Called out of Compassion

Toronto Oratory 2023 Advent Day of Recollection

On October 31, 1887, Father and I set off for Bayeux. My heart was full of hope, but I was still apprehensive at the thought of presenting myself at the Bishop’s house; it would be the first time I had made a call without any of my sisters with me, and it was to be on a Bishop!

Until now, I had never had to do more than answer questions others put to me, and now I should have to explain why I wanted to enter Carmel and prove my vocation was genuine.

It cost me a great deal to overcome my nervousness, but how true it is that nothing is impossible to love, since it is convinced “it may and can do all things” (Imitation of Christ, III, v. 4). Love of Jesus, and that alone, gave me the strength to face these difficulties and those which followed, the tribulations which were the price I had to pay for my happiness. I look upon them now as a very small price, and if I were to begin again, I should be prepared to pay a thousand times more.

Heaven seemed to have opened its floodgates as we entered the Bishop’s house. The date of our visit had been fixed by the Vicar General, Fr. Révérony. He treated me with great kindness, although he seemed somewhat surprised.

. . . I had been hoping that Father would do the talking, but instead of this, he told me to explain why we had come. I did this as eloquently as I could, knowing all the time that a single word from the Superior would have done far more than anything I could ever say, and the fact that he was opposed hardly counted in my favour. The Bishop asked me if I had been wanting to enter Carmel for a long time. “Yes, my Lord,” I answered, “for a very long time.” Father Révérony laughed and said: “Come now, it can’t have been for fifteen years!” “That is true,” I replied, “but it has not been much less; I have wanted to give myself to God since I was three.”

. . . The Bishop seemed very touched and treated me with far greater tenderness, it appears, than he had ever shown to any other child. “All is not lost, my daughter,” he said, “but I am very pleased that you are going with your Father to Rome; it will confirm you in your vocation. You ought to be rejoicing, not crying. I am going to Lisieux next week, and I will talk to the Superior about what you want to do and will send my answer to you in Italy. . . . peace because I sought the will of God alone.