marie Clement, the superior general and all the sisters of the orphanage also enrolled as members. Upon her return to Montreal, Mother General prepared a circular letter destined to each house in her institute in which she explained the purpose of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance.

Father Marie Clement had foreseen the need for a flyer on the devotion to the Sacred Heart, listing the requirements for membership in

the Archconfraternity.<sup>10</sup> With the help of the Grey Nuns, copies of the flyer were made for distribution to their own sisters, and soon to other religious congregations in the city of Montreal where so many mother-houses of different religious communities are located. More than two thousand Grey Nuns responded favorably to their mother general's appeal. Thereafter, each of them became an apostle, enrolling thousands of school children, orphans, the elderly, the poor, in both the United States and Canada, wherever they had houses and schools.

In the meantime, Mother Piche, the superior general of the Grey Nuns, had spoken to her colleagues, the superiors of the Congregation of Notre Dame, the Sisters of St. Anne, and the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Each community, in turn, answered the call.

The Eucharistic Congress of 1910, held in Montreal, was a heaven-sent opportunity. There, Father Marie Clement met the superior general of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, founded in Belgium, whose forty-seven houses in the United States were flourishing. She asked Father Marie Clement to explain the Archconfraternity to her sisters, gathered in Montreal for the Congress. He did so in English, wondering later how he had managed, because his English was so poor. He must have been convincing, as well as clear, since these sisters, having returned to their schools in the United States, were soon enrolling others in the Archconfraternity. Father Marie Clement reported to his own superior general that the superiors of both the Grey Nuns and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur saw the Archconfraternity as a providential response to what had been a preoccupation of theirs, "an auspicious means of renewing the spirit of fervor within their respective institutes."

Religious communities chose various methods of observing the Day of Reparation. In some, the sisters were divided into seven groups, one for each day of the week. It was up to that group then, to observe its day of reparation. In other communities, the entire convent observed the same day of reparation. In still others, the individual was free to choose her day.

As early as November, 1910, therefore, Father Marie Clement could

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<sup>10</sup>The aims of the Archconfraternity are to expiate for the sins of humanity and sanctify souls. Members enlist in one of three categories: those who choose to observe four days of prayer and penance per month, one each week; those who choose to do two; and, finally, the group which chooses one day only of "reparation" each month.

## *Chapter 17*

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foresee success for the Archconfraternity. He wrote, “Hundreds of names are sent almost every month to Montmartre. There is great hope for even more consoling victories in the future.”



## Chapter 18

Success was so sudden and so total that the staff of Montmartre was overwhelmed. Longer and longer lists of adherents and numerous offerings were being sent on a continuing basis to the international center in Paris which simply could not keep up with the volume of correspondence. Regrettable delays occurred. Errors were made. Needed documents, as well as enrollment booklets, were late in arriving. It soon became clear that some changes would have to be made. The only practical solution seemed to be to establish a Center in the United States.

The provincial superior of the Assumptionists spoke to John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York, where the Assumptionists had two parishes. He welcomed such an establishment in his Archdiocese if the superior of the Basilica of Montmartre in Paris approved. The formal telegram of agreement reached New York from Paris in August, 1912. The American Center of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance was thus duly and canonically established in the Church of Our Lady of Esperanza at 624 West 156th Street in New York City, on August 15th, Feast of the Assumption. Lists containing the three thousand names of the most recently affiliated members, those who had joined since the feast of the Sacred Heart in June of that year, were placed upon the altar during the Solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Heading the list were the names of Archbishop Paul Bruchési of Montreal and Bishop Alexis X. Bernard of St. Hyacinthe in Quebec. Archbishop Bruchési, after a lengthy conversation with Father Marie Clement, had promised that he would speak of the Archconfraternity during the retreats preached to the priests of his diocese, asking each of them to set aside a special day for prayer and penance. He was true to his word. Father Marie Clement wrote of his joy at this fortunate turn

of events in a letter addressed to his superior general in September, 1912: “Five hundred priests have followed his [Archbishop Bruchesi’s] example and have registered their names with the Association. The work of Montmartre has not seen such a day since it began. His Excellency is delighted with it all and would now like to set up a Center in Montreal for all of Canada and establish the Archconfraternity in seminaries, religious communities, parishes, schools, everywhere.”

Already, in May of 1912, Father Marie Clement could write to Madame Royer: “Without a doubt, the Good Master has visibly blessed our efforts. Since last May we have sent 9,412 names—of religious for the most part. What helps us enormously are the Regulations for the days of prayer and penance.”

## Chapter 19

Father Marie Clement belonged to a religious order whose founder believed in the power of the pen. For this reason, the Assumptionists had, early on, become involved in publications of all sorts, reaching out in this way to people everywhere. Such importance attributed to the written word was not lost on Father Marie Clement. He would always be involved in putting out flyers, bulletins, newsletters on the Archconfraternity, thus forming a network of readers linked together by a common interest.

With great perspicacity, Father prepared different leaflets, one for each age group and for various categories of individuals, to help them organize their Day of Reparation. There was one leaflet for religious, another for lay adults, one for the sick, one for children. Why a special leaflet for children? Father Marie Clement had not forgotten the increased fervor of his young orphans in Worcester and the salutary effect on their behavior, as a direct result of their enrollment in the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance.

He also wrote a booklet containing all the necessary information on the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance; a Guide for those who wished to devote themselves to enrolling others in the Archconfraternity; a leaflet on what had to be done in order to become an affiliated member; a pamphlet containing answers to possible questions on the association and suggestions about how to conform to its goals; a booklet on Pius X and the Archconfraternity; one entitled, *The Day of the Sacred Heart*; and finally, *A Life of Union with the Sacred Heart*.

For the English translations of these booklets, Father Marie Clement enlisted the aid of Sister Gertrude O'Brien, S.N.D. She was living at the convent of Notre-Dame-du-Lac in Worcester, where Father often celebrated Mass, and where the Sisters of Notre Dame de

Namur have, to this day, a retirement home for their aged and sick sisters. With Sister Gertrude's help, he published English versions of the official Montmartre documents as well as his own booklets. Through them he hoped to obtain the North American hierarchy's approbation of the Archconfraternity. An explanatory letter detailing the results already achieved accompanied the booklets which were sent to bishops throughout the United States and Canada. By April, 1913, three cardinals: Farley of New York, O'Connell of Boston, and Gibbons of Baltimore; seven American bishops, three Canadian ones, and the apostolic delegates of the United States and Canada, had responded favorably. Many more letters of approbation would arrive in the months which followed: a letter, written in 1914, addressed by the superior general of the Assumptionists to Pope Pius X, stated that more than thirty archbishops and bishops had given their blessing to Father Marie Clement's work.

In a letter, written in May, 1912 to Madame Royer, Father Marie Clement informed his correspondent that he was sending her the entire series of booklets in French. "Tell me what you think of them, or if you think that certain changes should be made," he wrote.

Since his arrival in the United States, through profound personal conviction and exceptional singleness of purpose, Father had affiliated nearly 10,000 persons in the Army of Reparation for the Sacred Heart.

By March, 1914, less than two years after its official opening, and a little more than four years after the start of Father Marie Clement's efforts in favor of the Archconfraternity, the American Center already had more than 75,000 members. The secretariat remained in Worcester, at Assumption College, where Father continued to reside. He had been obliged to ask for the help of volunteers, both religious and lay, to keep up with the ever-increasing volume of mail.

In June, 1910, Father Marie Clement had enrolled ninety-one young orphans and employees of St. Anne's Orphanage in Worcester; by 1914, thirty-two entire religious communities were enrolled. And this was to be only the beginning of an apostolate which, by 1920, had two Centers affiliated to Montmartre: one in New York totalling 300,000 members, and a Canadian Center, established in Quebec, in 1917, which numbered nearly 100,000 adherents.

The priests at Montmartre were duly impressed, writing to Father that, alone, he was accomplishing more than they themselves in Paris

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were able to do with twenty staff members. The approval of so many bishops and archbishops had given the work an enormous thrust forward.



## Chapter 20

In the spring of 1914, Father Marie Clement was called to Rome. He had the foresight to take along with him a complete dossier of documents on the Archconfraternity which he hoped to submit to his superior general, and even to the pope himself, if that proved to be possible. He was successful in seeing Pius X in a special audience granted to his superior general, Father Emmanuel Bailly, whom Father Marie Clement accompanied on that propitious day.

Father's own account of the audience tells of showing the sovereign pontiff all the encouraging letters of approval from the American hierarchy and the consoling results obtained during the first years of the existence of the Archconfraternity in the New World. "Pius X seemed to be struck by all of these details. To encourage our work, he enrolled himself as a member of the Archconfraternity, and in response to the *Supplication* which our Very Reverend Father General submitted to him, he deigned to prepare a *Rescript*<sup>11</sup> written entirely in his own handwriting, recommending the Archconfraternity to the priests of the entire world and enriching our work with precious favors."

It was during this special audience that the pope blessed and encouraged Father's work and, in response to a special request from Father Marie Clement, the pope blessed all of America, "*Benedico tutti, tutti e tutto!*"<sup>12</sup> In his diary for that day, Father Marie Clement wrote these words, "Long live Pius X who blessed our Archconfraternity, our efforts in America, the Apostles of the Cause. This approbation and these blessings of the Vicar of Jesus Christ . . . will give us life, strength, courage, and our work shall flourish!"

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<sup>11</sup>A *Rescript* is a decree issued by a pope.

<sup>12</sup>"I bless everyone, everyone and everything!"



## Chapter 21

The July 1914 issue of the *Bulletin of the Universal Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance in Honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, published at the Basilica of Montmartre in Paris, told its readers of the “marvelous results achieved in America through the zeal of a true apostle of the Sacred Heart.” The article went on to state that “in fewer than two years, in nineteen months to be exact, we have enrolled 76,000 members, from all corners of the immense American territory.”

The same issue recounted in some detail the consecration to the Sacred Heart of the parishioners of St. James Parish in Manville, Rhode Island, in November, 1913. The article described Father Marie Clement as a man of “strong conviction” and “communicative eloquence” who had explained to the parishioners “the beauty” as well as the “salutary advantages of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance.” By the retreat’s end, 1,700 persons had enrolled in the Archconfraternity. The closing session served as the occasion for a triumphant ceremony during which Father Marie Clement named the pastor as the “general” of this “army” of faithful to “direct and lead it to the victory which in this instance is a true life of prayer and penance in a spirit of reparation in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”

According to the account, the ceremony was followed by a homily, “so moving and so stimulating, that a quiver ran through the packed church and, at Father Marie Clement’s suggestion, a collection was taken up to erect a statue of the Sacred Heart.” The Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, which concluded the retreat, turned into a triumph for the Sacred Heart, with the pastor-general reciting the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. “It was beautiful and imposing. Men were shedding tears. As they left the church, everyone agreed that truly they had never in their lives experienced a day like

this one.”

Ceremonies like this were to be repeated over and over again in the United States and Canada in the years to come. The enthronement of the Sacred Heart in a particular parish was generally followed, some time later, by a very special ceremony of consecration of the families. On a given Sunday, at noontime, to the sound of the church bells ringing solemnly, each family, having hurried home from Mass, knelt before an appropriately decorated statue or picture of the Sacred Heart and recited the Creed. Then, the head of the family read the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart. This was followed by the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and an invocation in memory of the deceased members of the family. Confession and communion usually preceded this ceremony, and following it, these consecrated parishioners met again at church, where a solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament took place with all of the pomp and ceremony that each parish could call forth. Thus, in certain parishes throughout New England, entire families joined the Army of Reparation of the Sacred Heart as a unit, and did so with deep devotion and touching piety.

The pastors of French-speaking parishes like St. James in Rhode Island, where Father Marie Clement wrought so much good for the Sacred Heart, were themselves French Canadians. It seems appropriate to praise them here for their enthusiastic endorsement of Father Marie Clement’s work in favor of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance. Although Father received great support from many quarters, as has been shown, he could not have achieved so much success so quickly had it not been for the zealous collaboration he received from French-speaking parishes and religious communities in both the United States and Canada.

As he became better known, Father Marie Clement was very much in demand to preach annual retreats throughout New England and New York; in Ottawa, and throughout the Province of Quebec. These were to be Father’s preaching years, years of intense activity. His own mother is quoted as saying about her son’s travels, here, there, and everywhere to preach the Archconfraternity, “He was born on the day of the Visitation; he was bound to travel a great deal.”

From 1911 through 1917, Father gave hundreds of lectures and homilies, and preached numerous week-long retreats to religious communities, in addition to parish retreats. He preached to school children,

college students, and the Children of Mary.

Father's retreats generally began on Sundays and ended on Fridays, with the Day of Reparation. As a general rule, homilies given during this time followed a set pattern. First, Father Marie Clement preached the need for penance and proved its necessity by referring to the Gospels, the words of Saint Margaret Mary, and the writings of the Saintly Soul who had been the initiator of the Association for Prayer and Penance at Montmartre. He would then go on to explain the religious exercises required for membership in the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance. The last day was one of reparation and expiation to the Sacred Heart in which all took part.

These retreats of the Sacred Heart resulted in astonishing conversions and amazing returns to the faith which impressed both priests and bishops who had worked hard to obtain the same results, with little or no effect. All who participated in these retreats stated how their lives had been changed by them. They insisted upon the unforgettable nature of the experience of seeing and hearing a man whose face was radiant, whose speech was fervent, who spoke of the Sacred Heart with such impressive enthusiasm that he was able to communicate this to those who listened. Testimony abounds as to the extent to which his own ardent convictions were transmitted to his audience. One eyewitness describes Father Marie Clement as "a fiery apostle." That he was a holy priest, no one doubted. One witness wrote, "He spoke of the Sacred Heart with such fervor that it seemed to us as though he had himself seen Him or that he saw Him even while he spoke to us."

Fire, ardor, fervor, these are the words which returned again and again when people spoke or wrote of Father Marie Clement. He was no doubt an extraordinarily effective speaker, able to transmit his own fervor to those who listened. He succeeded in making people stand up and take new notice of their commitment as Christians. Under his influence, their faith was renewed, their convictions were deepened, their zeal knew no bounds.

Convinced that through his preaching of the Archconfraternity, he was in conformity with the wishes of the Sacred Heart, as expressed to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and Madame Royer, and that the results achieved to date could only be pleasing to Him, Whom he loved completely and with utter devotion, Father Marie Clement gave totally of himself, sensing that he had found his definitive vocation within the

priesthood.

## Chapter 22

At the height of his intense activity as the North American promoter of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance, Father Marie Clement was approached one day, in February, 1913, by Alice Caron, a woman in her early forties, who claimed to have a supernaturally inspired message for him. Father had been preaching the Lenten retreat at St. Joseph's, a La Salette parish in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. This city of about 40,000 souls is located some 25 miles north of Worcester, where Father Marie Clement was stationed. In addition to his regular sermons, Father had decided to give a series of afternoon talks on Joan of Arc to the young women of the parish. Alice Caron was among them.

Father Marie Clement had always had a special admiration for Joan of Arc. He considered her a compatriot, since she was from Lorraine, he from Alsace, the two provinces most affected by the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and its aftermath. Having attended a special ceremony at the Vatican proclaiming Joan of Arc's virtues, the very year of his ordination, in 1904, he had written, "Joan, you are my sister; you are from Lorraine, I am Alsatian. I shall do something for you during my life as a priest." In 1913, that "something" was to be an altar and a statue of Joan of Arc in the chapel of Assumption College.

The Holy Spirit chose this Lenten period, seven years before the canonization of Joan, whose heroic virtues have been a source of inspiration to women everywhere, to speak to His Assumptionist son. He did so through a humble woman with no formal education who worked as the housekeeper in the parish rectory. Moved, as she said, by a supernatural inspiration, Alice Caron approached Father Marie Clement and told him that Joan wanted more than an altar from him. "She also wants you to give her a community of religious sisters who would offer themselves up as victims of love for priests," she stated.

Father Marie Clement, who was born poor, and who was inclined to take all things seriously, was not a man to consider something negligible because it came from a humble source. For the next ten months, he meditated on the pronouncement of Alice Caron and prayed for guidance; consulted his superiors and solicited their advice; visited other congregations of sisters and beseeched their prayers—until he was personally convinced that an attempt could be made at founding a community of women religious whose reason for being would be the *service* of priests.

Because of his vast experience, gained in preaching retreats in the United States and Canada, Father Marie Clement was well aware that parish priests in rectories were in great need of discreet, devoted housekeepers who could serve the Church by being auxiliaries of God's ministers in the diocesan priesthood. These women were not always easy to find. The idea of a community devoted to the care of priests was, therefore, the type of suggestion capable of firing up Father Marie Clement's well-known zeal.

He had, however, been sufficiently warned by his superiors to beware of his penchant for taking on seemingly impossible projects. So, he reacted to this one with some measure of prudence. For nearly a year he considered the pros and cons of such an undertaking and discussed the matter at length with Alice Caron. In November, 1914, during the opening months of World War I, Father Marie Clement received a telegram from Father Emmanuel Bailly, his superior general, finally authorizing him to go ahead with the foundation.

## Chapter 23

Let us backtrack a little. On the 31st of December, 1913, Father Marie Clement listed in his diary the highlights of that year, including his various activities for the Archconfraternity. The list contains sixteen items in all. Of these, twelve pertain to his activities in honor of the Sacred Heart, including the choice of an appropriate statue for the enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the various parishes which he visited. The diary mentions his days spent at Saint Mary of the Woods, the motherhouse and college of the Sisters of Providence in Indiana, and his visits to the cities of Cincinnati, Reading, Columbus, Washington, Philadelphia, and New York, to preach the Archconfraternity. Mention is also made in this list of the encouraging letters received during the year 1913 from the cardinals of Boston, New York, and Baltimore, blessing the work of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance.

Item 4 in the list is of special interest, since it mentions that he preached the Lenten retreat at St. Joseph's in Fitchburg, as he had the previous year. He writes at this point, "During this same Lenten season, I preached to the young women on Joan of Arc. The idea of an altar was received very favorably. The collection basket yielded \$232.00. The altar will be built!"

Items 11, 13, and 14 contain yet other interesting references. In the first, Father Marie Clement states, "I confided in Father Stéphane Chaboud [his provincial superior] about the project of the little family. He was struck by the idea. He seems to see in it the Hand of God and asks that we pray a great deal ourselves, and ask others to pray also." Item 13 adds, "On the 9th of October, another interview with Father Stéphane who decided to act immediately by consulting Father Emmanuel [Bailly]." And, finally, Item 14 gives further details, "Father Stéphane came to Worcester. Interview, discussion of everything

... The next day, Friday the 19th [of October], Father Stéphane wrote to Father Emmanuel in Rome, asking him to have me come to Europe to speak of grave and urgent questions with him.”

Then comes a reference to Father Marie Clement’s cherished dream: to build a National Shrine dedicated to the Sacred Heart. “Another great thing marked the month of October; the superb letter of Very Rev. Father Emmanuel, dated 6 October 1913, from Gempe, outlining a plan of operation for a future national basilica, an American Montmartre dedicated to the Sacred Heart.” Circumstances would later dictate that the above-mentioned basilica be built instead in Quebec, with the approval of the Archbishop of Quebec, Louis N. Cardinal Bégin, on land bought by Father Marie Clement. The Montmartre Canadien, as it is called, is still to this day the center of much religious activity ministered to by Assumptionist priests.

Father Marie Clement concludes this lengthy entry in his diary with this statement: “I will dedicate my life to the realization of these great things! But I am all alone! What work—I sacrifice all of my time to keep up with it all!” In the same passage, he also expresses his gratitude for the favors granted him by the Almighty.

## Chapter 24

Because we are fortunate enough to have Father Marie Clement's diary for the years 1913-1915, we shall quote at length from it in the following pages. The reader will thus have the opportunity to relive, almost day by day, the trials and tribulations, as well as the great joys, which go hand in hand with the founding of a religious congregation.

