



## To Juana Gratias: Lérida

*Montserrat (Tarragona), July 8-15, 1851*

J. M. J.

My dear daughter: Yesterday we walked the whole day going to this mountain. Its precipices are truly frightful. We found many caves where I could retire when I get weary of this world. I am writing to you from the hermitage of St. Bartholomew. Its location is picturesque. Tonight, I will sleep in one of the most hidden and isolated caves, not far from this hermitage. Water is near. Towards the south, there is a spring not distant from the cave at the foot of the large rocks covered by an ever-green forest. Yesterday I got so tired climbing up and down the precipices that today I do not dare to continue my search. I went to the highest peak of Montsant, the one facing Lérida. The mountain that is named Montsant is like a trough or basin, that is, at the center there is a large valley, surrounded by four parts by the crests of the mountains that face Lérida, the sea, to the east and to the west. This profound valley has frightful precipices and is horribly isolated. Its caves are hidden by the forest. There are springs here and there and some cultivated land; many caves have been closed by the peasants, and those in the middle of the precipice serve them as shelters.

*Vigil of the feast of Our Lady of Carmel<sup>1</sup>*

These days I have been so alone as much as I could desire. The hermit of St. Bartholomew has provided my needs. He is ready to shelter anyone I would like to send in these caves.

The letter of Mr. Gregorio is sufficiently satisfactory. It is possible that Juan<sup>2</sup> will go to visit Cantayrac; in this case he will undoubtedly see Juan Bautista.

I have not forgotten you in my solitude. The way that your soul must follow is: in the beginning you could not bear and endure absolute solitude for a long time, because your soul has no sufficient nourishment. ***It is convenient to liberate oneself spiritually from self-love, selfishness and pride in order to be totally of God and in God.*** The prayer for the needs of the Church will be short and frequent and for the rest, occupy yourself for the good of your neighbors. Engage yourself in the welfare of others, for ***to take care of others is to take care of God, and to take care of God in his moral body, is to be truly of God.*** The solitary life requires intense communication with God concerning the salvation of mankind. This is the end of perfection. Pray from time to time for the needs of the wounded body of Jesus Christ and occupy yourself entirely for the salvation of others. This is your way. ***Engage yourself for the good of others, direct your energies, your virtues, your time, your life for the salvation of the neighbor.*** These virtues in

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<sup>1</sup> He continues on this date, July 15 on the letter he started on the 8th.

<sup>2</sup> Juan Palau, his brother. We do not know whether he returned to Cantayrac a little later. He was there on 2 August 1952, along with Juan Espasa, who Francisco had given powers of attorney, he executed the juridical acts needed for the administration of the goods that Francisco possessed in France.

order that they will be real pearls and precious stones that glitters in the temple of God, is necessary that they pass through the hands of many artists to be refined by fire and strokes of hammer. I mean to say, many circumstances must be combined and work together so that what we do for the good of others will be the work of solid virtues.

Real precious stones are very rare; they are few but of great value; there are many that are false and of these we have to purify. Heaven is not adorned and beautified by any precious stone that is false. These we have to remove. In order to distinguish them, to recognize which are false and which are true, it is necessary to study and deal with it in time and experience. What I want to say is that, at the beginning all that glitters seems to be precious stone, then time will show you which are the solid virtues ordained for the good of the neighbor and which ones are false. Engage then with all your courage and fortitude in dealing with precious stones and with time and work will be the end of a good dealer.

Always bear in mind that perfection consists in the fulfilment of the precept of love: "love of God and of neighbor"<sup>3</sup>. Do not forget that regarding the love of neighbor, those who practice it more are those who during their lifetime and with great effort have made themselves worthy to form part of the great heavenly council of the highest hierarchy of angels and of those souls of the militant Church who assisted them in the management of the affairs of the persons' salvation. What is determined there is executed in the universe. Learn to attend to him so that you will be admitted in your time. For this you have to read *The Struggle of the Soul*<sup>4</sup>. In order to be admitted in him it is necessary that you work for the salvation of your neighbor, rendering them works of charity: **do good to them, do not do evil**; here you have precepts of the law that you have to meditate upon and to practice.

