

Little Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer

Community of Saint-Aignan (53)

Community of Lagardelle sur Lèze (31)

Community of Castelnau d'Estrétefonds (31)

November 7th, 2018

Subject: ALMOST ALL THE CONGREGATION IS ASKING TO BE RELIEVED OF THEIR VOWS.

Dear friends,

Over six months have passed since you received the last letter that we had decided to communicate to the public at large. Seven months that we have lived through suffering and offering, ever following the example of the Virgin Mary, accepting this Sword of Grief as the place and the sign of the part we have always wanted to take, by our specific vocation, in the Work of Redemption.

We deeply thank the support committee for having kept us well informed on the way these last, harrowing events for each of the sisters of the Congregation took place. We now think it is appropriate and righteous for us to take the floor, in order to explain the extremely grave decision we have just made.

In June we welcomed three apostolic commissioners in our respective communities: grievous meetings with persons appointed by Rome, attentive to fulfilling their mission dutifully, but so far away from our lifestyle, and even more our charisma, that we could but deplore, once more, the fact we had not been heard when we solicited from the roman dicastery the appointment of persons who would be more familiar with our lifestyle. We were, of course, asked whether we were aware of the "*new theology of consecrated life*". Indeed we are well aware and we have read and studied the texts related to this subject, whilst it was the source of many concerns to us.

In spite of everything, the commissioners' report handed in on June 30th is totally at odds with the report dated December 5th, 2016, drawn up by Father Laurent Tournier (Eudiste) and Sister Nicole Legars (Augustine from Malestroit), and that we had immediately decried, one year ago, as soon as it was communicated to us. Thus, since the roman measures (suspension of the central government of the congregation and appointment of three commissioners) had been taken on the basis of this first report, we logically expected that these measures would be abandoned, considering the fact they had no more grounds. So we bring up this issue with the commissioner Sister Geneviève Médevielle, who, on the contrary, assures us that these measures still hold.

Thereby we can but be deeply dismayed, wondering where we could find some impartiality in this matter, without mentioning the "*obedience precept*" that one of our three chaplains has received two months ago from his Archbishop, The Most Reverend Robert Le Gall, upon request of Rome, and requiring that he leave the premises within a delay of ten days, and have no more contacts with the Congregation. This sort of conduct reminds us of another attitude, just as violent, against our General Superior and the Superior in charge of novices, over one year ago.

Furthermore, we have been deeply affected by the determination to oppose our two communities located in the south of France, and that have always gotten along well. Some have been determined to put in jeopardy the one community that, in its liturgy, expresses the Tradition more, although no group has ever been refused to pray or celebrate, as it wanted to. Another argument presented to Mother Claire-Marie and Mother Marie-Liesse by Archbishop Le Gall, on September 15th: the Sisters of one of these two communities do not attend the Mass he celebrates in their retirement home any longer, whereas the sisters of the other community are present.

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Thereby if Archbishop Le Gall had knocked on the door of the Community that he was considering “in the process of going astray”, in order to discuss what he felt concerning and to rescue “the lost sheep”: what joy for the shepherd and its flock! How heartwarming it is to work for unity and not for division. Then the sisters could have explained to him many a thing, and so would have their Superior. It is a fact that this portion of the flock will have suffered a great deal from the absence of its Pastor.

Finally, even though the superiors of the Congregation were accused of “*deviating authoritarianism*”, according to the words used in the first report, that’s when obedience is suddenly brandished to us as an indisputable duty, without letting straight conscience express itself, without ever explaining to us the objective grounds for all these roman measures. Thus are there double standards in this matter? Anyhow, it is certain that if the superiors had had, at some point, the same attitude with their sisters as they endure today from the ecclesiastical authorities, they would have been immediately punished, and this would have been righteous indeed. Yet none of the sisters suffer from such an attitude within the Institute, as they have, again, recently testified on our support website (<https://www.soutienpsm.com>) and even the five sisters who have decided to follow the dicastery requests, remain of course treated with much charity.

According to the ecclesiastical authorities, it seems there is a “*governance issue*” within our congregation. The general superior, who has been elected three times by her sisters, to their greatest satisfaction, does not seem to please some persons, due to her “too classical” side, and because the unity that she managed to build within her Institute is upsetting them. Not to mention the fact she happens to be the founder’s niece, and as a result, her loyalty to the founder’s charisma has raised concerns over a presupposed “*opposition to change*” in the way this charisma should be lived. It is nonetheless such a pity to go without the blessing offered by the presence by our side of the closest witnesses of our dear founder!

So be it! Should the person in place not be agreeable to some persons, all they had to do was wait a little to see the next election chapter, that should have taken place this summer, with the assurance that a new general superior would have been elected, since the constitutions do not allow a 4th mandate for Mother Marie de Saint Michel.

But the possibility of a successor that would have stayed too faithful to the directions taken so far, has led the Archbishop of Laval to make the first move, and place us under roman supervision.

On September 17th, 2018, the Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, Joao Cardinal Braz de Aviz, sent us an ultimatum: either we accept the Commissioner “*unconditionally*”, or we do not accept her, in which case the law stipulates that we can be expelled from the Institute:

- After having acquired moral certainty throughout this year, that welcoming the apostolic commissioner within our Institute would obviously and seriously damage, before long, both the understanding of the charisma offered by God to Mother Marie de la Croix, our founder, and the way we live it;
- After having so many a time submitted solutions to pacify the situation, without ever receiving any response;
- After having taken advice from authorised and competent persons;
- After having prayed so much, and always willing to remain faithful to Mother Church;

Wanting to remain faithful and obedient to the truth:

It has clearly appeared to us that we would have no other choice but renounce to our vows. Thus, of the 39 sisters that constitute the Institute, 34 of us have asked to be relieved of our vows by the Dicastery for consecrated life.

We are not making this sacrifice lightly: we wish to remain in total communion with the Church, but we cannot signify more clearly, or more painfully either, our incapacity, in conscience, to obey what we are commanded to do.

Dear friends, whilst our Mother Church is currently suffering from many evils, may these ordeals enable redemption not with words but in action. We want to deeply thank all those who support us one way or the other. We want to tell all those who do not support us, either by conviction or by fear, that we are praying for them, nonetheless conscious that our decision might upset some persons. We would like to make apologies to anyone we might have hurt and also tell those who have hurt and soiled us that we forgive them.

We solicit the prayer of all, so this Stations of the Cross bears fruit and blessings for each one of us!

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