Father Marie Clement's diary for 1914 is replete with references to the possible founding of a community of sisters. Alice Caron's message had struck home. He was, however, very much aware of the difficulties inherent in such an undertaking, but his singleness of purpose and his persevering nature would serve him well in this venture, as they had in all else in his life. At a quarter past midnight, the very start of the New Year, he wrote, "I spent the last hour of 1913 and the first moments of 1914 in chapel, at the altar of the Sacred Heart, those of Blessed Joan of Arc and the Most Holy Virgin, and before the manger. I consecrated everything to the Divine Heart, through his little Joan and through Mary. What does 1914 hold for us? Father Omer (Rochain, his local superior) says, 'Great things.' Even if the future seems obscure, the paths hard and steep, the way long and bristling with thorns, the Master walks there. That is enough. I begin 1914 under His divine benediction. I solemnly consecrate to Him my heart and my life, as well as Alice and the souls who would follow in her footsteps, if such is the will of God! Father Omer reminds me of how the Society of the Daughters of Jesus was founded. The resemblance is striking. Let us wait! But in the care of the Divine Heart, protected by Joan and Mary!"

The diary refers again and again, in the early days of January, to the possibility of founding a community in the service of the priesthood, dedicated to Joan of Arc, symbol of heroic, determined youth. He spoke to a young woman, Edna Lacroix, in Holyoke, Massachusetts,

who seemed to him to be a worthy subject for such a community, if all went well. He asked her to pray in a spirit of silence and immolation. On the 4th of January, he inserted the following prayer: “O Jesus, open the way, prepare the souls which You want as Your little victims! Good little Joan, fight for your Sisters. Help us!”

## Chapter 25

A telegram arrived from Rome on the 16th of January. It read: "Send Clement Rome." It was signed: Emmanuel (Bailly). Father Marie Clement arrived in Paris on February 11th. He was to spend Friday, the 13th of February, at Montmartre in Paris, where he spoke to the superior, Father Crepin, after saying Mass at the main altar. "How good Jesus has been," he wrote in his diary. "I felt that our entire army of American Associates, all 73,000 who have joined in the past 16 months, were grouped about me. And there I confided to the Good Master our ambitions for the future and for His Cause. I gave Him all I have: all my strength, all my powers of action and influence, all of it so that his *Kingdom may come*. And if He wants a Montmartre across the sea; if He wants victims as pure, sweet hosts before His holy Majesty; if He wants to continue to see the staff of His army increase, and to see it become organized and fortified—we are ready over there—for it all, for it all. Take me, O Master: my spirit, my heart, my hands, my feet, my strength, my life. I give all this to You, solemnly, in Your national basilica to which we have riveted America, the New World, with the chain of the Archconfraternity."

The first words of his superior general to Father Marie Clement, as he blessed him upon his arrival in Rome, on the 15th of February, were to be: "Are you a saint? For the apostle of the Sacred Heart should be a saint!" Father Marie Clement replied, "Alas, yes," meaning, I know only too well that he should be.

The superior general inquired about the Archconfraternity, saying that he approved it for two reasons: "Because it brings to America something which responds to the great need of souls over there: a life of prayer, penance, and sacrifice; and also because these ideas are in particular accord with the Assumptionist spirit." In his diary, Father

Marie Clement rejoiced at this encouragement, “What a joy to hear these declarations from him who is God for us!”

Father Emmanuel Bailly, realizing that Father Marie Clement needed help, given the extraordinary success of the Archconfraternity, suggested to him the possibility of founding a Third Order composed of friends, men and/or women, linked to the Assumptionists, who would then devote time to the work of the Archconfraternity. This suggestion was in conformity with the approach of Father Emmanuel d’Alzon (1810-1880), founder of the Augustinians of the Assumption, who, in 1857, had founded a Third Order of women, calling it the “Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament.” Father Marie Clement does not seem to have reacted very favorably to this idea, doubting its efficacy in the long run, both for the Archconfraternity and for the service of priests.

On February 16th, Father Marie Clement again saw his superior general. Father Bailly pointed out to him that a community called the Victims of the Sacred Heart existed already, that the founder of the Assumptionists, and the second superior general, Father Francois Picard (1831-1903), had had a hand in this foundation and “that they [the Victims] begrudged us the fact that Father Picard had subsequently founded a new community, the Orantes.” Father Marie Clement’s answer to this was, “Yes, they [the Victims] exist, but as contemplatives, not as an active congregation—which is what Our Lord seems to be asking of us now.” Then the diary goes on to say, “Father Bailly pointed out to me, but with great kindness, the difficulties [inherent] in realizing the project, questioned me on the rectories and on ecclesiastical authority.”

“But all these are questions of practical detail,” Father Marie Clement noted in his diary. “What matters, what we must weigh at this moment is the *principle of the thing!*”

## Chapter 26

In his diary for *February 16, 1914*, Father Marie Clement mentioned that Father Bailly had urged him to undertake pilgrimages to the various Roman churches and shrines in order to obtain great blessings. In the days which followed, he would visit at least a dozen shrines, beginning with the tomb of Saint Philip Neri, “this Roman apostle, this missionary preacher and great director of souls. This founder of an Institute attracted me on the morning of this important day.” In the course of his Mass, Father Marie Clement placed all at the feet of Saint Philip, “the important question to settle—the future small family, if God so wills it.”

After his crucial interview with Father Bailly, Father Marie Clement noted, on the afternoon of the same day, “Father Bailly agrees to examine everything and recommends that I pray a great deal, that I continue the pilgrimages, that I pray especially to Pius IX ‘who has already obtained so many graces and favors,’ and to dear Father Picard.” Father Marie Clement left Father Bailly on that day, happy and encouraged by this first meeting, and went to Saint Mary Major to place “all of this at her [Mary’s] feet, to make her guardian of this great Affair.”

The diary for these important days contains notations about Rome, about its inhabitants, who are not too busy to come to its magnificent churches to pray “so devoutly.” Clearly, the city and its people were close to his heart. “How much happier American Catholics would be,” he wrote, “if they knew how to imitate their Roman brothers!”

*Tuesday, February 17th*, found Father Marie Clement at Saint Catherine of Sienna’s tomb. His diary for that day contains the following reflection: “If Jesus needed a family of Victims, should they not resemble this Dominican Virgin who preferred a crown of thorns to one made of gold—this virgin apostle who did so much for the papacy? I

speak to this dear saint of the future which is before us. I entrust Alice Caron and her future companions to her care, if God wills it.”

On *Wednesday, the 18th of February*, Father Marie Clement was at the tomb of Saint Monica, mother of Saint Augustine. There he prayed for his own mother and all other mothers, spiritual as well as temporal. He prayed also “for this projected family which would contain something of Augustine, and so should be recommended to the mother of Augustine: O Saint Monica, protect Alice Caron and our projects. Have pity also on all Augustinians!” On his way home, Father Marie Clement, loyal as ever to his dear Joan, entered the Church of Saint Louis-des-Franais, “to see the statue of Joan of Arc by Vermare.”

On *Thursday, February 19th*, Father Marie Clement visited the Basilica of Saint Lawrence Outside the Walls. His diary states: “Lawrence was and will always remain the smiling martyr. I ask him for the grace to resemble him. If the Sacred Heart wants victims, He should make them smiling ones, that is volunteers, happy to give themselves, to immolate themselves.

“This afternoon at 4:30, I have another interview with Very Reverend Father General. It is the interview of objections, of difficulties. I am sad and my heart bleeds to hear what I hear; I offer it up to the Sacred Heart. I repeat categorically that I *am not pleading a cause*. I am only explaining something independent of myself, which in conscience neither I nor my [local] superiors believe we can settle or take responsibility for. I say to Father, ‘Decide that these things [the idea of forming a new religious community] do not come from God and all will be settled, finished. Not only for me, but for Alice Caron.’”

“But all this,” answers Father Bailly, “is not yet clear enough. We must pray, reflect, let this mature. To try it out first with Tertiaries, would be the most prudent, the wisest approach.” To this, Father Marie Clement indicated his readiness to furnish all the documents necessary to judge the case completely, but he added, “I would far rather do nothing at all before the question [of approval] is completely decided, than to make groping attempts with an undetermined, ill-defined goal.”

He further noted in his diary for that day, “Father General is of the opinion that he should see Alice Caron to speak to her, for that would be the way to judge. Then have her spend some time in a community, either with the Orantes or the Oblates.” “That would be feasible, we have thought of it,” reported Father Marie Clement.

*“Friday, February 20th ... A veritable day of agony and crowning with thorns.*

*“Saturday, February 21st. I place everything in Mary’s hands. She must be the Queen, the Mistress of everything, the superior and I beseech her for insight and help. De Profundis clamavi ad te, Maria; O Maria, exaudi vocem meam. Fiant aures tuae intendentes in vocem deprecationis meae.”<sup>13</sup>*

*“Quinquagesima Sunday, February 22nd. Father [General] speaks of the Protestant nations to conquer which Father d’Alzon always loved. Then he shows us how d’Alzon loved and was an apostle of the Sacred Heart, becoming a member of the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart established in Rome under the auspices of the secular priests of Saint Paul. Among the Associates, there was a category for the more fervent members, called ‘Priest-Apostles,’ to which group Father d’Alzon belonged.*

*“Later, when I see Father Bailly, he reminds me of all this and remarks that it can help us to explain and to justify our Apostolate to the Sacred Heart in the New World.”*

Father Marie Clement’s diary for the *24th of February, Mardi gras*, contains a long meditation on the Catacombs. On the last page can be found the following statements: “In the midst of these Martyrs’ tombs, how I pray for the souls of those who want to be future victims! O Holy Martyrs, I entrust to you in advance this family of souls, if ever it is meant to exist. Do not allow it to come into being unless it is worthy of your race and heir to your so Catholic traditions!

*“Ash Wednesday—February 25th. Mass at the tomb of Saint Benedict Joseph Labre. I ask this holy, poor man, to make us poor, detached, ascetic, as he was. Then I pray for Alice Caron. This thought [of a foundation] pursues me, although I am very calm and totally ready to abandon all to the decision of authority.”* At 9:45, Father Marie Clement learned that he was being called in to see his superior general for 10 o’clock that very morning.

During that interview, Father Marie Clement was to learn of Father Bailly’s decision relating to the new foundation and to receive the following advice, as he himself noted in his diary. “He thinks that the

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<sup>13</sup>Out of the depths I have cried to you, Mary; O Mary hear my voice. May your ears be attentive to the voice of my prayer.

wisest, most prudent course would be to have Alice Caron go to France for a probationary period in one of our congregations of sisters where she could be informed with regard to religious life and would prepare herself for it.”

Father Marie Clement’s reaction to this makes evident his unwillingness to have Alice Caron make so momentous a decision without some guarantee that should she prove to be a worthy subject, the hoped-for community would be given a chance to try its wings: “I reply that his decision is of great importance, and that it will be executed to the letter since Alice Caron is ready for any eventuality. As to our role in the matter, it seems to me that before having her accepted [by the Victims to the Forsaken Heart of Jesus], or even suggested to them, the elements at our disposal to judge [the matter] should appear to us to be of such a [convincing] nature that . . . we must act! Only on these conditions can we ask for this trip, undertake these expenses, and require all of these important decisions of Alice Caron.

“Father then responds that truly, given what they can judge, and from what I have been able to tell him—that all of this establishes the fact that the idea is quite well-founded and serious enough for us to ask that it be given a chance to follow its course. He adds, These are great things which we are deciding here!’ Yes, that is true—but if the Good Lord wants them, must we not want them and . . . achieve them?”

The same entry in Father Marie Clement’s journal mentions that the Archconfraternity was also a topic of this conversation. He was to learn that, henceforth, the superior general would be Chief Director of the Archconfraternity, that Father Stéphane Chaboud would be its local Guide in New York, and finally, that Father Marie Clement himself would have the title of Delegated Director. The diary contains the following comment, “Poor M. Clement will thus have the merit of obedience, security in his actions, and the movement will go forward. Thus arranged and settled, the whole thing will be the better for it and will be conducted religiously and in a holy manner.”

Father Marie Clement’s diary continues: “I remind Father Bailly how four years before I had submitted my intentions to him in his room concerning the Archconfraternity; that he had allowed me to act with discretion, without forcing anyone, which is what I have tried to do, with what *results* today! Father agrees; and, much as the interview of last Thursday had been destructive, depressing, so this one is uncon-

strained, breathes openness, light and . . . hope.

*“Thursday, February 26th.* Mass at the tomb of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga. I place on the altar the letter that I shall send today to Father Stéphane announcing the decisions of Very Reverend Father General concerning the first step to take for the little foundation. May this angel on earth prepare angels for this family. May this innocent penitent make of them pure victims, if they are to exist some day. I also go to pray at the tomb of the young brother of Aloysius: Saint John Berchmans.”

Having rewritten the letters for Father Stéphane and Alice Caron, Father Marie Clement read them to Father General who approved them. “Divine Heart,” wrote Father Marie Clement, “I entrust all of these things to You. Bless them!” The diary goes on to say, “Father Bailly read to me, from the second volume of *Notes et Documents*,<sup>14</sup> a passage referring to Father d’Alzon as founder of the Victims to the Forsaken Heart of Jesus. He told me to take notice of all these coincidences. He asked me also what I would say if it were proposed to affiliate these [new] Victims to one of our already existing congregations.

“I answered that this little family, if it comes to be, would have its own very characteristic goal, distinct from that which we have at present at Assumption—Victims for all Priests: interior devotion through sacrifice, prayer, immolation; exterior devotion through service to all priests and what concerns them! Then I add, ‘If our Lord wants this foundation, if it comes from Him, we must give it the form He wants and not another.’

*“Friday, February 27th.* Mass at the tomb of Saint Clement. I say Mass for Clement [his older brother] and our family. At the Memento of the Dead, I speak to God of my dear deceased father who himself was a Clement. I pray a great deal for the little family of Victims. I rest the *berceau*<sup>15</sup> on this tomb of a pope and martyr who will be more glorified because of it, if it is allowed to be born! Dear Saint Clement, be one of its advance protectors and patrons.

*“Sunday, March 1st.* This is the first Sunday of Lent. I think of

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<sup>14</sup>A book, prepared by Father Emmanuel Bailly, for the use of future biographers of Father Emmanuel d’Alzon.

<sup>15</sup>A *berceau* is a cradle. One sees here the paternal care with which Father Marie Clement was approaching the foundation of this community of Victims.

Fitchburg last year.

*Monday, March 2nd.* Mass this morning in the room of Saint Catherine of Sienna. Everything touching this virgin, non-violent martyr, like Mary a true victim of the Spouse, strikes home and attracts me because of the little family to come. I asked this great saint that life in the future small convents be lived as she lived in her cell. O Saint Catherine, let us resemble you!"

On *Tuesday, March 3rd*, Father Marie Clement celebrated Mass at the tomb of Saint Peter. In his homily to a group of French persons in attendance, he insisted upon the importance of the place: "the center, the heart of the Church." Alone afterwards, Father Marie Clement leaned on the tomb and placed there "all the souls whom I love, especially the future victims with Alice Caron. If this family is to exist some day, let this be its first cradle, its first support, its base."

## Chapter 27

*“Monday, March 9th—THE GREAT DAY. Father Bailly and I go to see the pope, to have him bless the work of the Sacred Heart.”*

There follows a detailed description of this interview with Pope Pius X to report to him on the work of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance, how it had been approved by the American hierarchy and encouraged by it to the point that 75,000 Associates were by then already enrolled.

Father Marie Clement’s diary then continues with these statements: “The pope was asked by Father Bailly to bless the work and grant favors to priests, thereby encouraging them to become part of this movement honoring the Sacred Heart: ‘These priests would be so proud, so consoled, if your Holiness placed himself at their head, at the head of this list of priests. Would you consent to this?’ *‘Oh! securamente,’*<sup>16</sup> answered the pope. *‘Non c’è dubbio!’*”<sup>17</sup>

It was now Father Marie Clement’s turn to relate in detail the organization, the nature, the utility, and the results of the Archconfraternity in America. The pope listened to the end, interrupting only from time to time with a, “*Bravo.*” “*Benissimo.*”<sup>18</sup> After a long exchange with the pope on Church matters in general, Father Marie Clement rose and submitted to him the letters received from the hierarchy. “I showed him also the *Supplication* which he read in its entirety. He said, *‘Si, Si, va bene, tutto concesso, tutto concesso—faremo un Rescrittino.’*<sup>19</sup>

“Then I submitted our Documents to him. He especially admired the booklet on the *Day of Reparation for Priests*. We rose and then fell

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<sup>16</sup>Oh! surely

<sup>17</sup>Without a doubt!

<sup>18</sup>Congratulations. Very well done.

<sup>19</sup>Yes, yes, that will be fine; everything is granted—we shall make a Rescript.

to our knees, kissed his ring, and the pope blessed us. Long live Pius X who has blessed our Archconfraternity, our efforts in America, the apostles of His Cause, especially the Movement for Priests.

*“Thursday, March 12th.* At 3 P.M. I arrived at the small monastery of the Daughters of the Heart of Jesus. I asked to see the superior general. We conversed for more than two hours, and truly it is good to speak with strong souls of this mother superior’s caliber. We talked of the Archconfraternity, of the future family. She spoke of the training of the aspirants; the need to be severe. ‘Better that they be fewer in number but fervent, than spoiled lambs.’

“Upon my return, I was told that Father Emmanuel was waiting impatiently for me. The Documents had arrived from the pope. Father was delighted. They surpass all of our hopes. What a joy to be thus confirmed, supported, encouraged by the pope!

*“Friday, March 27th.* I want this foundation only if the Sacred Heart inspires it and wants it. If this is the case, obedience and authority will pronounce themselves. Father Marie Clement visited the prisons of the first martyrs and asked the guard to leave him so that he could pray alone. “There I placed the *Victims*, prayed for Alice Caron and . . . the others! This was the place [to do so]!

*“Saturday, March 28th.* At 10 o’clock, Father came for me. He read the Circular to me regarding the Archconfraternity. Then he read a letter which had just arrived from Father Stéphane in New York announcing that Miss Alice was ready to leave on the 15th of April.

“What a momentous issue! What a decision! I can only recite two invocations: ‘Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in You. Sacred Heart of Jesus, may Your Kingdom come!’ I again told Father that this matter makes me *tremble!* That if it comes about, it is only because the Sacred Heart will have wanted it!

“After dinner, I visited the tomb of Saint Monica and spoke to her of this beginning! Then I entered the chapel of Joan of Arc at Saint Louis-des-Frangais to pray the valiant warrior that she prove herself to be our Protectress and our Patroness.”

## Chapter 28

Father Marie Clement returned to his diary only on the 12th of May, while aboard ship bound for New York.

He began by reviewing the happenings of the intervening weeks. On the 29th of March, he had received a telegram from his brother calling him to Kaysersberg where his mother was very ill. Fortunately, after having spent more than twenty-four hours *en route* by train, he was able to reach her bedside, give her absolution, and confide her to the care of the Sacred Heart, Whose picture was near her bed, before she passed away, only a few short hours after his arrival. He recounted how, after closing her eyes and reciting the *De Profundis*<sup>20</sup> he had reflected upon the tenderness of the Sacred Heart Who had brought him there to grant his mother the joy of seeing him once again and to give her the opportunity of receiving absolution from the hands of her son.

In a letter which he sent to his superior general at this time, in answer to Father Bailly's condolences, he wrote, "God, by this death, separates me greatly from this earth and gives me in a more solemn fashion it seems to me, if no less completely than in the past, to my second Mother, Assumption. The Sacred Heart was my mother's supreme consolation; she derived so much pleasure from the progress of the Archconfraternity, and she sustained it so by her holy prayers. May she protect it now from the height of her beautiful heaven and support it more than ever, this Work and the 'Other' if it is to be for the greater glory of God and His Divine Heart."

