

PALAU'S SCHOOL OF LIFE

"NEW NORMAL" after COVID-19

PART 1

To Eugenia Guerin: Cayla (Tarn)

Holy Cross Grotto (Caylus), February 14, 1845

J.M.J.



Miss¹: May the light of the Holy Spirit illumine our hearts. One of those days I paid a visit to mommy², and I have been asked to answer your kind letter to me dated...³

I tell you once again my dear daughter, enter into the depths of the temple of your soul; remain there in silence and listen to the voice of your king Solomon, who always speaks to you from the throne of the altar that is deep down in your heart. Make an effort to practice his advice faithfully, carefully, and perfectly. Act according to the words he utters in the secrecy of your heart, and you will have eternal life. This is my advice. Is this not sufficient?

What must be done my daughter to enter into the temple of your soul and to listen to the voice of king Solomon? Ah, this is somewhat difficult because the gate is narrow⁴. Oh, how few are those who enter through this gate of life! Do you know that this gate leads us to the palace of our God, our King and Lord? Anyone who does not renounce himself and carry his cross always, is not worthy of me and cannot be my disciples. In the same way no one can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions⁵. My daughter, this is exactly the narrow gate through which you have to enter. Without renouncing yourself and all the things of this world, you will never be able to enter through this gate of eternal life. This abnegation and renunciation understood spiritually are necessary in order to enter into yourself.



My dear daughter, make therefore your meditation daily with fidelity and with courage; if possible, half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening. Never

¹ Eugenia Guerin, the famous French writer and poet, related to the owners of the Castle of Mondesir, there she visited Fr. Palau, initiating a certain friendship and brought forth to the epistolary correspondence between them.

² Felicidad D'Hautpoul, wife of Francisco German Jose, count of Cahuzac.

³ He did not add the date. Perhaps he did not have her letter at hand and did not remember the exact date.

⁴ Cfr. Mt 7, 13-14.

⁵ Cfr. Mt 16,24; Lk 14,27.33.

give it up, begin from here to enter within yourself. The infernal dragon, strongly armed with all human respect with your old man and arm yourself, as well, from all the vanities of this epoch, with its pleasures and vain glories of the world, for it will stand on its heads at the narrow gate to impede your entrance, and will open wide the gate that leads to hell. In this way, it will fight furiously to keep you out of the door of life; to wit, in the precarious entertainments of the world. But you must courageously fight to enter into the temple of your soul where the king of kings makes his dwelling place and wants you to fixed your gaze⁶, and in your meditation and outside of it, learn to be detached from yourself and from all creatures. The more you renounce yourself and to all creatures the more you will get closer to God and enter more and more through the narrow gate. And when you have entered into the temple of Solomon, your soul will become a queen that will listen to the voice of your king, follow his advices in this world, and you will see besides departing from the body, where it actually dwells and you will be happy for all eternity.

Receive then, my dearest daughter in Jesus Christ, with this letter the sentiments of love and sincere friendship for which I have the honor to be united with you with the bond of the Holy Spirit this great sinner, your father and your humble servant.

Francisco of Jesus Mary Joseph

WHO WAS EUGENIA DE GUERIN?

She was born on January 29, 1805; died on May 31, 1848. She was a professional writer. In 1839 she lost her beloved brother, who died of tuberculosis at the age of 29. Very early in her life she has already lost her mother, but her aunt welcomed her often in her house in Mondesir, municipality of Caylus. It is there that she met with Fr. Palau and where they became friends. In 1844 she spent her time particularly living in Mondesir, discerning her way of life (she was considering to enter in the Congregation of White Ladies in Tours. She got very much impressed of personality and style of life of Palau: a hermit of profound life of prayer and austere conditions. The very first day of their encounter marked life of Eugenia: she met with a person totally absorbed by God, searching for God alone, far from whatever may human worries and business. She believed having met with twin-soul, until the point that she desired to live like Palau lived: a kind of hermitic life focused in contemplation and searching of God. This encounter with Palau gave new direction to her life: prayer, silence, detachment of all created things with purpose to enter in searching of Creator. Her hunger for God and love for spiritual things gave her life new motivation and special attraction for life in the desert, lived in the middle of the world (she was called by her family “the hermit of Cayla”). Often, she would consult Fr. Palau about spiritual matters.



⁶ Cfr. Jn 14,23.

THEME OF LETTER

The whole letter is a reflection of spiritual feelings animating the life of Father Palau, full of biblical references, exposure of his religious experience lived with maximum intensity. It's an answer to the needs and aspirations of a soul fascinated by the closeness to God, desire of detachment from all created things, attraction for solitary life and hunger for God, searched for and expressed in prayer. While Palau was orienting Eugenia, he was also making a description of his own interior life.

We can find in this letter a complete guide for mental prayer, given to us tips and advice in order to enter into the temple of one's own soul (how to do it, with whom to meet there, what work to do arriving already there...).

1. Through necessary interior silence, listen the voice of a King; stay attentive to the whisper of the Holy Spirit, who talks to a soul from the depth.
2. To enter is simple, yet challenging: to carry one's cross day by day, renounce to oneself and all the worldly things.
3. Eternal life achieved through this simple exercise has to be achieved through daily effort of faithful giving time for prayer and conscious detachment of all that don't bring one closer to God. It requires not only faithfulness, but also courage: determination to follow not listening to negative talks and temptations coming from our "old man".

IN REALITY...

It's curious how our priorities are today. After lifting of quarantine, where would you first direct your steps: to a mall or to a church? Why the authorities are not afraid to open mega malls, and still put so many hindrances for the temples to be open and serve the people? Maybe because the worldly way is the easy way: it's easier to pay hundreds of thousands for new face, than to renew one's spirit every day. It's easier to escape from problems enjoying hours without purpose in mall, than to accept life's challenges and bear them in silence. It's much easier to pretend to be someone else in the eyes of others, than to be as we truly are, just for a half an hour, in the eyes of our Creator.

They are talking about "new normal", but I cannot see what is new about it. Wearing mask? Washing hands? Keeping distance? We have already done it until now. Every single day of our lives we choose to wear different mask... Every single day of our lives we wash our hands like Pilate, shredding from our shoulders the burdens of innocent lives... Every single day of our lives we keep distance from what (and who) is uncomfortable for us, demands too much love and attention, complicates our lives...

Are we ready to choose the hard way, the "new" way,
when this crisis is over?