Inasmuch as the interior light is very dusky and lusterless, your virtues are weak. Stir it up, **foment it and nourish this interior light, it will warm up your heart and strengthen your actions**. In order to stir it up, foment and nourish it meditate on the mysteries of the incarnation, of the redemption and of the cross. In the book *The Struggle of the Soul* you will see how all these matters are done. In prayer take a general interest in the welfare of all persons; do not go down too much details and peculiarities, because as the light is very dusky and lusterless, you cannot distinguish the precise objects. **Imitate Jesus Christ in this and you will find a true teacher and a model of prayer**. Follow him in all his ways; see him in the desert praying for all mankind, in the garden of olives agonizing for them, in preaching assisting them in their needs, on the cross offering himself to the Father as a victim of atonement. Contemplate the life of the saints: St. John the Baptist, St. Elijah, St. Francis of Assisi, etc. Imitate their example in what you can. This, my daughter, is the true way.

Goodbye.

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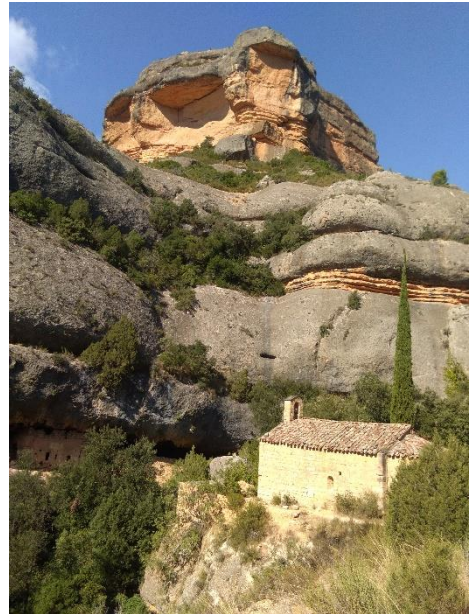
<sup>3</sup> Dt 6,5; Mt 22,37.39.

<sup>4</sup> His book with original title "Lucha del Alma con Dios", written in 1842 in France.

PD. I am sending you the rules<sup>5</sup> [copy or get copies from the drafts that are attached to the rules, and then make a clean copy. Nothing more in particular]. Do not allow anybody to copy the first two pages of the rules.

#### WHAT WAS HAPPENING?

After returning from France, secured the license of bishop of Barcelona, Costa y Borrás, Palau spent some days in total isolation, far from crowded and noisy world. And it's because in his head and heart there were also noise and crowd: noise and crowd of new and risky plans about his present and future. He needed some time and space to serene his spirit with peace and solitude of this place: Montserrat. He needed this encounter with God, protected by silence, disturbed only by a melodious song of the birds and air and drops of water falling in a cave. Alone with God, he was going to meditate about what he had to do.



#### LESSON TO LEARN

This letter traces a complete program for progressing in spiritual life. In life generally, but more considerably in spiritual aspect, who we are is defined by our interior; it comes from within. Fr. Palau will insist that we need to strengthen first our interior light. From there, we will be able to distinguish between true and false virtues and attitudes. ***Not all is gold what glitters.*** Specially, if we refer to the service to others. It is necessary to detach from one's own spiritual will and likes, our selfishness and pride, that time to time obscure our true motivation for service.



During pandemic we experienced moments of uncertainty and doubt, even depression. Being in lockdown was not an easy experience. We were deprived of our routines and customary habits in which we live and move ordinarily. For many, it was an opportunity to discover that the values they used to cherish and honor before, in reality have little or no meaning in times of crisis. Things like money, luxury, social life, are not things on which one could build the ultimate meaning of one's life. We realized that they are not true values. They are the things that glitter, but are not a gold. True value of each person is built inside, through a painful process, "by fire and strokes of hammer". I hope that the time of isolation was a time of "trafficking with the precious stones" of things that are important: God, family, inner peace. And that we won't lose this focus as we slowly return to what was our "normal".

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<sup>5</sup> Found lately, it is entitled *Las Doncellas Pobres – sus Reglas y Contituciones*, was destined for the women living in Ayton and Lerida (Les Germanes de la Creu).