Returning to Paris via Strasbourg, Father Marie Clement attended to details regarding the German editions of his writings for the Archconfraternity. The next day, Holy Tuesday, April 7th, he had an appointment to see Madame Royer at 2 P.M. He had brought with him

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<sup>20</sup>"Out of the depths." First words of the Latin version of Psalm 130.

all the papal documents and the originals of the letters of approbation from the hierarchy. "She saw all of this, turned the pages of it all, as Pius X had done," he wrote. "She revelled in it all, was overjoyed, and saw all of its importance."

Having stayed until 4 o'clock, he was asked to come again the following day and to arrive even earlier. This second meeting, at the home of Madame Labouré, Madame Royer's daughter, was to last until 4:30 P.M. "The Saintly Soul told me great and consoling things. She repeated often and in a very formal manner, 'The Sacred Heart has chosen you, Father, as His instrument to repair what damage and detriment the first Instrument [the Saintly Soul, herself], because of her unworthiness, has inflicted upon the Work.' She declared that the Sacred Heart 'has chosen the Assumptionists, a congregation of fighters and soldiers spread throughout the entire world, to be the pioneers of the Archconfraternity.' She said, repeated, and asserted over and over again that it is providential that we have become involved with this Work, and that 'the successes in America prove that the Sacred Heart chose you and wanted you.' "

Madame Royer informed Father Marie Clement that she would write to Father Emmanuel Bailly to thank him for all he had done in Rome for the cause; to tell him that the Sacred Heart counted on the Assumptionists to propagate the Archconfraternity; and to express her gratitude "for the superior general's superb idea of establishing centers in Jerusalem, Constantinople, and London."

She promised him that she would go to see Father Crepin, the Superior of Montmartre, to convince him to write to Father Bailly also and ask for his cooperation. "Our conversation was important and serious," comments Father Marie Clement.

At 2 P.M. on *Holy Thursday, April 9th*, Father Marie Clement was again honored by a third interview with the Saintly Soul. "I had announced that I would tell her the great news today: that is, the projected foundation of the Victims of the Sacred Heart for Priests. She had promised that she would receive Communion on this Holy Thursday with this intention in mind. She found the idea beautiful and grand—albeit difficult for our human means—not so for the Sacred Heart. She reassured me on the procedure undertaken to examine the Work, saying that all is being done following God's design and according to true prudence. She will continue to pray."

Returning to the subject of the Sacred Heart, Madame Royer comforted Father Marie Clement by saying that it was the first time “that the Archconfraternity has been put in such intimate contact with the papacy . . . in such a detailed and precise manner,” as had been the case in the audience of March 9th.

“She promised to send me a picture of the Sacred Heart signed by both Leo XIII and Pius X and, finally, the Documents still in her possession at St. Remy.<sup>21</sup> What a Holy Week! What an Octave the Sacred Heart had me experience after the sad events of Kaysersberg!

“*Good Friday—April 10th.* After 3 o’clock, I went to Madame Royer’s for a short visit to have her venerate the relic of the true Cross. She cannot go out to religious services; *le bon Dieu*<sup>22</sup> deprives her of all these joys! I tried to compensate for it. She was so evidently grateful. I forgot to mention yesterday her disclosures regarding her Visions. She related all of the events to me as though I were her confessor. Today she added certain details omitted yesterday and Wednesday. This unbelievable favor, what a privilege for my unworthiness! *Domine non sum dignus.*”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Madame Royer’s residence.

<sup>22</sup>The good Lord

<sup>23</sup>Lord, I am not worthy.



## Chapter 29

Father Marie Clement spent Easter with his family in Kaysersberg. During the religious ceremonies, he was reminded of his youth as an altar boy when he too had sung those venerable church hymns. One of Father Marie Clement's last acts before leaving Kaysersberg was to vow on his mother's tomb "where reigns the Sacred Heart within and without [he had just attached a picture of the Sacred Heart to the cross on his mother's grave], that I shall consecrate my life to make Him known and loved!"

Having blessed his entire family and "placed it under the protection and in the open arms of the Master," he took leave of them, bound once again for Paris.

The next day he saw his superior general at 8 A.M. Everything was settled between them for the arrival of Alice Caron on the following day. Because he was leaving for Jerusalem on the very day of Alice Caron's arrival, Father Emmanuel Bailly asked his first assistant, Father Andre Jaujou, to replace him in this matter of the religious foundation. "Father Emmanuel Bailly is so good, so kind, so experienced," wrote Father Marie Clement for that day.

Father was at the Gare Saint Lazare in Paris on April 23rd, to meet Alice and take her directly to the Orantes, a contemplative order founded by Father Francois Picard, successor to Emmanuel d'Alzon as superior general of the Assumptionists.

"The superior received her as a mother would," wrote the new founder.

The next day, Father said Mass at Montmartre in the company of Alice Caron and Sister Elisabeth, an Orante, who accompanied her. Alice received Holy Communion. "At her request," wrote Father Marie Clement, "I offered this sacrifice for the foundation in the Chapel of

Saint Michael, which is Joan and Arc's as well! What joy [when we realized] this coincidence! We prayed fervently."

After Mass, Father Marie Clement introduced Alice Caron to Father Andre Jaujou whose responsibility the community-to-be had now become. "I explained everything to Father. I gave him all the documents, entreating him to look at everything, to examine it all."

The next day, Father Marie Clement left for Namur, Belgium, to meet the superior general of the Sisters of Notre Dame who had assisted him so ably in Worcester. After having transmitted the greetings of the American sisters, he spoke to the assembled sisters about the Archconfraternity. So taken were they with the idea of a basilica in North America that they gave Father Marie Clement \$200 for the future shrine.

Before leaving Belgium, Father visited two shrines to the Sacred Heart. He wrote movingly of this event: "I experienced the great joy of celebrating the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the first Basilica to the Sacred Heart [at Antwerp] in the care of the Daughters of the Heart of Jesus. I spoke at this 'cradle' of another 'cradle' which should be similar to that which the Sacred Heart has built here! 'O good Master, speak. Let Your light shine, let Your counsel decide and Your orders be accomplished! You know that all of these proceedings, these trips, this additional fatigue, all of this is only because of You, for Your glory and the coming of Your Kingdom!' "On Tuesday, April 28th, Father Marie Clement visited the Novitiate of the Sacred Heart, now relocated in Louvain, where he had been sub-prior. He spoke to the brothers about the Archconfraternity and of America and its "grandeurs!"

On Thursday, the 30th of April, he again saw Madame Royer who had awaited his visit for many days. "She had brought the documents and wanted to deliver them personally into my hands. I asked her if she would be good enough to reread them so as to assure me that all was exactly as it should be. I also asked her to write me a note attesting to this fact. She readily consented. From 11 P.M. to midnight, Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament at the Convent of Grenelle [where he was staying], not at Montmartre, as I had dreamed; my exertions have been excessive. It would not have been prudent! *Fiat!*

"*Friday, May 1st.* Alice came to attend my Mass [at Montmartre]. An Orante brought her. We prayed with very great insistence to obtain

light and the decision. At 9 o'clock I had an interview with Father André . . . He told me he had prayed, studied, questioned, reflected, and weighed everything with regard to the *Oeuvre* [Foundation]; that his first impression was very good and that the reasonableness of the Work seemed evident to him; that his meditation had yielded good results; that he was very happy.

“So we can thus proceed to take the next step. Have Miss Caron spend a probationary period with the Little Sisters of the Assumption. Upon reflection, Father [André] believes it far more preferable to have her accepted as a postulant, as though she were to stay with the Little Sisters. This would avoid any difficulty for her and for the Little Sisters. Only the Council would be informed. This decision suits me completely. Father continued, saying that he believed it to be for the best to do things thoroughly; to have the postulate last six months—to take enough time even then to have Miss Alice try the novitiate so that she can see everything and be trained.”

The diary adds, “Mme la Comtesse d’Ursel [Mère Isabelle de Gethsémani], foundress of the Orantes, whom I questioned regarding her judgment of Miss Alice, answered that she had made a very good impression on her, that of a very humble, very simple, very supernatural and prayerful person.”



## Chapter 30

On Friday, May 8th, Alice Caron, accompanied by Mother Emmanuel, an Orante, again attended Father Marie Clement's Mass at Montmartre. Father's intentions on that day reflected his two preoccupations: the construction of a basilica to the Sacred Heart and the founding of the new community. "All of these great things will no doubt be more advanced when next I celebrate Mass in this beloved sanctuary! It is all in God's protective hands!" he wrote.

This was Father Marie Clement's fourth opportunity to celebrate Mass at the main altar of the Montmartre Basilica and he thanked God for "these great favors!" After Mass, the small group moved on to the church of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires. "Before leaving, we had to obtain the potent benediction of this all-powerful Virgin in her pious sanctuary in the heart of the metropolis. I placed before her all my other intentions and . . . the future, as well as the projected Work with Alice. O Virgin of Victories, how many victories we will need to obtain simply to prepare this one—but it will be of immense value! Your will alone be done. That is what we want to know and to learn—the rest will follow!"

From Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, the group went to La Bonne Presse (the Assumptionist publication center) where Father Marie Clement picked up the two reports and the official documents (regarding the Archconfraternity) which had been reproduced for him. "They are to be distributed throughout the congregation and even elsewhere since 700 copies have been printed, of which 250 are destined for Rome. *Deo gratias.*"<sup>24</sup>

The next day, Father Marie Clement saw Alice Caron and transmitted "his final instructions and recommendations. Then I blessed the

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<sup>24</sup>Thanks be to God.

dear child, [who is] very brave and very generous, ready for anything.” Having taken leave of her, Father departed for Le Havre. Accompanied by an Assumptionist priest and two brothers, he boarded the ship *La Provence*, en route for New York.

“*Au revoir, France!*” he wrote, especially recommending Alsace to God. “We return where God wants us, towards the New World, bringing with us immense and precious treasures in the form of the papal documents and everything that transpired in Rome and Paris with all that they signify.”

His diary expresses his gratitude at having been able to accomplish so much. “I can only be infinitely grateful to God. He has been more than good since the fourth of February.” Because it was May, the month of Mary, the Assumptionists sang *Ave Maris Stella*<sup>25</sup> and recited the rosary looking out over the ocean every evening during the voyage.

At this point in his diary, Father Marie Clement listed the work accomplished for the Archconfraternity since his departure from Rome. It consisted principally of publications: circular letters prepared for religious communities—reports on the Archconfraternity for which he was receiving requests from Alsace and from professors at Catholic University in Washington—an eighteen-page brochure on Pius X and the Archconfraternity—a booklet entitled *Day of Reparation for Priests*, in a definitive edition containing the papal documents and printed in both French and English, with a German edition soon to follow—and 30,000 medals prepared for distribution through the Archconfraternity.

This impressive list continued as follows: five thousand copies of an eight-page pamphlet containing information on the establishment of the Archconfraternity—nearly forty thousand copies in French and English of a guide for the young entitled *The Day of the Sacred Heart*—one thousand pictures of the Sacred Heart with the Litany and the Consecration, again in both French and English nearly 10,000 copies of the picture of the Sacred Heart printed with His promises to the adherents and, finally, a pamphlet entitled *The Archconfraternity and the Life of the Religious*.

Father Marie Clement’s list of publications is mentioned here in some detail so that readers can appreciate the sheer enormity of the task for a single individual. If we reflect upon the fact that the need

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<sup>25</sup>Hail, Star of the Sea.

## *Chapter 30*

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for these publications and medals on such a scale had been generated in four short years, we will further realize that Father Marie Clement's great vitality matched his extraordinarily successful preaching of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance.



## Chapter 31

Alice Caron was not to have the benefit of a six-month novitiate with the Little Sisters of the Assumption in Paris. World War I, which broke out in late July, 1914, was to cut short her stay in Paris. By early September, Alice was in New York where she would remain with the Little Sisters, at their convent on 15th Street, until her retreat. The new agenda for her religious training included some time with the Grey Nuns in Worcester.

Father Marie Clement's diary jumps from May to September, 1914, when he noted that Father Stéphane Chaboud, who was superior for North America, and, thus, Father Marie Clement's provincial superior, had recently arrived in Worcester from New York with letters which Alice Caron had brought back with her from France. One of these was from Father Andre Jaujou, and the other from the mother general of the Little Sisters, at whose convent Alice had spent the intervening weeks.

The letters stated that Alice had responded well to the various phases of her orientation. Father noted in his diary that he would now have to reach agreement with his own superiors on the next steps to be taken. "I spoke at length to Father Stéphane to see how to proceed in fact." The entry ends with this prayer, "O Mary, bring this cradle and your own [at Bethlehem] closer together."

At the request of his superior who was returning to New York, Father Marie Clement wrote to Alice Caron that same day, September 9th. His letter outlined the plan for her stay with the Grey Nuns in Worcester after leaving New York and broached the possibility of her going to Sherbrooke, in the Province of Quebec, where she might spend some time with the Little Sisters of the Holy Family.

The diary entry for that day expressed realistic enthusiasm and a

profound sense of the need for heaven-sent aid. He wrote: “The first phase is over and we enter the period of accomplishment. *We now begin!* What follows will not be easy, but if God wills it, we will achieve! Dear Joan, help us to fight the good fight! O Heart of Jesus, Victim of love, protect Your Victims if you wish to have them!”

Once again there is a long lapse in the diary. The next entry is dated *December 3rd, 1914*. In it, Father wrote, “It is now 11:05 A.M. Father Stéphane is in the library, meeting with all of the religious of the Greendale House [Assumption College] to announce that on Christmas night a new foundation will be born at Assumption: The Sisters of Joan of Arc whose aim is to be *Victims of the Sacred Heart for Priests*. The result of this meeting will be that *le misérable*<sup>26</sup> who is writing these lines will be placed in charge of this community, that he will be its founder. *Domine miserere!*”<sup>27</sup>

Having gone to the chapel, Father Marie Clement wrote upon his return, “I have just placed this mustard seed, which will be planted in the ground on Christmas night, in the hands of Joan of Arc and the Sacred Heart. [For] it is on the night when the Divine Victim was born that His humble Victims will be born also. In spite of everything, in spite of everything [the repetition is his] because all of this leads me to Calvary and the cross, I say to the Sacred Heart, *Paratum cor meum Deus, paratum cor meum!*”<sup>28</sup> *Calicem salutaris accipiam et nomen Domini invocabo!*”<sup>29</sup>

Although conscious of the difficulties ahead, Father Marie Clement had not foreseen one unexpected problem which sprang up. This was the fact that Bishop Thomas Beaven of Springfield, Massachusetts,<sup>30</sup> would at first reply negatively and then be out of town and unavailable when Father Marie Clement most needed to contact him for permissions to change “the order of things.” For the day-to-day functioning of the kitchen and laundry at Assumption College would now be in the hands of the newly created community.

Father Marie Clement also wanted to obtain permission to have Mass said in the house on the campus grounds where the Victims

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<sup>26</sup>The unworthy individual

<sup>27</sup>Lord, have mercy!

<sup>28</sup>My heart is ready, Lord, my heart is ready! Ps. 108:2

<sup>29</sup>I shall take the cup of salvation and invoke the name of the Lord. Ps. 116:13

<sup>30</sup>Worcester itself would become a diocese only in 1950.

## *Chapter 31*

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would be living. A letter was written by Father Omer Rochain, Superior of the Greendale House, on December 3rd, to Bishop Beaven informing him of the changes being contemplated and requesting the necessary permissions. The Bishop's reply was to say nothing of the Mass request, but to question the fact of having women in the service of the college. The letter was direct and seemed to be closing the door definitively: "I have never yet allowed it" ended the letter, "for any college, any seminary of my diocese."

Feverish but futile attempts were made during the next few days to reach the bishop, but to no avail. He was out of town. In the meantime, two postulants, the Misses Celina and Clarinda Benoit, had arrived from New Bedford and were staying with the Little Franciscans of Mary at Saint Francis Home, their Worcester convent, awaiting Bishop Beaven's decision.



## Chapter 32

A month elapsed before the diary resumed its account of what had then transpired. Father Marie Clement had been obliged to wait until the Bishop of Springfield, in a letter dated December 24th, agreed to the foundation. He had done so after having reflected upon the matter and obtained the advice of other bishops and the apostolic delegate. He would not, however, allow Mass to be said in the Victims' oratory. An interview between Father Omer Rochain and Bishop Beaven had followed the bishop's letter. It took place, as noted by Father Marie Clement, "on the 28th of December, Feast of the Holy Innocents." During that meeting, Bishop Beaven not only allowed the "attempt," he "wishes us well," added Father Marie Clement.

Father Marie Clement had hoped against hope to found his community of Victims on Christmas night. The reader will recall his numerous references to a *berceau* or cradle in speaking of the proposed foundation. As long as it existed, the Worcester house was always to be called *Le Berceau*.

Father, who was totally committed to his own Assumptionist congregation, knew full well that it too had been founded on a Christmas night. As a man conscious of linkages and desirous of respecting them, he surely felt that to inaugurate a religious community on the same night that his own had been founded would augur well and would ensure for the new "birth" the favors of Emmanuel d'Alzon, whose loyal and admiring son he was. He surely saw himself as a young father who sought to imitate his own religious "father" in this entire matter. But, the best laid plans . . .

The bishop's objections had resulted in a week's delay. The best that Father Marie Clement could do under the circumstances was to have a special Holy Hour before Midnight Mass in the Franciscan Sisters'

chapel. The first three Victims were consecrated to the Sacred Heart on that night: Alice Caron and the Benoit sisters, Celina and Clarinda. Father Marie Clement noted, nonetheless, in his diary, "That is where the Work was founded! Outwardly, it was established today."

The new community was to assemble under its own roof one week later. Seven women ushered in the New Year, 1915, as Victims. "Seven souls, like the seven sacraments, whose ambition is to do a great deal for priests, to be Victims for them, protected by young Joan of Arc," wrote Father Marie Clement.

According to the diary, "the first to enter the new house was the Sacred Heart followed by a bronze statue of Joan," which Father had purchased in Paris the preceding May. The altar on which these statues were to be placed in the college chapel had been beautifully decorated. The two statues were piously and lovingly installed on New Year's Eve, with the pomp and ritual which Father Marie Clement always judiciously included in ceremonies which marked momentous occasions.

On the first day of January, 1915, Father Marie Clement reviewed the year just past and noted its highlights in his diary. He quoted in detail from Father Emmanuel Bailly's letter approving the foundation. This letter, dated December 6th, 1914, had been sent, not to Father Marie Clement, but to Father Stéphane Chaboud, his provincial superior, who resided in New York. "You have my approval to attempt the projected foundation with Miss Caron. You should begin with the caution and prudence which you mentioned in your latest letters and which Father Marie Clement aspires to in what he calls his 'suggestions.'" Father Marie Clement had outlined a plan to be followed in founding the community, entitling the proposal, "Suggestions on the procedures to follow for the projected foundation of the Victims of the Sacred Heart for Priests."

Father Bailly's letter commented on the advantages to both communities of having the Victims work at the college: the women having worthwhile duties to perform while awaiting final approval of their new community, and the college having in its employ devoted, conscientious workers. Father Bailly concluded his letter stating, "It's a good idea to place the foundation under the patronage of the Christmas Manger. Keep me informed and go ahead very humbly, little by little, and only one step at a time. Let the spirit of faith and prayer preside over everything." It was to be done accordingly.

