



To Juana Gratiass: Bagnères (France)

Cantayrac, June 1848

My most esteemed daughter¹: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. I hastened to answer your letter which I received with the satisfaction you can imagine. I did not expect that you are already at Bagnères, and I set forth to write you. I could have done it, but since you left, I did not have a quiet moment. The mayor of Caylus has prohibited us to present ourselves in public with religious habit in Cantayrac and in Our Lady [of Livron]; but we evaded him. Within one week the letter of the Bishop will be published.

All of us were gladdened of knowing your news report. It is very difficult for me, my esteemed daughter, to tell you in detail what you have to practice in what concerned your journey. ***Act with liberty as the Holy Spirit inspires you.*** Discretion and prudence must guide you in this undertaking. To begin, do not perform any action that would bring to light and expose completely your plan and intentions. ***Little by little God will reveal to you his will,*** that I will explain them to you progressively. In spite of my limitations, I have been following you in spirit all along the way and I am keeping an eye on all of you. Write me often and tell me in detail and with all circumstances of the contradictions or protection that may happen to you. You will always find me vigilant and mindful. I am always prepared and well-disposed to answer immediately all the letters that I receive.

Have courage, my esteemed daughter, in order to persevere in your undertakings. Defy death, life and all the contradictions that may come from persons, be it from their natural weakness in doing good and so prone to do evil.

At this point I do not have time to tell you more: I do not want to let you wait for my letter which I am sending this afternoon. And Virginia²? I do not forget her; I hope in the Lord that she will be free from those horrible temptations. Greet her on my behalf. Your mother³, thus like Mary⁴ greets you all.

Receive my esteemed daughter the blessing I give you in spirit in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Your father.

Francisco

¹ Juana Gratiass Fabre was born at Gramat (France) on October 27, 1824. She met Francisco Palau for the first time in 1845, and one year later she joined the group directed by him in Livron. Accompanied by Virginia, another member of the group she went to Lerida (Spain) in 1848. Since then, her fate and the fate of Francisco Palau were interlinked forever.

² Juana Gratiass' companion in Livron, now on her journey to Lerida.

³ Teresa Christia, whom he calls "mother", acted as superior at Livron.

⁴ Maria Boy was another member of the group.

A STORY OF ONE FRIENDSHIP

Before travelling to Spain in 1846/7, Palau had bought some terrain near to the Sanctuary in Livron, where he was planning to live his hermit life. After coming back from Spain, he found out that this place has been occupied by Teresa Christia and her companions who wanted to live closer to their spiritual director. Palau sold terrain to them, helped them to accommodate space for living, where they continued as guardians of the Sanctuary.



He himself moved to Cantayrac with his brother John and some others hermits.

Soon this small community encountered opposite reaction of church authorities. In some moment, bishop has prohibited them the reception of the sacraments. They defended themselves appealing to Pope, asking him to mediate in this conflict. They resisted. After some time, reconciliation was sealed, but unfortunately because now they found in Fr. Palau a common enemy. While Francisco continued his own journey chasing after his project of life, Teresa remained in France. But some of her companions (like Juana Gracias and Virginia) followed Palau in his adventures in Spain.

THEMES OF LETTER

It's a letter between two friends, united by a strong link of spiritual direction. Juana was one of those persons close to Palau; their mutual interactions had a great influence in the life of both of them. In this letter he gives her some advices, that we could also apply in our life:



1. Step by step, slowly but surely: when one decides to take direction in life, there are instances that will help, others that will be a hindrance. In all of them, God is slowly revealing his plan, showing the way, manifesting his will.
2. It takes a lot of courage to follow our path: it's true that the universe will work for our good when we begin to give steps toward our destiny, but still we need this "determined determination", this firm decision that nothing will be able to change our mind.
3. "Love and do what you want": listening to this inner voice of Spirit is enough to know what to do. One not always needs external directives to govern his/her life, because the guidance comes from within us.

IN REALITY

There is this book of Simon Sinek titled "The infinite game". One of the chapters speaks about "existential flexibility": this capacity of a person or company to change

direction, to take new risk, to adapt to the changing world. It can become our “be or not to be”. There are people and companies (congregations?) that don’t want to change, don’t want to adapt, don’t have capacity of risking to achieve better opportunity for the future. For many, this time of COVID19 is provoking this kind of change: or we adapt, or we die. Are we able to be flexible in so radical way? I’m sure that through these events God is revealing to us His will, slowly and patiently. Are we ready to give steps forward, or only waiting to step back to what we know as “normal”?