At 1:30 A.M. on the morning of January 1st, 1915, Father Marie Clement wrote in his diary, “I intone with joy my *Te Deum*<sup>31</sup> for 1914! What a multitude and variety of happenings in my life this year! What does 1915 hold? It begins with quite an event, one of the most important in my life! *Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum.*”

The night before, Father, as duly noted in his diary, had spoken at great length to the seven women who had placed their trust in God represented in this instance by Father Marie Clement. Their faith had allowed them to overcome whatever misgivings they might legitimately have had in leaving everything behind them to constitute a group which had not yet received ecclesiastical approbation. Indeed, as noted later by Mother Jeanne of the Sacred Heart, elected the first mother general of the fledgling community, “We were not allowed to wear a holy habit. We could not be considered as religious, but merely as employees of the college.” Official approbation, when it finally arrived, was to come in 1920 from Louis N. Cardinal Bégin, Archbishop of Quebec, who presided at the canonical establishment of the novitiate on August 15, 1920, Feast of the Assumption.

What were the natural traits of Father Marie Clement, so enhanced and made doubly effective by his intense prayer life, that these women of great faith were willing to risk all under his tutelage? His deep convictions, his magnetic enthusiasm, his evident sincerity, his obvious determination and will to succeed, not for his personal aggrandizement, but to bring about Christ’s Kingdom—these characteristics served as guideposts for those who consecrated their lives under his paternal guidance. These women knew that they too could thus help achieve the motto by which he, as an Assumptionist, lived his own life: *Adveniat regnum tuum.*<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>First words of the traditional song of praise to the Lord.

<sup>32</sup>Thy Kingdom come.



## Chapter 33

On that memorable last night of the year 1914, Father Marie Clement delivered the first of many messages to this group of women whose deep faith had brought them there. Over time, his instructions were to take many forms: homilies, talks, letters, pamphlets, books. They all reflected the power of his convictions, the sincerity of his purpose, and the constancy of his great benevolence for each of them. He inspired confidence, gave them strength of purpose, and stimulated their zeal, so much so that he was able, almost immediately, to establish a community spirit whose essence to this day is one of a profound sense of service to the clergy, enhanced by smiling devotion and quiet discretion.

At the foot of the altar, with the New Year about to begin, Father Marie Clement wished to make the women gathered before him realize the solemnity of that particular moment. “Before the Blessed Sacrament, we promise to work diligently to bring this undertaking to fruition. God wills it.” Sensing that these women must have been wondering how best to respond to their particular vocation, he described at length the qualities essential to their spiritual development:

1. “A profound spirit of silence and discretion. Even if an individual did not persevere, her lips would be sealed.
2. “Deep humility and simplicity to allow herself to be trained, for she who is better prepared can do more and better!
3. “Devotion and generosity. We must not spare ourselves but do all we can. The greatest efforts reap the greatest rewards.
4. “Great love, yes, especially that. Our hearts will burn with love, for the more ardent the flame, the more it warms those about it.

We shall stimulate love in others to the degree that we ourselves are consumed by it.

“Tomorrow,” he continued, “nearly 4,000 souls will be consecrated to the Sacred Heart through the Archconfraternity. What consolation and what joy this brings. The Archconfraternity will be victorious through the Victims, through their work and their prayers! What will this work be? It will be that of Victims for Priests, that is to say, for what is greatest and most beautiful on this earth. Saint Teresa is quoted as saying, ‘If I met an angel and a priest, I would first greet the priest.’ The Victims will give both their outward lives for priests: efforts, labor, fatigue, devotion; and their inner lives: prayers, mortifications, immolations, sufferings, for priests at all levels, from the pope to the seminarian.”

There are no entries in Father Marie Clement’s diary for the next six months. The very silence is eloquent! One readily imagines what those months contained: intense activity, unforeseen obstacles, work to be done, problems to be solved.

The diary takes up again in July. At the start of his retreat, Father Marie Clement was able to record the more important happenings of the preceding six months. “Since the Holy Hour of January 1st, we have worked indeed!” he exclaims. The document relates only the highlights, including the placing of a special cross “having the Sacred Heart at its center” atop the roof of the Victims’ living quarters. “Some religious had initially protested against such a cross,” wrote Father Marie Clement. But their superior’s answer had been, “Put it up. The cross has never compromised anyone.” Elevated on the feast day of the Sacred Heart, at exactly 3 P.M., to commemorate “the hour in which He drew His last breath,” the cross had been blessed by the provincial superior himself, Father Stéphane and kissed by all present, before the carpenter brought it to the roof. “We prayed while the blows of his hammer nailed it to the rooftop. Long live the cross, long live our cross! May it remain in its place as our lightning rod, our shield, our all-powerful protector. *Ecce crucem Domini! Fugite partes adversae.*”<sup>33</sup>

The diary noted the improvements made to the Victims’ quarters, enlarged to meet the needs of the growing community, and listed in

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<sup>33</sup>Here is our Savior’s Cross! Flee, adversary!

### *Chapter 33*

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detail the daily regimen of the Victims, which had been sent to Father Bailly, and had received not only his approval, but his praise as well. On Holy Thursday, the first vocation of the year 1915 had been welcomed into the group. She was followed by two young women from Quebec. On the feast of Saint Joan of Arc in May, a sign bearing the inscription “Jeanne d’Arc” had been placed above the entrance to the renovated building. That entry in the diary concluded with, “O, long live Joan!”



## Chapter 34

A problem lay ahead for Father Marie Clement and his small band of willing workers. It came unexpectedly from his own colleagues at the start of summer. The college administrators, saddled with the constraints of a limited budget and feeling hard-pressed to make ends meet, began to be concerned about having to feed the members of the fledgling community during the summer months when the students would be on vacation. Father Marie Clement agreed that this was a problem which needed to be tackled, but expressed regret at the curt and cutting manner in which his religious colleagues had handled the matter. He was kept out of the deliberations altogether. Upon Father Stéphane's arrival from New York, meetings were held on five successive days in mid-June, before Father Marie Clement was called in to have the "solution" read to him. Included in the proposal was the need for him to pay room and board to his own community of Assumptionists, now that he was working for another one. So, the women, faced with the prospect of paying room and board, decided to prepare their own food and eat in their own quarters. The college for its part continued to employ and to pay the salaries of the two who were needed for the summer months.

Father Marie Clement was to suffer for the rest of his life from the critical attitude of some of his fellow Assumptionists. But, it must be noted that he was never deterred from his intense activity by adverse criticism, nor did he for one moment ever dream of leaving his congregation, to which he remained completely faithful to his dying day. He mentioned in his diary the problems caused by being, at one and the same time, a mere member of one religious community and the founder of another: "Oh, how difficult it is to be at the head of Works [he used the plural in order to include the Archconfraternity] as a simple reli-

gious! What agonies one has to endure, what crosses there are to bear. It will be known only at the last judgment, for here below one cannot realize without having lived through it." But, he quickly added, "Oh, let me at least know how to offer all this to Jesus, He Who has known all these agonies. He had to drink from all these chalices. All the works of God are built upon suffering, combat, tears, crosses, and blood. It was so with the Archconfraternity; the work of *Joan of Arc* cannot escape this destiny. I want these Works to bear fruit and be beautiful and worthy of the Sacred Heart. They would not be if they were not surrounded by tears and blood and profound sorrows! *Fiat* then, I shall be, as best I can, the victim which you want, O Good Master."

His colleagues at this time did not seem to share Father Marie Clement's vision regarding the foundation. "But what really is the precise goal of this Institute?" they insisted. "What will be done there?" they questioned repeatedly.

The administrators of the college seemed to think that the Victims prayed too much, leaving too little time for work. In defense of their life style, Father Marie Clement wrote in his diary, "These sisters must be trained for a life of work during which they will pray a great deal." His colleagues appeared to be convinced that Father was overly protective of the members of his new community, for he also noted, in their defense, "The sisters work very hard, given the size of the college buildings. According to Mother Alice, the sisters would not have to work nearly as hard in a rectory."

These criticisms indicated a lack of conviction on the part of his colleagues as to the importance of the foundation. This state of affairs could only lead to disagreement and, in the long run, to a parting of the ways.

By 1932, the recurring discussion over salaries, "along with internal misunderstandings and the clash of personalities, would result in the Victims' final departure from what had been their birthplace. Nature was to have the final say. In June of 1953, the *Berceau* was snatched up by a funnel cloud and dashed to the ground like a house of cards. The tornado which wreaked havoc on the Assumption College campus was to destroy, not the community, for by then it was flourishing elsewhere, but the first house which had been cradle and home to the community for more than seventeen years. Two Antonian sisters, members of the congregation which had replaced the Victims at Assumption College,

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were killed in that tragic storm.



## Chapter 35

In the midst of his tribulations with his colleagues, Father Marie Clement experienced some joy, nonetheless.

Asked to preach the annual retreat to the students of the college, in 1915, he was grateful at receiving “further proof of the extent to which the Holy Spirit blesses the Word of God.”

In his closing sermon, addressing the older boys, Father Marie Clement suggested that they form a Guard of Honor for the Sacred Heart. This idea did not fall on fallow ground. Several days later seven students, each of them aspiring to the priesthood, met to constitute such a group. When approached on the matter by his superior, Father Marie Clement agreed to direct their activities.

He was soon involved in overseeing the multiple details which the foundation of an organization requires. No item was considered too small to merit his attention. Calling itself the *Cercle St Jean*, after John the Apostle, patron saint of priests, the club was to last for many years, long after Father Marie Clement’s departure from Assumption College. Founded primarily for students aspiring to the priesthood, it can claim to have fostered some 400 vocations during the four decades of its existence (1915-1956). Ten percent of these became Assumptionists.

At this point, Father Marie Clement’s diary comes to an abrupt end. The last lines are a list of the members of the *Cercle St Jean* who constituted the first honor guard of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Assumption College.



## Chapter 36

Throughout all these months and years, the tiny band of sisters continued to grow. Only after some hesitation had Bishop Beaven accepted the concept of having women serving a community of priests and male students. Father Marie Clement foresaw that he would probably be even more reluctant to accept the group as a full-fledged religious congregation into his diocese, especially since it was a new foundation. So he turned to other bishops for acceptance of the sisters. Fortunately, he knew a great many. His work with the Archconfraternity had brought him into contact with several American bishops and most of the bishops of French-speaking Quebec.

This is how it came about that the motherhouse of the new community was established in Sillery, a near suburb of Quebec City, rather than in Worcester. It remains there to this day. Sillery was called Bergerville in 1917 when Louis N. Cardinal Bégin, Archbishop of Quebec from 1898 to 1925, authorized the foundation in his archdiocese. It is of interest to note here that the See of Quebec had, before 1763, embraced all of French North America. Included in this vast expanse were those American states later carved out of the area covered by the Louisiana Territory. This enormous French possession had doubled the size of the United States when it was purchased from Napoleon in 1803.

Seven postulants had been united in prayer during the midnight vigil inaugurating the year 1915. Seven postulants were present in 1917 at the opening of the temporary house at 469 St. Jean Street, in the city of Quebec.

Authorization for the new community had been received on March 2nd of that year. Father Marie Clement had chosen the 29th of September, Feast of St. Michael, for the first Mass and for the first taking of the habit in Canada. This habit, designed by Father Marie Clement him-

self, includes the Cross of Lorraine and a coif reminiscent of a medieval warrior's raised helmet. On the Cross of Lorraine is engraved the inflamed Heart of Christ pierced by a crown of thorns; above it, the name "Jehanne" and beneath, the inscription: "*O or Amor is Victima.*"<sup>34</sup> The reverse side of the cross contains an engraving of a fleur-de-lis, again to honor Joan of Arc. Below this is a cross of Malta, on one side of which is engraved the name "Jhesus," and on the other "Maria," the very words, in their medieval spelling, which were inscribed on the official banner which Joan of Arc carried into battle.

At Christmas Mass that same year, 1917, Cardinal Bégin also officially opened the Canadian Center of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance, which to this day continues to be the official North American Center of this devotion.

The sisters lived in their temporary quarters in the city of Quebec until September, 1918. There they awaited the completion of their motherhouse being built on a superb cliff overlooking the St. Lawrence River. The land, purchased from the Seminary of Quebec, was part of a fiefdom dating back to 1637 and called the Fief of Saint Michael. The title "fief" refers to the French medieval manner of land tenure. In this case, the land had been dedicated by its first owner to Saint Michael, the militant archangel, defender of the faith, slayer of Satan. His was one of the voices which had inspired Joan of Arc's glorious mission to save France.

Father Marie Clement believed that individuals are influenced by the physical as well as the psychological factors which make up their environment. The motherhouse itself, as enlarged in 1928, attests to this conviction, for it incorporates, in its architecture, medieval turrets and a crenelated roof line both of which serve as reminders of Joan of Arc. The founder was attentive to every detail which could recall, and so inspire the sisters to imitate the heroic virtues of their medieval patron: energy and valor enhanced by integrity and candor.

In notes prepared for his sisters many years later, in 1934, to serve as an introduction to their *Directoire* or *Rule of Life*, Father Marie Clement wrote about Saint Joan, insisting upon the fact that, sustained by her great faith, she had never retreated. Because of her confidence in God, no problem had proved to be too difficult for her

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<sup>34</sup>O Heart, victim of love.

to face head-on. He Who had chosen her to go forward in His name was her strength in adversity. Father Marie Clement had chosen Joan as the ideal model for his sisters because her virtues could inspire the Victims to be brave and valiant, straightforward and strong.

From what precedes, we can readily imagine the fervor and enthusiasm which swept through the motherhouse when the news of Joan of Arc's canonization, in 1920, reached the sisters. The celebration of that event, at the motherhouse on May 16, 1920, turned into a triumph for the new saint and her religious followers.

The community could now call itself the Sisters of *Saint* Joan of Arc. Father Marie Clement's admiration for Joan of Arc and his promise "to do something" for her during his life as a priest dated back to 1904, the very year of his ordination. His early appreciation of Joan of Arc had not been unfounded.

On June 29th of the same year, at the Mass of Saints Peter and Paul, Father Marie Clement could also, at long last, solemnly announce to his sisters that official approval of the community had been received, along with the authorization to begin a canonical novitiate.



## Chapter 37

The years 1914-1919 had been exciting years for Father Marie Clement. Blessed with great physical stamina and a vigorous, active temperament, he had readily and easily faced the enormous demands placed on him during this period.

The letters he wrote to his sisters at this time were buoyant, joyful, enthusiastic. He wrote at length about his daily activities which revolved around preaching the Archconfraternity in New England and, increasingly, in Quebec.

It is easy to see that these were also exciting years for the members of the fledgling community. They were so few in number that each one of them could clearly perceive the importance of her contribution to building the institute. In addition, Father Marie Clement always made a point of singling out each sister in his letters. One of these, dated February 25, 1917, from Quebec, expressed regret at not being able to return that week, although he had wished to do so because, "I assure you, far from the family, Father is lonely and does not even know how to laugh." He hoped that each of them was well. Then came a reference to each sister in order of seniority, although Celina was first since she was in charge during Mother Alice's absence:<sup>35</sup> "Has Celina acquired color in her cheeks? Are Josephine's ears cured? Is she the angel of the secretariat with our Emmanuel? And Julie, I see her laughing from here as she touches her left eye with her closed hand! And has Marie-Anne finished the addresses; has she been punctual with the mail, at the door, and everywhere? And Florida, does she still squint meaningfully? And does Marie-Anna continue to make good sauces and good soups? And does Jeanne keep her tongue in check more and more

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<sup>35</sup>Mother Alice was in Quebec to take part in the decision regarding the location of the motherhouse.

during Lent; is she a model of seriousness outside recreation? And does Marie grow in wisdom and concentration? And is Rose a sweet perfume for the Sacred Heart? And Marguerite, the ornament in *Joan of Arc's* flower bed? And does Gemma grow in grace, the better to be true to her name? And Emmanuel, the youngest, is she truly 'God with us' as her name indicates? And finally Therese, is she still round-shouldered, and does she still have to use a cane? I hope that she has straightened herself out and is getting well!"

Truly, these early recruits to *Joan of Arc*, these chosen ones, could chant with the great poet: "We few, we happy few . . ." <sup>36</sup> They were close knit and deeply committed. And they had as founder and "Father" a man who cared for each of them, a priest whom they trusted implicitly. He was a leader among men, recognized as a highly successful apostle of the Sacred Heart, praised and admired by all who knew him—from the humble working-class man and woman to the princes of the Church.

As secretaries, shipping clerks, and saleswomen of the various medals, holy pictures, and booklets needed by those who enrolled as members of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance, the sisters participated on a daily basis in its successful expansion. "*Vous serez avec moi partout, partout; je ne vous quitte jamais.*" <sup>37</sup> Father Marie Clement wrote them on the Feast of Saint Michael in 1915.

He thanked them again and again for their prayers, convinced, he said, that it was because of them that he was able to carry on his very heavy preaching schedule through the cold and snows of a Canadian winter, and in spite of the throat problem which had plagued him since childhood. "I feel that you are praying for me. I am strong and my resistance is not to be believed. It's marvelous. I laugh when your letters indicate that you think I'm sick! I don't have the time to be!" In turn, his letters mentioned his own concern for the health of his sisters: "Thank you for your dear letters which pleased me greatly, except for Julie's indigestion and 'the lightness' of Celina's weight! I want all this to change! Take your medicine and eat something with a bowl of milk at 10 o'clock in the morning and again at 3 in the afternoon—all of you! Rest. I insist that you to go to bed at 8:30 without fail.

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<sup>36</sup>Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, Act IV, Scene 3.

<sup>37</sup>You will be with me everywhere, everywhere; I never leave you.

Sleep is necessary for you all. Do not do as I do for I am *obliged* to do otherwise.”<sup>38</sup>

Whenever he could, he stopped in to see the families of his Canadian sisters who were far from home, living in another country. He was willing to wait hours to meet train or ferry connections in order to make these visits whenever possible. His letter of September 22, 1915, from Baie St. Paul, after giving all the details of rail and boat connections, added, “If I cannot go, I shall be deeply grieved—for you dear little ones from Ste. Anne [de la Pocatiere] know how much I would like to cross [the St. Lawrence] and go to greet your loved ones.”

But, and this is of great importance, lest it be thought that his concerns were only human ones, his letters also abounded in advice and counsel for the sisters’ religious formation. In one letter, he challenged them “to become saints until my return!” The message, although light-hearted in tone, was clearly to be taken seriously—and the sisters knew it. He brought to their attention the particular virtues of a certain number of women saints. They were to be models for the sisters’ behavior.

As can be supposed, Joan of Arc received special attention. Father Marie Clement highlighted her unique combination of virtues: *faith* in God—such faith that no obstacle was too great to “attack” and thus overcome; *courage*—such courage that one can carry on in spite of the gravest difficulties; *joy*—such joy as comes from knowing that one has been chosen by God.

Another saint who was held up to the sisters as an example was Margaret Mary. Her valor was to be their inspiration. He prayed that they might be enlightened so as to understand “the honor of your beautiful vocation and obtain the grace to replace her near the Sacred Heart. Oh, if only we had Margaret Marys at *Joan of Arc*: humble, broken, submissive, obedient, prayerful, meditative, loving to the point of having visions of the Sacred Heart!”<sup>39</sup>

Writing to his sisters from Central Falls, Rhode Island, in November of 1916, he held Saint Gertrude up to them as a model: “It is said of this great Benedictine in today’s Mass that Jesus chose her heart to

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<sup>38</sup>Written from the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Montreal, on July 11th, 1916.

<sup>39</sup>October 19, 1916.

build Himself a pleasant abode! Oh! if he could choose, or rather if my children of *Joan of Arc* were all as humble and as emptied of themselves and of all self-love so that Jesus could find in their hearts enough room to build there ‘a pleasant abode’ as in Saint Gertrude’s soul, how consoled I would be! Saint Gertrude was a great benefactress of purgatory. Be like her in this aspect also. Be the little victims of purgatory!” The postscript of this letter advised the sisters “to be laboring souls, working at your own perfection and transformation, and not only by paying lip service and making ‘beautiful promises’ which cost nothing, but for real!”

Saint Teresa of Avila was also to be their model. In a letter dated on her feast day in 1916, he wrote the following to his sisters: “Saint Teresa, what a woman she was! What an ardent, generous, enthusiastically intrepid soul for God’s cause! There is nothing about her that is faint-hearted or timid; she is not fearful, mean or niggardly, or at a loss for anything, [not like those] who cannot see beyond their own nose. She was a soul worthy of Jesus Christ and His cause. Oh, if only we had a Teresa at *Joan of Arc* Who will be the first?”

In 1919, one of his letters stated, “Is not ‘imitation’ of the saints, to the extent that we can, the best way to honor them?”

Saint Michael merited a special reference. “Saint Michael,” he wrote, “must feel and realize that his 15th century Joan has sisters in the 20th century and that these sisters, valiant, generous, daring in their actions for God or for His cause, are humble like their patron saint and that they have constituted him, the Archangel, the captain, the conqueror of Satan, as their own protector, as the angel guardian of their convent, their souls, their future, their good works, their ambitions, in a word, of all!”

Living persons were also set up to his sisters as examples of true religious. Among these, Mère Michael stands out. She was a Trappistine at the Monastery of St. Romuald, located directly across the St. Lawrence River from what was soon to be the motherhouse of his own sisters. French by birth, Mère Michael, whom Father Marie Clement referred to as “*la petite Mère du nord*,”<sup>40</sup> was deeply interested in her countryman’s activities, especially the new foundation for which she prayed so ardently. In Father Marie Clement’s estimation, she was the

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<sup>40</sup>The little Mother of the north.

ideal woman religious, and he held her up to his own sisters as a role model. The Trappistine community as a whole also served this function. A letter, dated January 23, 1916, written from the monastery at St. Romuald, where he was preaching a retreat to the Trappistines, has this to say about them: “What a life of immolation [for these] victims. Within myself I am almost ashamed when I think of the beauties and the comforts we have at *Joan of Arc* where, nevertheless, the true Victims are living! Pray, let us practice austerity, let us be valiant, detached, poor—true soldiers like Joan! Perfect yourselves for my return!”

He referred also, in these letters, to Father Emmanuel d’Alzon, the founder of his own religious congregation: “This valiant man, this soldier of Christ, this worker so devoted to the Holy Church, this father of our Assumption who, in effect, has given you him whom you call ‘your father’!” In yet another letter, he suggested, “Ask Father d’Alzon for the true spirit of Assumption for yourselves and for me! This is a spirit made up of heroism and generosity, of work and struggle for God’s good cause, of ardent love for Our Lord Jesus Christ, for the Very Holy Virgin and the Church. Every child of Assumption must be ‘a victim’ not of vanity, nor of susceptibility, nor of her own selfish, grudging personality, but a victim of the Divine Master and of the Holy Church. That is what should preoccupy us always, that is how we should live, not *in ourselves!*”

Father Marie Clement’s concern for his sisters did not stop at their religious formation. He reminded them to be polite and to smile always. At one point he suggested setting up an “Archconfraternity of Amiability,” whose rules would consist of “always smiling pleasantly,” always being “polite and distinguished. A religious soul which is not polite, amiable, distinguished, does not accomplish the good she must do.”

Programs were set up to train these postulants in reciting the divine office and deepening their knowledge of religion. They were expected to perfect their knowledge of French and to learn to love beautiful ornaments, flowers, and lights, the better to adorn the altar and the statues in chapel.

Everything needed to be done with regard to formation. Meticulous about details, Father Marie Clement left out nothing, thought of everything, and so, succeeded in a short period of time in giving this group of

*Herald of Love*

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recruits of all ages, most of whom had little formal education, a sense of belonging, a community spirit which had its roots in an intense prayer life.

## Chapter 38

Father Marie Clement was clearly overworked, allowing himself too little sleep during the years covered by these letters: 1915-1919. He continued to write, nonetheless, because he knew that his sisters awaited his letters with great eagerness. He realized also that sharing with them in detail his daily round of activities meant that the sisters could thus feel that they were participating, even at a distance, in the great work of the Archconfraternity. These missives, written over a four-year span, furnish precious knowledge about the man as well as his work.

A letter dated July 4, 1916, written from the Montreal suburb of St. Laurent where he was preaching a retreat at the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, provides an example of the kind of life he was leading at that period, and how he managed to convey all kinds of messages, from the spiritual to the down-to-earth, in his letters. Father Marie Clement had turned 40 on the 2nd of July and this letter, dated two days later, thanked his sisters for their good wishes. He asked them to “Beg pardon for your Father for all that he *has not done* for the Sacred Heart or for all that he has *done badly* for His cause! I thought of you all [on that day] as I indeed do each day! The retreat progresses. The chaplain has left for his month’s vacation which leaves me alone with my 262 retreatants. I shall try to launch the idea of a Holy Hour from 11 P.M. to midnight for Thursday evening. Thus we shall be united!”

“Yesterday I was able to do a very fine thing. I visited the convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, the Canadian apostles to Chinese children. I asked to see the two sisters who had returned from China during Lent. His Excellency, the Archbishop, had spoken about them to me. I asked them to spread the Archconfraternity *in China* and to send us the names of young Chinese; they promised that they would

do this. I also insisted that they set to work translating our documents [for the Archconfraternity] in Chinese and to have them printed by Christmas; it would be our gift to the Infant Jesus for His birth! They gladly promised to do all of this.”

But, as we have already seen, his letters could mention mundane things as well. One of them reads as follows: “Are you resting? Is Celina putting on weight and color? And is Julie still trying out her wings and is Jeanne still as witty? Is the grass cut and well cut? I can see from here beautiful lawns cut twice a week! You could paint the small entrance to the house, the one which opens into the kitchen, along with the steps of the main entrance, only the top, using the gray paint left over from last year! Take advantage of a good day [to do this]! I bless you in great haste.”

Father Marie Clement’s letter of the 6th of July, written early that morning, before his Mass, wishes them a “beautiful, fervent, generous, and very holy First Friday.” He announces that the mother general of the Sisters of the Holy Cross has not only agreed to the Holy Hour but considers it a special favor during retreat. What joy for the Divine Heart if 262 fervent souls are at His feet during the Holy Hour, other Margaret Marys! I shall be truly united with you in this and grant you your share of these joys.”

The letter of the next day, a First Friday, blesses them all on their “monthly feast day of the Sacred Heart.” “Oh!” he writes, “if you could have seen last night’s [Holy Hour]. I think it was the most beautiful spectacle of this type that I have ever seen. We were more than 500 at the Holy Hour; the superior general and her council headed the group. Even the sick sisters attended in wheel chairs. The altar was beautifully adorned and illuminated; it was truly a unique scene, a worthy octave celebration of last week’s Feast of the Sacred Heart. You must have prayed well. Everything is fine. My health is perfect. The Sacred Heart sustains me marvelously. Pray a great deal! Rest! Have you had your first picnic? I bless all of you.”

His letter of July 9th, after giving details of the retreat he has been preaching, states how mother general and mother provincial had told him that they would never forget the night (of the Holy Hour) as long as they lived. “Long live the Holy Hour, the hour requested of a poor little religious by the Sacred Heart; the hour which does not kill, but rather consoles, restores, and makes one rejoice! Thank you, dear Children,

for having observed it so faithfully. That is perhaps the reason for the successes of this cause! Today, Sunday, at 10:30 A.M., I asked if I could give a special lecture to the superiors. Reverend Mother seemed delighted. Fifty-two superiors attended. I was able to tell them many things and I especially requested that they be *superiors according to the Sacred Heart*. I explained 'how to act' in order to become henceforth and everywhere apostles of the Sacred Heart's cause. All have decided to go along! They want to win over the priests in the parishes and [plan] to do a great deal! *Deo gratias!*

"Tomorrow I will give my final sermon. On Tuesday, the 11th, the close of the retreat takes place at Mass. In the afternoon, His Excellency, the Archbishop, will preside at the taking of the habit. Then my program will be as follows:

- 12 July — Archbishop's residence in Montreal
- 13 July — Departure for L'Islet
- 13, 14, 15 July — L'Islet
- 15 July — Departure for St. Romuald
- 16, 17, 18, 19 July — St. Romuald
- 20 July — Quebec and Ste. Anne de Beaupré
- 21 July — Departure for Montreal
- 22, 23 July — Ste. Anne de Bellevue for installation of Archconfraternity
- 24 July — Return to St. Laurent for the start of the second retreat."

Such a sample of the busy schedule of this man gives one an inkling of the immense amount of good he was able to do, and, through these retreats, preached to so many sisters, the very large number of souls he was able to reach, directly, and also through each one of them.

His pace did not let up. Wherever he found himself, he visited the pastor, the sisters in the local convent, and schools. He was willing to knock on doors for the Sacred Heart—from the humble farmer’s house to the palaces of bishops and archbishops. Nor, in his fervor for the Sacred Heart, did he neglect his sisters. Already, during those years, he was busy finding the proper parishes where he could establish them to carry on the work for which they were being prepared. His letter of February 4, 1919, written from Manchester, New Hampshire, detailed his meeting with the Ordinary of that diocese, Bishop Georges Albert Guertin:

My very dear Children,

Glory to the Sacred Heart and long live our holy patron, the immortal Joan, for the great graces which have just been accorded us since this morning at 10 o’clock.

At exactly two minutes to ten, we, dear Father Tétreau and I, were entering the quarters of Bishop Guertin, as His Excellency had asked us to.

We were received with open arms. Immediately, His Excellency said this: “I am happy to tell you that the question of the establishment of the Work of *Joan of Arc* in the diocese has been reviewed by the Council and was favorably received by all the counselors, with no restrictions. It is thus decided that we do accept the little Sisters of Joan of Arc as soon as they can come, and I authorize Father Tétreau, in accord with the Council, to make all the necessary arrangements to receive them suitably.”

He promised that he would come himself to say the first Mass in the chapel of the little Joans of Arc and would even install them officially on May 30th, feast of the beloved [Joan]. He also promised to give me a written document signifying the formal acceptance of our dear Family in his diocese.

Glory be given to the Sacred Heart! Long live Joan of Arc. Long live Bishop Guertin, our friend and father. Long live

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Father Tetreau with whom I tell you again that I am yours  
in *Corde Christi*.<sup>41</sup>

Your unworthy Father, F.M.—Pernet A.A.

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<sup>41</sup>The Heart of Christ.



## Chapter 39

Father Marie Clement, in his care and concern for the perfection of his sisters, never lost sight of the need to better himself. He wrote, for example, “Obtain for me the grace to become a holy priest in the service of the Sacred Heart.” He did not hesitate to expend all the physical energy he had, to accomplish the tasks for which he felt responsible: “Let us love the Sacred Heart by the sweat of our brows.” “We must work and produce the hundred for one.” “Everything goes well in spite of everything. I work and pray and try not to waste a second. It is forbidden.”

On the Feast of Saint Clement, in the year 1916, he wrote, “Must I confide in you, my dear children, what I like most to offer the Divine Heart in my life as a priest? It is my exhausted lungs, my almost mute throat, and my weary limbs when I descend from the pulpit, or when I am worn out in the confessional, or during the long and laborious travels which the Divine Master demands of me to prepare and advance everything! It is those offerings, I believe, which He likes best and which we must give Him!”

He asked his sisters to pray to Saint Clement, pope, that he, Father Marie Clement, might become a true priest of the Holy Church, a devoted son of the papacy of which “my patron saint has been one of the glories! Ask this ‘martyr’ to tell me how to be like him ‘a victim of the Sacred Heart’ in every sense of the word, for the noble cause of the Archconfraternity, for the community of *Joan of Arc* and for priests.”

His letters to his sisters, as we have seen, are numerous, full of the details which make for good reading and which allowed them, at a distance, to feel that they were united with him via prayer, collaborating with him in bringing about the triumph of the Sacred Heart. Such letters must have elicited admiration, reverence, excitement, enthusiasm

in this small group of women who, because of the generation in which they lived, because of the circumstances of their upbringing, could not have occupied center stage. Through their affiliation with Father Marie Clement, they were in touch, on an almost daily basis, with a priest of God who was doing great things for Holy Mother Church. They were thus vicarious participants in the life of a charismatic man of God.

Knowing that he was their link to the larger world of the Church, Father Marie Clement made them feel cared for and beloved: “A word with as many ‘special’ benedictions as you are cherished souls!” he wrote on one occasion. “I bless you 16,500 times, a thousand times for each of you and 500 more for little Mother Josephine!”

In 1919, he wrote, “You are loved, we live united, and I run about trying to do all the work I can to return quickly to the dear city of the shepherdess!<sup>42</sup> Jesus replaces me at your side. He is obliged to do so; if you only knew with what audacity, authority, and confidence especially, I say this to Him—and I know that He does so; He is that *good*, ‘so good’ as our dear Josephine would say! So, *no tears*, no regrets, no sighs; let us live on sacrifice when Jesus imposes this upon us and we shall thus truly be victims, always ready for everything whenever it pertains to God, to Jesus, to the Church, to souls. Remain ‘valiant.’ You, my dear children, are the first souls to whom my priesthood goes!”

Such were Father Marie Clement’s letters, written in the bustling excitement of busy days, days spent preaching retreats to bring souls closer to God, all the while forming new souls to be worthy victims in the pursuit of their special vocation as Sisters of Joan of Arc.

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<sup>42</sup>A play on words: Joan of Arc was a shepherdess and Bergerville (city of the shepherd) was the site of the motherhouse.

## Chapter 40

Soon, all too soon, clouds began to gather over the horizon of *Joan of Arc*. The year 1921 was to test Father Marie Clement's mettle as a true priest of God. That year two very crucial and intermingled questions were to come to a head. The first was the complete misunderstanding of Father Marie Clement's position in the community of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc shown by Father Joseph Maubon, named Vicar General of the Assumptionist Congregation in 1917, upon the death of Father Emmanuel Bailly. The other was the case of Alice Caron, first member and "inspirer" of the sisters' foundation.

Father Emmanuel Bailly had passed away during the worst days of World War I. The full-fledged election of a successor would have to await the end of the war. In the meantime, a vicar general was named to head the congregation. He was Father Joseph Maubon who had spent many years as a missionary in Chile. Notwithstanding the fact that by 1921 the war had long since come to an end, elections for a superior general had not yet taken place.

From the start, Father Joseph seems to have totally misconstrued the special relationship between Father Marie Clement and the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc. This misconception was to result in grave problems for Father Marie Clement within his own congregation, and the near destruction of the new community of sisters.

Thinking Father Marie Clement to be merely the sisters' chaplain, Father Joseph was of the opinion that his prolonged stay at the motherhouse was against canon law. He therefore resolved to remove him from there, planning eventually to alternate the chaplaincy among the members of the Assumptionist community.

Father Maubon's correspondence with the new superior for North America, Father Tranquille Pesse, mentioned his intention to buy "a

small house” in Bergerville where he could install a community of Assumptionists. As he saw it, these priests could then, by turns, be chaplains for the sisters, in addition to assuming responsibility for the *Montmartre Canadien*. Both of these positions were being filled by Father Marie Clement, with the help of the sisters who took care of the enormous amount of secretarial work required for the functioning of the Archconfraternity.

It should be remembered here that Father Marie Clement’s superiors had never granted him the richly deserved title of Director of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance. This was the case, in spite of the fact that, except for help received from a certain number of sisters of many communities, before his own was founded, he alone had preached the devotion and had insured its success. Initially, Father Emmanuel Bailly had reserved the title for himself. In 1920, Father Joseph Maubon named the regional superior in the United States as Director General, with the local superiors in New York and Quebec as Assistant Directors.

Later correspondence between Father Marie Clement and Father Gervais Quénard, elected superior general of the Assumptionists in 1924, pointed to the difficulties encountered by Father Marie Clement during all those years in promoting this devotion to the Sacred Heart without having the official title of Director. It is an established fact, worth reiterating here, that no other Assumptionist had ever preached the devotion, that Father Marie Clement had, from the start, been the only member of his congregation to do so.

An onlooker can only conclude that his superiors were motivated by a desire to keep Father Marie Clement humble. Some of his colleagues, misjudging him completely, seem to have found him to be too sure of himself and to have decided that his great discretion was based on the conceited notion that he felt sufficient unto himself.

In an attempt to shed some light on such an erroneous perception of Father Marie Clement, a previous biographer, Father Yvon LeFloc’h, himself an Assumptionist, quoted from a letter of 1915, written by Father Marie Clement to Father Emmanuel Bailly in which the former attempted to refute the accusation that his colleagues found him to be “presumptuous, egotistical, and lacking in humility.” Father Marie Clement’s answer reads: “Alas! Father, I know only too well that I am not a saint and I sense that my manner does not suit everybody. But

will I ever be able to please everyone? Am I presumptuous because I have given totally of myself to the work which you have approved and which the pope has blessed? Would these undertakings have been blessed by the Sacred Heart if they had been based on pride and egotism?" The scope of Father Marie Clement's success can be judged by the fact that in December, 1916, four short years after the establishment of an American Center in New York, the Archconfraternity had already enrolled 200,000 members. In fairness to Father Emmanuel Bailly, it should be added that in November, 1917, he had dictated a laudatory letter regarding the Archconfraternity from his deathbed. In it he had stated, "the favors from Quebec are the greatest which Assumption has received."

Profoundly humble, patient when faced with the contradictory behavior of others, judging himself to be but the poor instrument which the Sacred Heart was using to reach the hearts of men—these were Father Marie Clement's real qualities. His vigorous pursuit of the two causes which he had espoused, the Archconfraternity and the foundation of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc, seems at times to have had a negative effect on those who were less energetic and less enterprising than he. The success of one person can put to shame one's associates, even one's friends. Could Father Marie Clement have been such a different person to his fellow priests than he was with the sisters whose praise of him knows no bounds? One doubts it, even if persons can be different depending upon those with whom they find themselves. But certain basic traits persist—no person, scrutinized daily at close hand, as was the case with Father Marie Clement, can be so radically different. The mystery remains to be elucidated.



# Chapter 41

The year 1921 began badly and continued to be full of dark days for Father Marie Clement. The total lack of understanding manifested by Father Joseph Maubon and the adverse criticism of some among Father Marie Clement's colleagues were to prove disconcerting in the extreme and ominous for the future of the Sisters, as well as for the Archconfraternity.

Father Joseph Maubon was seeking to remove Father Marie Clement from the motherhouse of the sisters, going so far as to state in a letter to Father Tranquille Pesse, Father Marie Clement's regional superior, "If Father Marie Clement is opposed [to leaving the motherhouse], you have my authorization to remove him from Bergerville and bring him back to New York."

More dangerous still, however, were to be the schemes of a man from within the ranks of Father Marie Clement's local community. Father Pierre Celestin Regnier had been assigned to Father Marie Clement as a companion in 1920. He is the one who worsened the situation for Father through an assiduous correspondence with Father Joseph Maubon in which he consistently distorted the facts.

Father Regnier was struck down by a cerebral hemorrhage in April of 1921. Before his premature death, he behaved strangely toward Father Marie Clement, having on one occasion gone up to him during the chanting of the Credo on Holy Thursday, whispering, "If Judas had asked for Our Lord's pardon, he would have received it. I too will be able to obtain it." In the days following this incident, Father Regnier would disavow his actions and ask for pardon. Just before his death, in a semiconscious state, he muttered, "I worked at Father Marie Clement's departure."

For ten days after the death of Father Regnier, Father Tranquille

Pesse conducted an inquiry into what turned out to be a complicated and delicate situation. This period of time, along with the weeks which had preceded and the days which followed, were to be a time of anguish for Father Marie Clement. April, 1921 was indeed a cruel month for him.

## Chapter 42

Had Father Marie Clement realized, prior to those mysterious statements made by a man dying of a cerebral hemorrhage during Holy Week of the year 1921, that there were serpents in his nest, one a man, the other a woman? Was he himself so straightforward and open, besides being extremely busy, that he had not realized the mounting bitterness of Mother Joanna [Alice Caron] at being left by the wayside? This was the fault of no one, least of all of Father Marie Clement. It was the result of circumstances beyond anyone's control. Mother Joanna was resentful of the fact that she could never be either superior general or even mistress of novices. No one doubted her sincere piety, but there was a flaw in her character. In attempting to describe this trait, the women religious who knew her and lived with her use the expression *mauvais caractere*, adding that she was obstinate. The expression *mauvais caractere* encompasses a multitude of possibilities. In this case it would seem to indicate that rather than humbly accept a minor role in the community, she had not hesitated to stoop to malevolent means in order to come out on top. She had managed to convince Father Pierre Celestin Regnier that her recriminations against Father Marie Clement were founded in fact. As we have seen, some of Father Marie Clement's colleagues seemed to have been only too eager to believe whatever might be said against him.

Fortunately for Father Marie Clement, Father Tranquille Pesse arrived to set things straight. Homage should be rendered here to this superior who, had he simply listened to the dictates of the vicar general of the Assumptionist order, acting in good faith, but at a great distance from the reality of the situation, would have removed Father Marie Clement from the motherhouse of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc, thereby killing the new community in its infancy. Instead, he de-

cided to study the situation carefully, taking the time to inquire closely of all concerned. "I saw the Cardinal, the Vicar General, Msgr. [Cyrille] Marois, Canon [Charles] Gagne and one other prelate. Bishop [Paul Eugene] Roy is in the hospital," he wrote to Father Maubon. He went on to state in this same letter, "I am transmitting everything to you in an impartial manner without taking sides for anyone."

He then presented his report as follows: "The very day of Father Pierre Celestin's funeral, Mother Joanna, the foundress, or co-foundress, or inspirer—whatever you prefer—asked to see me to transmit information from the archdiocese; she said that she had received a note from Canon Gagne asking whether we were going to execute the promises made by you, that is, to remove Father Marie Clement from *Joan of Arc* for three months, to allow a mistress of novices from the outside to organize the novitiate."

When asked to produce the note from Canon Gagné, Mother Joanna replied that she had torn it up. Father Tranquille then decided to see Canon Gagne himself. The note and its contents proved to be a figment of Mother Joanna's imagination. Further inquiry was to reveal that Canon Gagne saw nothing anticanonical in Father Marie Clement's residing at the motherhouse, that this was often the case in the convents of Canada, given the rigors of the climate. "Canon Gagne even added," wrote Father Tranquille, 'Concerning Father Marie Clement, I have never received any complaints worthy of mention.' "

Accordingly, in his report, Father Tranquille set forth a first conclusion: "It is absolutely false that Bishop Roy and Canon Gagne confided any mission to Father Pierre Celestin."

There followed a second interview between Mother Joanna and Father Tranquille during which, he recounted, she became agitated, stating that someone else had received the message from Canon Gagne, a former Sister of Saint Joan of Arc. So once again Father Tranquille asked to see Canon Gagne who, in response to this question, "began to laugh, saying, 'Father, this makes no sense!'"

The second conclusion to be drawn from all this, according to Father Tranquille was that, "Mother Joanna is guilty of lying, lies which led Father Pierre Celestin to take certain steps and write letters which caused him remorse and may have led to his cerebral hemorrhage and a painful end. A punishment must be applied," he concluded.

Father Tranquille took advantage of his talks with someone at

the Chancery, probably Msgr. Cyrille Marois, to ask how the cardinal would have reacted to the removal of Father Marie Clement, planned by Father Joseph Maubon. He received the following answer, as recorded in his report to Father Maubon: “The cardinal would immediately have referred the question to the Vatican and by return post would have received permission to recall Father Marie Clement, officially delegated by Father Bailly to Cardinal Bégin to see to the foundation of *Joan of Arc*.

“Father Marie Clement’s departure would place the future of this foundation, which is in its formative stages, in grave jeopardy. The cardinal esteems and loves Father Marie Clement. In the interview that I had with him, he formulated no complaint. On the contrary, he had nothing but praise for him, for the work of *Joan of Arc*. The cardinal loves and strongly encourages the work of *Joan of Arc*; he recommends it to all the pastors; the foundation is going well.

“Third conclusion then: Father Marie Clement and his work are very much appreciated.”

Father Tranquille, kind, discerning superior that he was, saw fit to add yet another conclusion: “I need not add that Father Marie Clement is suffering terribly from all these events and the suspicions which hang over him. In any case, I can tell you that if you had removed him from Quebec, he would have obeyed immediately, no matter what the unfortunate results might have been, results for which he refused any responsibility.” This report was dated April 23, 1921. A letter written on April 21st had included the following statement, “Father Marie Clement asked me to tell you that in spite of what we may have thought of him, he loves and will always love Assumption as [he has] in the past.”

When all this had been written, what remained to be done? Mother Joanna’s wiles and ruses to rid herself of Father Marie Clement’s influence had been, and were still, the crux of the problem. Father had become, in her estimation, a rival to her own authority, and she had stooped to lies and subterfuge to oust him.

Once the dust had settled, it was clear to all that not Father Marie Clement, but Mother Joanna herself would have to leave. She could not be allowed to go on undermining the pillar of the new foundation in the person of Father Marie Clement, nor could she be allowed to sow seeds of discontent in certain of the younger and newer sisters who might

have listened to her out of respect for her position in the community.

The problem had come to a head in August, 1920, when Celina Benoit of New Bedford, Massachusetts, one of the first of the many women who were to answer God's call by placing their total trust in Father Marie Clement, had been elected as the first superior general of the young community. It is inevitable that one should wonder why Mother Joanna had not been chosen for this post. Indeed, she herself had seen in the election both an insult and an injustice, so convinced was she that she needed only to exist in order to be revered and respected.

The reasons for her having been passed over for the post are multiple and the details of the story very complicated. An attempt to sort out the pieces of the puzzle seems to point to the fact that Alice Caron, inspired to suggest the foundation of a congregation dedicated to the welfare and well-being of priests, and herself a person of deep faith and piety, did not have the qualities needed to direct a young community. As time went on, she became a malcontent. Her bitterness increased whenever her suggestions, which tended to extremes, were not accepted.

Nor does she seem to have had a true community spirit, keeping to her room a great deal of the time. She was treated with all due deference by the other members of the community. This, however, does not seem to have sufficed. As the "inspirer" of the foundation, Mother Joanna was convinced that her ideas should be followed in all things concerning the community. She was certain that the Holy Spirit continued to speak through her. There seems to have been stubbornness in Mother Joanna's make-up, unenlightened by awareness of her true self. Father Marie Clement always treated her with special regard, as befitted her position as the eldest in the community. He instructed the other members of the order to call her Mother and to treat her with all the respect due her.

Because of his obligations to the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance for the Sacred Heart, Father Marie Clement was perforce absent for certain periods of time. During his absences, did Mother Joanna see herself slip in the esteem of her colleagues in religious life? Did she, during those periods, wish to enforce her personal rule? She was, in any case, no match for Father Marie Clement, either in judgment, farsightedness, elevation of spirit, or education. As a result, it

would have been natural for the members of so young a community to look to Father Marie Clement in all things. Nor would he disappoint them.

She evidently felt victimized when Celina Benoit, who was among the very first to enter the community at Christmas of 1914, and others also, began to surpass her in responsibilities assigned because their judgment was surer and their abilities greater than hers. Seeing herself slip from first place in the eyes of her companions, she grew embittered and therefore intent on re-establishing her position of leadership. Frustrated within, she sought support without. To draw attention to herself, she complained to Father Pierre Celestin Regnier. She also spoke against Father Marie Clement, or so it would seem, to someone in the Quebec Chancery. We have seen the problems induced by her scheming.

Father Marie Clement, who was of an open and frank temperament, was to suffer deeply from all this, as can readily be guessed. He wanted nothing better than to have peace reign in the new community. He was also a man respectful of the special graces bestowed upon others, sensitive to the particular needs of persons, conscious of individual differences, and desirous of avoiding unnecessary pain and conflict. The case of Mother Joanna was not, however, to be resolved until both he, and Mother Joanna herself, were to suffer immensely.

Mother Joanna, working alone, could not have gone very far in plotting the removal of Father Marie Clement. She was able, in this instance, to benefit from the fact that Father Marie Clement's personality and goals were not appreciated by all his Assumptionist brothers. One sister, in whom she had confided, reported that she had said upon hearing that Father Maubon would visit the community, "I assure you that he will set matters right; things must change; our Father must leave this house, and I will take every possible step to see that this happens."



## Chapter 43

A biography of Father Marie Clement must come to grips with the question: Was he the founder of the congregation or was Mother Joanna its foundress? Mother Joanna herself is quoted as having said that her role was only “to say things,” that “it was up to her spiritual director [Father Marie Clement] to act.” In February, 1917, she had written the following words to Father Emmanuel Bailly, “The Work of *Joan of Arc* is progressing. We must rely on him who was chosen by the Sacred Heart to be its founder.”

From the very start, Assumptionist documents referred to Father Marie Clement as the founder. Father Stéphane Chaboud had so designated him in 1914 at the community’s beginnings in Worcester. An account of the event of the first Mass<sup>43</sup> of the newly formed community, published in the annals of the Little Franciscan Sisters of Mary in Worcester, in whose chapel the ceremony had taken place, concludes with the words, “of which Father Marie Clement is the founder.”

Alice Caron’s inspiration of 1913 led to the formation of a religious institute, almost exclusively through the efforts, abilities, knowledge, personal relationships, and influence of Father Marie Clement. At this distance, it seems fair and just to see Alice as a transmitter, a catalyst, whose role it was to spur Father Marie Clement to action. She sowed a seed in his mind and, had she been a good farmer, she would always have worked alongside Father Marie Clement to ensure a fine harvest. She would have continued to enrich this fertile soil, which the new foundation rapidly became, rather than sow seeds of dissension.

Father Marie Clement’s wonderful letters, written during the early years of the community, between 1915 and 1918, gave no hint of any difficulty between them. On the contrary, they revealed a desire on his

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<sup>43</sup>Midnight Mass 1914.

part to honor her position within the community. The letters referred to Alice Caron as “little Mother,” enjoining her “to govern well by your gentleness of character, by the example of your life, by your goodness and the power of your prayers.”<sup>44</sup>

In 1917, from Quebec where she had joined him during negotiations regarding the purchase of land and the construction of a motherhouse for the congregation, Father Marie Clement wrote appreciatively of her to the other sisters in Worcester: “Mother Alice is well. We see each other every day, sometimes often during the same day, whenever I have need of her insights, her good sense, and her judgment, for she has all of these and she helps me a great deal during these difficult days.”

It is clear that he wished to associate her closely with him in this most important activity for the community: the transfer of the motherhouse from Worcester to Quebec. This had been made possible by Cardinal Bégin’s acceptance of the Sisters of Joan of Arc into his diocese during the late winter of 1917.

But for three years prior to 1921, it is clear that Father Marie Clement was aware of Mother Joanna’s growing discontent and the difficulties caused by having a sulky dissident within the community. Disagreement had arisen regarding the type of order which *Joan of Arc* was becoming. Mother Joanna would have preferred fewer classes, conferences, and meditations. She found these too demanding; she wanted a more simple rule to follow than that proposed by Father Marie Clement. He had tried by every means possible to guide Mother Joanna and to lead her to a more positive view of things.

Given her attitude, he could foresee that she would soon be surpassed in importance within a community which she had considered as her own foundling, and which she had helped nurture through the difficult days of its infancy. Her increasing bitterness was accompanied by a desire to oust the person responsible, as she saw it, for her declining importance. This attitude was to prevent Mother Alice, Joanna in religion, from witnessing the adolescence and experiencing the joys of seeing the community reach maturity.

Official ecclesiastical approval allowing the sisters to constitute a community and to begin a canonically sanctioned novitiate had been received on June 29, 1920. The first vows were to be taken one year

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<sup>44</sup>September 1915

from that date. Respectful of Mother Joanna's position within the congregation and grateful for all that she had done for it, Father Marie Clement, nevertheless, foresaw the problem of having her pronounce vows. Father Tranquille Pesse rescued Father Marie Clement from this dilemma. He invited him to an interview with Canon Gagne, representing the cardinal. According to Father Tranquille's report to Father Joseph Maubon, Canon Gagne stated explicitly at that meeting that Mother Joanna's case was serious, a case even for dismissal, on which the community would have to pronounce itself without delay for the greater good of the Work and to calm everyone's mind. He had advised Father Marie Clement on the procedure to follow, that is, that the senior sisters were to be informed of the situation and subsequently asked to vote by secret ballot on the case of Mother Joanna. The results would be transmitted to the cardinal himself who would be the final arbiter in this situation.

On the 16th of April, 1921, an official document was addressed to Cardinal Bégin. It read as follows:

On April 15, 1921, at the Convent of Joan of Arc, in Bergerville, near Quebec, the oldest sisters in the community—thirteen in number—met in Chapter with Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart,<sup>45</sup> the current superior general, to study and discuss a very important case.

It concerned the conduct of the most senior member of the community, the very person who inspired the Work of *Joan of Arc*, Mother Joanna Caron of the Sacred Heart.

After serious consideration, the meeting was brought to a close and each one continued prayerfully to reflect upon the decision she would reach.

On the 16th, Mass was said for this intention. Every sister involved attended the Mass and received Communion to obtain the insights needed to settle the matter at hand. The meeting for the vote took place at 11:30 A.M.

This secret ballot resulted in a unanimous decision to exclude said Mother Joanna from the community.

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<sup>45</sup>Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart was the first religious name of Celina Benoit.

The response from Cardinal Bégin was not long in coming. On April 19th, he sanctioned the decision reached by the sisters.

Alice Caron left the motherhouse two days later, on the 21st of April, 1921. In a circular letter addressed to each of the houses within the congregation, Father Marie Clement summarized the document we have just read, asked everyone to be discreet about the matter, and concluded, "I believe this departure will restore peace, unity, and spirit to our Family. Prior to this there was uneasiness, anxiety, and discomfort because of this poor Mother who was not and did not want to be what she should have been. Pray for her with us and may God sanctify her in the world to which she has returned."

In this age of women's liberation, would things have turned out differently? It is clear that were the events to take place today, Alice Caron would still have had to be more self-controlled, have had a more judicious temperament, and not have used underhanded means in order to earn the right to lead what she considered to be her community. In her estimation, the fact of having had the initial idea for the foundation automatically bestowed that right upon her, by divine right so to speak. Even in today's more liberated society, where women can and do successfully assume positions of great responsibility, certain qualities of mind and heart must be present to insure the success of their undertakings.

After leaving *Joan of Arc*, Alice Caron spent some time with her family at L'Islet Station in the Province of Quebec. A letter she wrote to Father Joseph Maubon brought from him the suggestion that she try to engage in some meaningful activity. She worked for the Redemptorist Sisters at Ste. Anne de Beaupre in the kitchen, as a sacristan, and even in the basilica's gift shop. Years later, she spent some months in Boston, working for the Marists. She died of cancer in 1950, at the age of 78, and is buried at Levis in the Province of Quebec.

One can only feel sadness for what was not to be, and relief also that the breaking point, when it happened, did not destroy the foundation which had come at such an opportune time for the clergy of God.

# Chapter 44

Just as 1920 had been a banner year, a crowning point in the life of the young community, so the year 1921 had been one of crisis.

In 1920, there had been many “firsts.”

- First election of a superior general and the members of a General Council.
- First official vesting ceremony.
- First writing of the community Constitutions.
- Official acceptance by Rome of the new congregation.
- First series of *Meditations* for the sisters by Father Marie Clement. These would later be published as a two-volume work.

The canonization of Joan of Arc that same year had been viewed as a providential sign for the community. As such, it had been the cause of great rejoicing for both Father Marie Clement and his sisters. Father Marie Clement had been so convinced of Joan’s sanctity from the start that he had not hesitated to invoke her aid and protection by giving her name to his sisters. His faith in her had been justified. He now had canonical proof that his trust in Joan had not been unfounded.

The year 1921, however, as we have just seen, was to be a different matter altogether. The joys and rewards of 1920 were to be followed by the pain and punishment of 1921. Undeserved punishment is hard to bear. Though Father Marie Clement’s reputation was to emerge, not only unscathed but enhanced, from the troubles occasioned by Alice Caron and Father Pierre Celestin Regnier, the experience had left its

mark on this highly sensitive man. He had suffered greatly. Both body and soul would bear lasting scars.

Comforting words came his way, however. Barely three weeks after Alice Caron's departure, Cardinal Bégin expressed to Father Marie Clement his admiration at the rapid development of the community. He saw in this, he wrote, not only the blessing of heaven, but also the influence of the founder to whom he expressed both gratitude and praise for his work. In this same missive, the cardinal included an official six-year approbation of the Constitutions written by Father Marie Clement for his community.

The next fifteen years: 1921-1936 were to be years of consolidation and intense activity. It was a period highlighted by Father Marie Clement's careful preparation of *Meditations* for the spiritual direction of his sisters.

In February, 1919, Georges Albert Guertin, Bishop of the Diocese of Manchester, which includes all of New Hampshire, had authorized the coming of the sisters to his diocese. Infant Jesus Parish of Nashua was the first parish in which the sisters established a convent within an existing rectory. There was a clear-cut separation between the convent and the rectory, so that the sisters in fact "lived a semi-cloistered existence," as one priest was to remark upon hearing the list of prudent requirements exacted by their Constitutions. That same month of February, the Vicar General of Quebec, Msgr. Cyrille Marois, who respected the work Father Marie Clement had undertaken, and whose brother was the pastor of a large parish in Montmagny on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, asked the sisters to care for this rectory also.

Father Marie Clement called these convents "Lorraines." In this way he continued to honor Joan of Arc, the saint from Lorraine. Natural psychologist that he was, he realized that in so doing he was inspiring his sisters to act as Joan would have done, valiantly going off into a new situation, there to act with energy, without ever being daunted by unforeseen circumstances.

At his death in 1936, twenty-five "Lorraines" had been founded in the United States. All of this had been made possible by such a steady stream of vocations to *Joan of Arc* that the sisters were already 248 in number by 1936.

## Chapter 45

Humble though their everyday tasks may be, cooking and cleaning in rectories and monasteries, the lives of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc are enriched on a daily basis by an intense prayer life which is their founder's richest legacy.

Their role in the Lord's vineyard is to perform manual labor. By freely choosing this humblest of vocations and by joyfully accomplishing the work which it entails, they have raised housework to the status of a heroic act.

The Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc do the work which frees priests from the drudgeries of everyday existence, thus allowing them more time for their ministry to souls.

On the surface, the lives of the sisters can seem to be simply a round of tedious tasks. But, if one believes in the Communion of Saints through the power of prayer, it becomes possible to appreciate the extent to which the sisters participate in the spiritual life, not only of the parishes in which they work on a daily basis, but of the entire Church of God.

Each of their days is dedicated through prayer to a separate category of ministers in God's holy Church, from the pope right down to deacons and future priests. Though seemingly circumscribed outwardly, the lives of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc reach out each day far beyond the walls of their convents. They live out their valiant, dedicated lives in communion with the universal Church.

It is clear from the records that as soon as he saw his family grow in numbers, as well as in efficiency, Father Marie Clement began to think seriously of establishing his community in France—France, the country which Joan of Arc had served and saved—France, the country where his own religious congregation had been founded—France, to

which his native province of Alsace had been returned after the defeat of Germany in World War I.

By the year 1928, Father Marie Clement, with the consistency that was a dominating trait in him, had managed to acquire the castle of Beaulieu-les-Fontaines in the diocese of Beauvais, where Joan of Arc had been imprisoned after her capture at Compiègne in 1430 and before being taken to Rouen for the trial which was to result in her death at the stake.

The sisters chosen to serve at Beaulieu-les-Fontaines experienced a special sense of mission in transforming the dungeon, in which Joan of Arc had been held, into a religious and patriotic sanctuary. Glass cases were installed there containing swords and military decorations from the recently ended war. One sword, especially, deserved a place of honor, that of General G. Pau who was a descendant of Joan of Arc's brother.

In 1930, Father Marie Clement organized splendid ceremonies to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Joan of Arc's arrest. He spared no effort on this occasion. The celebration included a parade of soldiers in 15th century garb. The castle had been restored, the dungeon had become a sanctuary, the sisters, under Father Marie Clement's guidance, had worked wonders. The site quickly became a place of pilgrimage. By 1933, more than 6,000 persons were visiting it annually. In addition to the upkeep of the castle and its sanctuary, the sisters also maintained a Hospice for elderly men and women on the grounds. Under French law, they were allowed to be in France as a religious community only if they worked at something which promoted public well-being.

When the first seven founding sisters arrived in France in 1928, Father Marie Clement introduced them to Louis Cardinal Dubois of Paris and explained to him the reason for which the community had been founded. The cardinal had, at the time, manifested a keen interest. So impressed was he, in fact, that he spoke of the community to the Sulpicians who almost immediately asked to have the sisters at their historic parish of Saint Sulpice in Paris. The request was quickly honored. What better way to repay the debt of gratitude which both the United States and Canada owed the Sulpicians! From the early days of the Church on this continent, they had been in charge of priestly formation, especially at the National Seminary in Baltimore and at the

*Grand Séminaire* in Montreal.

By 1929, on the Feast of Saint Charles Borromeo, the second “Lorraine” in France had become a fact. The sisters assigned to Saint Sulpice even took special cooking lessons, the better to please French palates!

In 1932, a third “Lorraine,” called Villa Notre-Dame, was opened in Combs-la-Ville, not far from Fontainebleau. Here the sisters ministered to priests who could rest there for a few days or for a few months. Up to twelve priests could be accommodated in this home given to the Archdiocese of Paris by a woman with deep faith and a caring heart. A visitor, writing on the importance of such a house of repose in the life of priests, commented in the article on the discretion and tact displayed in their work there by the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc. By 1938, the sisters were also working devotedly in the bishop’s residence at Beauvais.

But we are getting ahead of our story. As early as December, 1931, Father Marie Clement had opened a second novitiate for his sisters, this time in France. On March 2nd, 1932, the first perpetual profession of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc took place in France. In the very spot where, 500 years before, Joan of Arc herself had been a victim of enmity between two nations, seven women voluntarily became “Victims of Love for the Clergy” on that memorable day. Father Marie Clement hoped, quite naturally, that many young French women would join the community. Unfortunately, his death in 1936, followed so closely by the outbreak of World War II in Europe, would prevent this fond hope from becoming a reality. Today, only three French sisters remain in the congregation. One of them is Father Marie Clement’s own niece who, out of respect for her uncle, carries the religious name of Clement Marie.

War was to force the departure and eventually the closing of all the French “Lorraines.” The American sisters were evacuated when the United States declared war against Germany. Two Canadian sisters, who had remained in France, were interned for a few months, but were then released and allowed by the German authorities to carry on their charitable functions.

After the war, the general council of the community reluctantly decided to give up its “Lorraines” in France.

In 1933, France had presented Father Marie Clement with a medal, *les palmes académiques*, in recognition of the services rendered by him

*Herald of Love*

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and his sisters to the French nation—a fitting tribute to so loyal a son.

## Chapter 46

The beautification and enlargement of the motherhouse occupied Father Marie Clement during these years also. Given the increasing number of vocations, the original building had been quickly outgrown. As early as 1928, a wing to house the novitiate, more than doubling the size of the original convent, was added. It is this wing which incorporates turrets and a crenelated roof line as a further reminder that this is a house dedicated to the Maid of Orleans who lived in the 15th century.

Father Marie Clement also hoped to build a larger chapel for his community. His wish was to be able to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the institute, in 1939, in a new chapel dedicated to Joan. During his numerous trips to France in the 1930s, Father consulted with an architect in Paris about the future chapel. This architect, M. Roisin, had earlier collaborated with Father Marie Clement on the restoration of Beaulieu-les-Fontaines. By 1936, the plans were ready. A letter written by Father Marie Clement, on the very eve of his death, to the sculptor Jules Dechin in Paris, indicates that contracts had been signed: the stained glass windows were to be executed in Nancy, the altars in Lyons, the bells in Alsace, and the statue of Joan by Dechin himself. Once again war intervened and the chapel was completed only in 1955.

In 1964, on the occasion of the benediction of the third and final wing of the motherhouse, named Cardinal Cushing Pavilion, in honor of the cardinal-archbishop of Boston, the cardinal himself stated, "I would like to tell you that without the services of your sisters, I would never have survived these twenty years as Archbishop of Boston." Cardinal Cushing's generosity had made possible this wing, named in his honor, which houses the general administration, the infirmary, the se-

nior nuns, and retired priests.

Nothing was ever considered to be too beautiful, in Father Marie Clement's mind, to honor God and His saints. He is quoted by a Little Sister of the Assumption as having said to her one day, "I want my sisters to be poor, but the house of God must be beautiful, as beautiful as possible for the glory of the Sacred Heart and to help souls to pray. Church ceremonies must be arrayed in beauty as a foretaste of heaven for the faithful." As a result, he had given much thought and lavished a great deal of attention on the decoration of the first chapel in the motherhouse. He had been able to obtain for it from Rome the relics of a young martyr, Saint Generosa, whom Father proposed to his sisters as a model of the total offering of oneself to God as a Victim.

Statues also were important to Father Marie Clement. The splendid large equestrian statue of Joan of Arc which ornaments the grounds of the motherhouse is one of the most beautiful ever done of Joan. It is a particularly significant statue because its magnificent base links New France with the Old through the figures of the French explorers and French religious, both men and women, who are represented on it. It honors those who explored and settled the North American continent, and the men and women who proselytized and ministered to the Indians and the settlers. On one side, one finds the men: Jacques Cartier, the first to claim Canada for France—Samuel de Champlain, founder of the city of Quebec—Maisonneuve, founder of Montreal—Louis Hebert, the first permanent settler of Canada—Father Jean Dolbeau who celebrated the first Mass in Quebec—Father Jean de Brebeuf, a Jesuit martyr,—and Abbe de Queylus, first Superior of the Sulpicians in Canada.

The other side of the enormous pedestal, except for one man, Bishop Francois de Laval, first Bishop of Quebec, is reserved for the heroic French women who courageously came to Canada when it was nothing but wilderness: Marie de l'Incarnation, foundress of the Ursulines of Quebec—Jeanne Mance who founded the Hotel-Dieu of Montreal—Mother Catherine de Saint-Augustin, foundress of the Hotel-Dieu of Quebec, both of which are general hospitals,—and Marguerite Bourgeoys, foundress of the Congregation of Notre Dame. All these women, except Jeanne Mance, have within the last few years been honored in a special manner by the Church: Marguerite Bourgeoys has been canonized, Marie de l'Incarnation has been named Blessed, and Catherine de

Saint-Augustin, Venerable. Last, but not least, Father Marie Clement included two of his own Joans alongside the glories of New France. His sisters are carrying chains, reminders of the sufferings their patron saint endured for her country.

Once again, through Father Marie Clement's foresight and efforts, the dedication of the statue took place meaningfully, in 1931, to commemorate the five hundredth anniversary of Joan's martyrdom. The dedication ceremonies were surrounded by all the pomp and solemnity which Father Marie Clement's zeal could muster. The apostolic delegate, who presided at the ceremony of dedication, publicly stated on that day, "Never have I seen a commemoration marked by such enthusiasm, piety, and distinction!"

On the motherhouse grounds can also be found a statue of Saint Michael, located at the original entrance to the property. To his great joy, Father Marie Clement, after having bought the land for his motherhouse from the Seminary of Quebec, discovered in the deed that the land had been dedicated to Saint Michael the Archangel by the first owner, Pierre de Puiseaux, a friend of Samuel de Champlain. The statue, erected in 1922 by Father Marie Clement, is a reproduction of the one atop the Basilica of Montmartre in Paris. Here again the dedication ceremonies were grandiose.

The motherhouse grounds can also boast a faithful replica of the grotto at Lourdes in commemoration of the Assumptionist devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes. Father Francois Picard, second superior general of the Assumptionists, was the originator of the annual national pilgrimage of all France to Lourdes. He had also organized the volunteer stretcher bearers who still come from all over the country to place themselves at the service of the sick during these pilgrimages—proof once again that Father Marie Clement was a son of the Church through his Assumptionist congregation. The grotto was dedicated in 1933 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Our Lady's eighteen apparitions to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes in 1858.



## Chapter 47

We know Father Marie Clement well enough to realize that his generous heart, his active mind, and his enormous energy would wish to do ever more for the Church, especially for its clergy.

In 1924, he managed to organize yet a new work for the benefit of the priesthood. He called it, *L'Oeuvre de la Communion pour les Prêtres*.<sup>46</sup> He envisioned it as a vast network of persons, both religious and lay, who would voluntarily join in what would become a crusade of prayer, through Communion, for the hierarchy. Father Marie Clement's suggestion to these latter-day Crusaders was to receive Holy Communion "that eminently salutary act of piety," under the aegis of Mary, Queen of the Clergy.

Father Marie Clement had learned of the special statue dedicated to Mary, Queen of the Clergy, quite by accident. In January of 1922 he found himself one day in the Church of Saint Augustine in Paris to hear the famous Pre Mateo preach. The pastor, to whom he spoke on that occasion, pointed out to him the statue of Mary, Queen of the Clergy, which he had placed opposite that of Saint Margaret Mary, which had caught Father Marie Clement's attention. Once again the sculptor Dechin was called in and Father Marie Clement now had the statue he needed to concretize his new idea.

To become a member of Mary's legions was a simple matter: one was expected to promise the offering of one Communion, on a specified day, once each week or month, for the clergy and to send the document, which contained the promise and the total number of Communions so offered, to the motherhouse of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc.

Cardinal Bégin and his successor as Archbishop of Quebec, Raymond Marie Cardinal Rouleau, both approved this endeavor. Cardinal

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<sup>46</sup>The Movement of Communion for Priests.

Rouleau wrote of it, "What priestly heart, what pious faithful Catholic will not rejoice at the birth and the expansion of this movement placed under the maternal protection of the Very Holy Virgin Mary and destined to bring down so many graces on the ministers of God?"

Once the idea was launched, it was immediately successful. The first offering, which Father Marie Clement called a "Ciborium," numbered 10,570 Communions, the second 22,082. By 1967 the number had reached 2,412,566.

Given his organizational powers, Father Marie Clement recognized the need to set up an "army" of zealous individuals, volunteers who would work to gather affiliations for this movement, just as they had for the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance. He soon set up this network of devoted men and women who willingly gave their time for this noble cause. To his Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc devolved the tasks of printing the official documents, publishing an annual newsletter, and handling the correspondence needed to maintain such an enterprise on so vast a scale.

Through the years, this particular undertaking has evolved and is now called, "My Day for Priests." Affiliated members are asked to designate for each month of the year the one or many days during which, in a special manner (attending Mass, receiving Communion, practicing good works) they will pray for the priesthood in general, or, according to their own choice, for the pope, cardinals and patriarchs, archbishops and bishops, diocesan priests, religious and missionaries, deceased priests, suffering priests, or priestly vocations. As was previously the case, all affiliates are asked to make known their day or days and particular intention to the motherhouse of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc.

## Chapter 48

The official request, transmitted to Rome in 1919 with the help of Cardinal Bégin, for the approval of the community of the Sisters of Joan of Arc, speaks only of “service to priests in rectories,” as the purpose for this new foundation. It reads in part, “It is nearly impossible for priests to find trustworthy, well-trained persons capable of such a ministry and willing to devote themselves to the service of rectories. The lack of such competent individuals has led to delicate situations, which bishops often experience much difficulty in remedying. Thus there exists a problem of great importance for the life of our priests, one which must be faced, and a void which must be filled. It seems, therefore, that only a religious institution can guard against these difficulties. The Sisters of Joan of Arc respond providentially to this need.”

According to Canon Law, religious life includes the requirement of a life lived in common. Father Marie Clement thus realized full well that, “for this reason, it is especially the [large] rectories, housing many priests, which will benefit from the advantages of this institution.” Rome’s approbation had included the obligation to have a minimum of three sisters living together in rooms separate from the rectory itself. Father Marie Clement accepted this restriction, but he knew also that he would have to organize something for smaller and poorer rectories. In the course of his many travels, he had met women wishing to be affiliated with the work of *Joan of Arc* without becoming religious. They could thus be dispensed from the necessity of living in community and could be sent individually, or two by two, to smaller rectories.

On August 22, 1929, at the Assumption College “Cradle” in Worcester, Father Marie Clement preached a Holy Hour to two such women. On the 3rd of January, 1931, he expressed the idea that these Auxiliaries, as they were to be called, were true nuns and should be treated

as such. They would have their own Mistress of Novices and would wear lay clothing. Their distinctive sign would be the Cross of Lorraine. On the 6th of January, 1931, to commemorate Joan of Arc's birth, five hundred years earlier, another ceremony took place, this time at the motherhouse, where seven postulants were to begin their novitiate as Auxiliaries.

This enterprise was not to be as successful as Father Marie Clement would have hoped. Two different categories of religious under the same roof at the motherhouse posed a number of problems which were eventually to lead to the discontinuation of this particular endeavor.

Yet another foundation would preoccupy Father Marie Clement during the last years of his life, that of a group of men, priests and brothers, who would themselves serve the priesthood. Father Marie Clement wanted these men to carry the name of Joannites, after Saint John, the beloved Apostle of Christ.

The project was elaborated in minute detail by Father Marie Clement, carefully corrected and rewritten. He corresponded assiduously with a number of young priests and brothers whom he hoped would eventually become members of this group. Unfortunately, the project never received the necessary approval, either from the superior general of the Assumptionists, who feared that such an organization could entail a great deal of responsibility for the Assumptionist Congregation, or from the Archbishop of Quebec.

The project, as envisaged, or one very similar to it, was already in existence in Europe and in China, founded by Father Eugene Prevost (1860-1946), a Canadian Blessed Sacrament father who was at that time living and working in France. Father Vincent Lebbe (1877-1940), a missionary to China, in response to a special request formulated by Chinese bishops, had founded a similar community called Priest Auxiliaries to the Missions and a Congregation of Little Brothers of Saint John the Baptist for the formation of lay Chinese religious. Once again, Father Marie Clement's reflections on the needs of the Church had led his thoughts, without his being aware of it, towards a foundation for which there was clearly a need, but which others would bring to fruition.

Nor was his missionary zeal to be limited by national boundaries. We have already seen him ask missionary sisters working in China to enroll their faithful as members of the Archconfraternity. He believed

in true catholicity. The Church to him was indeed universal. A letter written to the superior general of his sisters, Mother Jeanne of the Sacred Heart<sup>47</sup> on the 1st of March, 1926, day of the enrollment of the Far East in the Association of Masses and Prayers for Priests, stated: “Beautiful day for our Family. We now become truly catholic apostles, with souls as large as the world, with hearts as universal in their charity and devotion as is the Church.”

Father Marie Clement also wrote, “May Joan live in all nations.” In 1931, he had opened a novitiate in France. In 1932, he contemplated opening one in the United States, in Altamont, New York, not far from the La Salette Seminary where his sisters were established. An American novitiate was indeed established in 1968 in Greenville, New Hampshire. When the Assumptionists offered the sisters a house in Worcester, the city which had been the community’s “cradle,” they were happy to accept. Thus was the novitiate transferred to Massachusetts. In 1983, the novitiate was relocated to Boston.

Father Marie Clement’s temperament was such that one project led to another, always with the needs of the universal Church clearly kept foremost. Less resolute souls than his, or less energetically vigorous ones, would surely have hesitated at the thought of the work each enterprise would involve. In his case, to see, to sense the need was to try to meet it, with judicious prudence, with a clear knowledge of what was involved canonically, but also with great faith. Father Marie Clement truly believed that faith can move mountains and his life was constant proof of this deep-seated conviction.

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<sup>47</sup>After the departure of Alice Caron (Mother Joanna), Father Marie Clement changed the religious name of Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart to Mother Jeanne of the Sacred Heart in order to retain the nominal link with Joan of Arc. Jeanne is the French form of Joan.



## Chapter 49

Alas, Father Marie Clement, without knowing it, was entering the final phase of his life. He was not quite 60 when he died in May, 1936. So the years 1933 until his death were crucial years for him and for his young community. He had one more bitter ordeal to live through before he could go to his eternal rest.

The trial came quite unexpectedly, striking him like a bolt out of the blue. Exactly three years before his death, on May 16, 1936, Father Marie Clement received a stern letter of condemnation from Rodrigue Cardinal Villeneuve, Archbishop of Quebec, a letter which the then provincial superior of the Assumptionists, Father Crescent Armanet, was to describe as being of an “unprecedented harshness.”

Coming so soon after a series of encouragements and high praise from the same cardinal, Father Marie Clement could only react with sad bewilderment. He wrote to the cardinal, “Prior to this document, Your Eminence had never ceased to encourage me, to tell me how pleased you were. Thus nothing had prepared me for such a stunning blow. That is why both my spirit and my heart were so hurt by it.”

The letter of accusation was all the more surprising given the fact that the cardinal, in February of the same year, had written Father Marie Clement a letter praising his work highly. That same month, Cardinal Villeneuve had taken refuge at the motherhouse for a few days of rest and to make a retreat. It was during this stay that he had learned of his elevation to the cardinalate.

It will be recalled that in late 1932, the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc had left their “Cradle” in Worcester under painful circumstances. They had been summoned to leave almost at the very last minute, in order to make room for sisters who belonged to another community and who had agreed to work for lower wages. This bitter blow, coming from his

own colleagues, had cut to the quick. Father Marie Clement was a highly sensitive individual, who, as a man of faith, lay his sorrows at the feet of Christ, but who suffered deeply, nonetheless.

The cardinal's letter hurt all the more because it came so soon after this forced departure from Worcester, which had been seen as a brutal uprooting by Father Marie Clement, for whom Worcester had been home for so many years. He was a man who linked everything. To have this most important tie severed had been very painful indeed for all concerned, but most of all for Father Marie Clement himself, against whom his own colleagues and superiors had turned in this incident. For it had been in Worcester, at Assumption College, that the seed of *Joan of Arc* had been sown and from there that the young sapling had been transplanted to Quebec. The first uprooting had taken place only because it was clear that the Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts, would have been unwilling to see it grow to maturity in his diocese. Assumption College had been the sisters' "Cradle," as Father Marie Clement called it affectionately. It was there that he had lived since his arrival from Europe in December, 1909. It was from there that he had launched the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance and founded the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc. That door had been closed and was to remain shut to his sisters for forty years.

## Chapter 50

This new blow from the archbishop of Quebec followed very closely upon the other. After having to leave the “Cradle,” Father Marie Clement was being struck once again, and this time by the new ordinary of the diocese whose predecessor had warmly welcomed him and his sisters back in 1917.

What did the letter of condemnation contain? What did it order Father Marie Clement to do? Quite simply, he was ordered to leave the motherhouse! And he was accused of having interfered with the administration of the community which he had founded.

Once again, as in the case of Alice Caron, the problem came from within the nest. A sister, who had been asked to leave the community by a unanimous decision of the General Council and, who did not “get along” with Father Marie Clement, for reasons which are not clear, apparently decided to bring her case to a higher court, that of the cardinal-archbishop of Quebec. An intelligent person, skilled at writing, she, nevertheless, had caused problems in each of the “Lorraines” in which she had served. Her behavior having been criticized, she had promised to mend her ways and had been assigned to one of the more agreeably situated “Lorraines.” Father Marie Clement had written her a fatherly letter. In spite of this she fell back into her old ways, stating that she had been forced to promise to change both her attitude and her behavior. She went so far as to attempt suicide and the only regret she expressed was that she had been prevented from taking her own life.

It would seem that Cardinal Villeneuve’s extreme reaction had been touched off by the fact that Father Marie Clement himself had signed the document dismissing the sister from the community. Correct legal forms had not been observed in this matter, according to the cardinal,

who stated also that Father Marie Clement had no right to sign such a document. It seemed to the cardinal as though Father Marie Clement had reached the decision in favor of dismissal in an arbitrary manner, without proper consultation.

As a result, Cardinal Villeneuve had decided to study the entire dossier of the community very carefully. He also saw fit to question Father Marie Clement regarding matters he had heard on his account from certain priests and Father Marie Clement's own superiors. Most of the reproaches addressed by the cardinal concerned his position within the congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc. Cardinal Villeneuve asked Father Marie Clement to respond in writing to all of his detailed observations. Father Marie Clement did so in two rather lengthy letters.

At this distance, one can see that Sister X, who had complained to ecclesiastical authority, was probably of the opinion that the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc could manage without Father Marie Clement, that he had unnecessarily remained the controlling figure in a community which now numbered some eighteen years of successful existence.

Two factors need to be taken into account here if one hopes to understand the situation fully:

1. The nature of the vocation of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc did not attract highly educated women to this community. All the sisters, therefore, even those whose natural talents enabled them to become superiors and/or members of the General Council, felt a greater need to have recourse to their father-founder who was a doctor of theology.
2. The first sisters of the community saw themselves as participating in exciting endeavors, breaking new ground as religious, and contributing to the expansion of the Archconfraternity. Ties had been forged by and through Father Marie Clement, by his presence, through his letters, and his activities. To have removed him would have seemed to them to have removed the head and the soul of the community.

Sisters who entered later, because they were more numerous, were perforce not as close to Father Marie Clement, and so, did not know

him as well. They were more removed from the origins of the community and, consequently, from the difficulties and hardships courageously overcome by the pioneers. They might possibly have seen Father's continuing presence as a lack of confidence in the duly elected superiors of the congregation.

Although numerous witnesses, especially the superiors themselves, repeated and continue to repeat to this day, over and over again, that his discretion in these matters was exemplary, there will always be doubting Thomases. One such doubter seems to have been Sister X, whose case brought reproach down upon Father Marie Clement's poor head.

Father Marie Clement had of necessity attended to everything in the early days:

- Composing a Rule of Life suited to a new community founded for a very specific purpose.
- Finding vocations, and once found, training them as befitted their special vocation.
- Corresponding with bishops and with priests.
- Taking the necessary steps to obtain approval of the foundation.
- Relocating the motherhouse from Worcester to Quebec.
- Purchasing land for the motherhouse.
- Drawing up architectural plans for the buildings.
- Supervising the construction.
- Finding money to pay off the debts.

For all these reasons, it was said with complete veracity, "He was everything in the community."

The first superior general had made it clear, upon her election in 1920, that she accepted the responsibility only with the reassurance that Father Marie Clement would continue to guide her steps. In the controversy with Father Crescent Armanet, superior of Assumption

College, however, the sisters themselves had reached their own decision regarding the salaries due them. In matters within their purview as housekeepers, Father Marie Clement made it clear to all who would listen that the sisters acted of their own accord.

But in the matter of the foundation of the “Lorraines,” Father Marie Clement took charge. He negotiated with the pastors, the superiors of seminaries, and with bishops, after having seen for himself that the sisters’ Rule of Life would be respected. For the foundation of the “Lorraines” in France, it is hard to imagine how the sisters could have managed alone. They knew nothing of French law with its complications whenever a religious community is involved. Nor could they have commanded the respect needed to obtain the precious war souvenirs, and, thus, transform Joan’s prison cell into a superb sanctuary to French patriotism after World War I.

Father Marie Clement had, early on, detected among his sisters those who could take responsibility and he would send these sisters out to prepare the proper lodgings and chapel within each “Lorraine.”

It was he who preached the sisters’ retreats, thereby assuring that their religious formation would be prolonged. The sisters, realizing this, were pleased at his continued presence and the interest he took in their every activity.

Throughout the years, however, this founder-father had been obliged, from time to time, to deal with the misconception that he had only been “lent” to the sisters by his own congregation: Father Joseph Maubon, vicar general of the Assumptionists and Bishop Paul Eugene Roy, auxiliary bishop of Quebec, seem to have been of this opinion when controversy broke out in 1921 in the case of Alice Caron.

Father Gervais Quénard, superior general of the Assumptionists (1923-1952), had, however, written to Father Marie Clement in 1925, clearly stating, “You are the Founder of the Sisters. It is up to you to direct them, in accord with the diocesan authority and to preside over their development. The other religious have no authority to do these things.”

Clearly displeased by the fact that the document “excluding” Sister X from the community, as a result of a vote of the General Council, had been signed by Father Marie Clement, Cardinal Villeneuve reminded him that only the bishop could do this. This *faux-pas*, envenomed by Sister X herself, had led the cardinal to study the role played by Father

Marie Clement in the community and to warn him not to overstep the bounds of his authority. This was done in order to protect the rights of the sisters themselves and the freedom to be heard, to which each sister was entitled.

All of this resulted in the cardinal's demand that the superior general of the Assumptionists take Father Marie Clement away from the motherhouse and designate someone else in his place, and also that Father Marie Clement not be involved in any way in the next General Chapter of the sisters. This last order was handed down by the cardinal because the sisters themselves were now seen as responsible for the internal administration of the community.

Father Marie Clement's answer to this was that he knew full well the need to respect the authority of the duly elected sisters, "but I also believed that it was my duty, so I had been told by bishops and superiors general, 'to be the light, the guide, the counselor, the director.'"

In response to a point made by the cardinal that he "had no official right to assist at council meetings, preside over them, vote in them, or orient the voting," Father Marie Clement replied: "I have never attended the meetings as 'president,' Mother General always presided; I was there only at the request of the Mothers to guide, enlighten, inform; never to vote or coerce or dominate. Nor have I presided at the General Chapter for elections. I had asked the archbishop or his delegate [to do so]; I only attended the business Chapter, always to orient and facilitate matters. To date we have had only one General Chapter, and it is something quite complicated for a new community."

As so often happens in delicate, complex matters, each side was right. The cardinal, in reminding Father Marie Clement of the care which should always be taken to observe canon law, was in fact judging the case according to the letter of the law. Father Marie Clement who knew the law—we must not forget that he had a doctorate in Theology—had been guiding his actions according to the spirit of the law. This had been necessary, given the newness of the foundation. He had realized that without his leadership and his connections within the Church, Alice Caron from Fitchburg and the two Benoit sisters from New Bedford would not, could not have obtained the approval and visibility needed to make a success of such a community.

This was an age in which women needed protectors. Although there were exceptions, women were not usually taken seriously on their own

account. Indeed, pastors of parishes and rectors of seminaries would have paid no attention to the group unless it had been sanctioned by the proper authorities, a sanction which the community had obtained because of the impressive reputation of its founder.

Thus Father Marie Clement became leader/protector to the community, and the sisters gratefully, enthusiastically even, accepted this commitment on his part, knowing full well that under his leadership, and with his protection, the congregation would expand its wings to the fullest possible extent and even span the ocean. Without him, those who became the early recruits would have had to live on in the towns and villages of New England and Quebec in a futile search for their true vocation.

## Chapter 51

Father Marie Clement would live long enough to see this problem resolved to everyone's satisfaction. The cardinal himself having interrogated the members of the General Council, as well as the superior general, was reassured that Father Marie Clement had never overstepped the bounds set down by canon law, and that everyone's freedom of conscience had been duly respected. His had been the guidance of a father, not the demands of a tyrant.

This terrible ordeal for Father Marie Clement was to result in his being greatly admired by Cardinal Villeneuve. For a period of some six weeks, however, the uncertainty of the situation was to test Father Marie Clement's moral stamina to the utmost. For a man as deeply attached to the Church as was Father Marie Clement, an accusation from the archbishop of the diocese was disconcerting in the extreme. Coming, as it did in this case, from the diocese which had accepted his community, harbored it, and encouraged it almost from its very start, the blow was particularly painful. It hurt to the quick.

In a letter written to Cardinal Villeneuve during this period, Father Marie Clement stated, nonetheless, his confidence in his archbishop: "I know that I am dealing with a loyal leader. Saint Paul, unjustly accused, appealed to Caesar. My Caesar is Your Eminence, better informed."

To set matters straight, Father Marie Clement continued to give the cardinal details of his conduct with regard to the community. He realized also that his great discretion concerning the internal affairs of the sisters might have been wrongly interpreted by his own Assumptionist colleagues who perhaps felt that they were entitled to more information. This too had given rise to misunderstandings. But from the first, he had stated, after asking to see the cardinal, that "he was ready for

anything, that he would obey in every instance, no matter what would be asked of him." These weeks of anguish were endured by Father Marie Clement with the most saintlike disposition of soul.

In the meantime, after informing the superior general of the sisters as to what was taking place, much to her own consternation, Father Marie Clement went about his duties as usual, preaching, attending to administrative matters, even celebrating the feast of Saint John the Baptist, on the 24th of June, Quebec's equivalent of the 4th of July.

One sister, who, as a member of the council, had seen the second letter written to Father Marie Clement by the cardinal and had consequently not had the courage to celebrate with the other sisters, could not help exclaiming to Father Marie Clement after the ceremony, "I don't know how you managed to take part in the festivities." Father Marie Clement's answer was, "Poor child, one must act as though nothing has happened, even when the heart is bleeding. One must smile in front of people; it is backstage that one cries."

Father Marie Clement spent even more time in chapel during those days of torment. On July 14th, in order to be absent from the motherhouse during the cardinal's canonical visitation, he left for the United States to preach retreats.

The cardinal's official visitation took place from the 28th to the 31st of July, 1933. During this period, the superiors, the sisters, the novices, even the postulants who were at the motherhouse or in "Lorraines" in the city of Quebec were questioned closely.

One paragraph of the report written by Cardinal Villeneuve following his visit, reads as follows: "The religious spirit of all these pious women struck me with particular force. They each display a fervor, a spirit of abnegation, of obedience, of discretion, of devotion, especially worthy of praise."

In an address to the members of the council, the cardinal stated, "Your dear community, such as I have been able to judge it in this diocese, is beyond doubt one of the most fervent and most prosperous. You must praise the Lord and be grateful to your founder who has accomplished something admirable in your formation, giving you through religious life such a powerful means of sanctification."

Suggestions were made by the cardinal on the necessity for the superiors to assume the responsibilities of their office without depriving their sisters of a reasonable degree of initiative; on the usefulness of

having different priests preach their retreats; and on the basic freedom of each sister to seek counsel from the confessor of her own choosing.

Having conducted his visit to the sisters and having been struck by the depth of their spirituality, Cardinal Villeneuve must have wondered if he had been hearing exaggerated reports which had very little foundation in fact.

Father Hermes Fuchs, treasurer of the Assumptionist monastery in Quebec, and Alsatian like Father Marie Clement, acted as a true friend in this affair. Unfortunately, it would seem that Father Marie Clement had suffered once again at the hands of some of his fellow religious, for the cardinal, in response to Father Hermes' positive analysis of Father Marie Clement and the situation, answered, "I am happy to hear this. It is the first time that Father Marie Clement is spoken of in this way."

Through the years, the relationship between Father Marie Clement and some of his Assumptionist colleagues had not been ideal. But, Father Marie Clement also had friends within his congregation, most notably, Father Tranquille Pesse who acted as a judicious mediator between Father Marie Clement and Father Joseph Maubon. The reader should also recall the laudatory statement made by Father Emmanuel Bailly on his deathbed concerning Father Marie Clement: "The favors from Quebec are the greatest which Assumption has received." Father Marie Clement himself, however, is the best witness for the Assumptionists. Never for a single moment did he think of leaving his congregation. He remained completely faithful to it to his dying day when his last confession was heard by his Assumptionist colleague, Father Leocade Bauer. To this day, moreover, an Assumptionist priest serves as chaplain to the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc.

Cardinal Villeneuve, from that time on, had complete faith in Father Marie Clement. Bishop-elect Martin Lajeunesse, O.M.I., newly appointed Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin in the Northwest Territories of Canada, made the retreat preparatory to his being consecrated bishop, at the motherhouse, sent there by the cardinal himself. This took place from June 12th to 18th, 1933, prior even to the complete resolution of the problem we have just related.

Of his stay at the motherhouse and his firsthand contact with Father Marie Clement, Bishop Lajeunesse was later to write to the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc, "I have always thought that Cardinal Villeneuve directed me to you for a retreat because he wanted me to come into

contact with this man whose faith is so robust.” Later still, he would state to the sisters, “I have the distinct impression that good Father Marie Clement was a man of no ordinary sanctity.” He was “an ardently bright light, the supernatural seemed to be his habitual climate. When he spoke of God, of His Providence, of the Sacred Heart, or of the Blessed Virgin, one felt that the voice spoke from the abundance of the heart.”

So ended yet another chapter in the trials and tribulations of a founding father.

## Chapter 52

The storm had blown over when, in March of the following year, Father Marie Clement went to the Chancery to obtain the necessary signature for the definitive approval of the Constitutions of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc. On this occasion, he remarked to the cardinal, whose signature he had just obtained, "Eminence, I hope that your signature on this magnificent decree signifies the confidence you have in our young Institute. No one has seen or studied it as you have."

Upon his return to *Joan of Arc* that day, Father Marie Clement dictated in detail to his secretary the conversation he'd had with Cardinal Villeneuve on this occasion. The cardinal had reassured Father Marie Clement, stating:

Father, be in complete peace on this matter. It is true that I have examined everything concerning your religious family in my diocese. My canonical visit made me aware of this and you know how I insisted on studying the Constitutions with great care. The decree of approbation which I am granting you proves this. It could have been ordinary, superficial, but I did not want it to be thus. I preferred to give you a more meaningful one. I know that I must have caused you and your sisters sorrow. We sometimes insist on secondary matters. We exaggerate, since the substance has remained intact. I know, from having experienced it personally, that one of the greatest sorrows which can befall us is to feel a lack of confidence on the part of ecclesiastical authority. This sometimes happens, but things are set right again . . .

[As for spiritual direction and preaching to the sisters] you may continue. Continue! My earlier remarks on the mat-

ter are to be considered suspended! Be assured of my confidence.

In 1935, Cardinal Villeneuve was to repeat similar words to Father Marie Clement, “I admit that I was hard on you, but I was truly edified by you. It did you some good, it sanctified you—and me as well!”

When, a little over a year later, he learned of Father Marie Clement’s death, the cardinal offered to preside at the funeral services. This was a significant gesture, the definitive proof that all had truly been resolved in Father Marie Clement’s favor.

Later still, in a talk to the sisters, given in December of 1939, the cardinal would have this to say about Father Marie Clement: “Your founder was a true priest, a holy priest, a very ardent soul. We must give him credit for having trained you in this way, with such energy. He taught you to sacrifice yourselves; his was a very pious soul linked to a very firm will. You have received a very solid indoctrination, steeped in sacrifice; you must maintain this!”

## Chapter 53

At Christmas time, in 1935, on the occasion of the twenty-first anniversary of the foundation of the Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc, Father Marie Clement, speaking to them at evening recreation, made the following statement, "Now you can walk alone, you have come of age."

In retrospect, such a statement took on great meaning for the sisters who were to lose him only a few short months later. He himself does not seem to have realized the serious nature of his illness when, by March of 1936, his feet and legs began to swell.

After a three-week stay in the hospital, during which he received special permission to celebrate Mass only once, on the feast of his patron, Saint Joseph, Father Marie Clement returned to the motherhouse, visibly relieved and happy to be home once again.

On May 10th, he participated, with the doctor's approval, in the celebration honoring Joan of Arc, ceremonies which he himself had established. He spoke a few words in chapel and accompanied his guests to the Joan of Arc monument on the motherhouse grounds.

The exertion proved to be too much. He continued, nonetheless, to dictate letters in which he described with enthusiasm the recent ceremonies honoring Joan of Arc. He commented on the fact that his edema had disappeared, but that he felt exhausted.

The following Saturday, May 16th, desirous of celebrating the 16th anniversary of Joan of Arc's canonization, Father Marie Clement asked to see the entire community. Permission was granted only on condition that he not speak too long.

At 10 A.M. he spoke to the second-year novices and next, to the group in its first year of novitiate. He reminded each of the need to imitate the courage and the generosity of Saint Joan. At noon he received the professed sisters. Again he spoke of Joan and the future chapel.

To Father Leocade Bauer, who came to hear his confession, Father Marie Clement confided that he was asking God to grant him five more years of life in order to complete the chapel.

At 6:15 P.M., having read his mail, he ate a light supper. He then read the response of each sister to whom he had asked that very day to answer the following question in writing, "What does it require for a Joan [that is, a Sister of Saint Joan of Arc] to become a saint?" As he read the answers, he penned a remark to each sister. These comments were to become precious mementos just a few short hours later.

The community, in the meantime, was going about its daily routine: spiritual exercises in chapel for the month of May; a special visit to the Lourdes grotto, a visit suggested by Father Marie Clement himself to ask for the recovery of Bishop Joseph E. McCarthy of Portland, Maine; all of this followed by night prayers. The sisters were preparing to retire at about 8:45 P.M. when Father Marie Clement suffered an angina attack. He was in intense pain which the infirmarian, Sister Franchise, was unable to assuage.

The sisters were in anguish at seeing their beloved founder suffering what proved to be a fatal heart attack. Father Marie Clement tried to appease them, saying, "Be calm, it is nothing! I feel better."

The sister who remained at his side while the others went to call for the doctor, his Assumptionist colleagues, and the priests who boarded at the motherhouse, has related that the end came at 9:30 P.M. "The face of our Father was transfigured," she recounted. "It was as though he'd had a vision, as if he had seen something that was very beautiful. He seemed captured by it, his eyes were fixed in wonder as he raised his left hand in a gesture of adieu."

On his night table was found a book of Meditations on the Gospels of the year. The bookmark, a souvenir of Lourdes, was at page 172, at the second meditation, which contains the following words of Christ to His Apostles: "It is much better for you that I go." John 16:7.

The body lay in state from Sunday through Tuesday night in the very first chapel of the motherhouse, transformed into an Oratory to the Sacred Heart because it had become too small to contain all of the sisters. He who had been so generous himself throughout life, lay now in the company of a martyr of the Church, Saint Generosa, whose statue is beneath the altar shaped like a tomb. Father Marie Clement had given himself to the Church at the age of fourteen, without once

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looking back. In May, 1936, he was six weeks short of his 60th birthday.

A very great number of mourners filed past Father Marie Clement's catafalque during those sad days. Cardinal Villeneuve himself celebrated the funeral Mass. The body was then carried by the Assumptionist brothers and some Zouaves<sup>48</sup> and placed temporarily in the mortuary chapel of the community cemetery while awaiting its transfer to the motherhouse on the 19th of June, Feast of the Sacred Heart.

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<sup>48</sup>Members of the Papal Guard.



## Chapter 54

Father Marie Clement lies buried today in the motherhouse made possible by his toil and the trouble he took to bring about the Kingdom of God on this earth through the founding of a religious community. His final resting place, close to the Oratory of the Sacred Heart, and in the home of Joan of Arc, reunites him with the two glorious achievements of his ministry.

The Sisters of Saint Joan of Arc and the hundreds of thousands who became members of the Archconfraternity of Prayer and Penance are themselves the best possible witnesses to the success of Father Marie Clement's endeavors. His sense of enterprise, combined with his unwavering determination, worked wonders for God's Kingdom. These distinctive traits, ennobled by his ardent faith, allowed him to achieve amazing results in his lifetime.

May his zeal live on in the hearts of his sisters. May his example inspire others to go forth with a willing heart and a fervent soul to bring about the Kingdom of God on this earth.