



Spiritual Letter Box

THE ANGUISH OF YOUNG PEOPLE

During the triduum last May-June, excerpts from one of Marie-Paule's spiritual letter boxes were read, with the aim of helping and providing support to the young people who are growing up in our very permissive contemporary society.

Given the importance of this spiritual correspondence, we are reproducing here the first part of this long letter which was published in June 1975 in the review "L'Armée de Marie", vol. IV, p. 191. The last half will be printed in one of the next issues.

N.B.: The numbers added in the letter were put there by Marie-Paule to facilitate her replies.

LETTER FROM A YOUNG GIRL

I write to implore your invaluable help. I would like to ask a few questions that my mother cannot answer. **1.-** Besides, coming from her, I do not always accept what she says, because she does not always have the exact words, and I must always guess. Whereas, in your Letter Box, I notice that the answers are always precise.

2.- Since I entered high school [at the age of 12], everything has suddenly changed. Last year, when I went to the Presentation of Mary school, there were a few Sisters and this provided a little more discipline. But this year, it is really serious. (I do not know if you understand what I mean by "serious"...) But it is terrible to live in this school with no discipline, no respect, etc.

3.- I speak of my situation: I, who believe and try as best I can to be faithful to God. It is so difficult! What must I do to carry on? I no longer have the courage for anything, that is, to pray, to go to Mass, to go to confession, etc. For quite some time, I felt the presence of God near me, then He was absent for such a long time, but I think He is returning little by little. **4.-** It was not that I doubted then, but I wanted to fashion my own God, **5.-** my personal religion. What I want the most in the world is to be independent. **6.-** I want to live my own life, have freedom of opinion.

7.- What my mother tells me seems ridiculous to me at times. I find her ridiculous with all these things, but at the same time, I admire her. I would like to be like her, but I am afraid because I know that she has suffered... **8.-** and I am terribly afraid of suffering. For myself, I do not accept to suffer! **9.-** And the question that always comes back to my mind is this: "Why suffer? Why must a person suffer to reach this God? And why does one want to reach this God?" The other young people of my age don't seem so unhappy, and they have dropped everything!

10.- Why do I have faith, while others have it only more or less? They do not commit themselves to anything and have no remorse because they do not know what is good and what is bad. **11.-** As for me, I know it because I have this mother who knows so many things and does not stop telling me about them. I can no longer put up with that, and it leads me to rebel. There are so many questions being tossed about in my head. I have

found several answers, but they are not complete..., they are not solid.

12.- Thus, regarding my question "why suffer?", well, I found the answer: "To suffer for God is to love, and this is the way we prepare our heaven." **13.-** But there is another question: "If God is almighty, why does He not take away evil from the earth and why does He not give us everything instead of making us suffer?" There again, an answer came to me: "God leaves the evil so that we can choose to love Him. If He had given us everything, He would receive our indifference. We would be robots. We have an intelligence and we can decide whether to love or not to love God." Life is unfair and it is because of God. Why choose us to suffer?...
X..., 14 years old

MARIE-PAULE'S REPLY

I read your letter attentively, trying to understand the confusion that reigns in your life, in order to help you find some answers to the numerous questions that haunt your mind.

1. Psychological Crisis

At present you are going through a difficult phase, a crisis that comes upon young people of your age at one moment or another. Now, your personality wants to assert itself. Your filial affection towards your mother experiences ups and downs because a certain independence is developing in you – and this is normal. However, this independence must not lead you to judge too quickly... it is common for young people to act like this. There are so many details that you still do not know.

"With your mother, you do not always accept," you say. Another person would advise you the same way, and you would appreciate that person's advice. So we have here a psychological crisis which at times sets the daughter against her mother, and at times the son against his father.

While you go through this crisis, you must not wound the one who has been so good to you. Be prudent in your words and actions towards her. Try to understand what she cannot say, maybe because of great fatigue, because of the trials she must endure silently, or else, because of a lack of time or knowledge to express herself. Do not judge her. Be good to her and wait. Time passes. You will be happy one day to have checked some words that you could regret, for the events of life open our eyes and show us that our parents want our happiness and our good, while our exuberant youth would invite us to look for them elsewhere, in an independence that can lead us into all kinds of disillusionment.

2. Desire for Independence

You received a good education in your family, strengthened at school for many years, where the respect of authority was sacred.

Here you are now in a milieu altogether different. This is where your desire for independence can be put to a good purpose, that of keeping yourself upright, respectful of yourself and others, dignified, sincere, in spite of the distressing examples displayed before you.

3. Strength of Character

It seems to be difficult to be faithful to God when everything appears to be crumbling around you and when you run the risk of being caught up in the whirlwind.

This situation must prompt you to measure your strength, because it is through difficulties that the character is wrought and

the will strengthened. But your efforts must rely, above all, upon a superior force: trust in God – “*whether you feel His presence or not*” –, and the recourse to Mary who promised to assist all those who consecrate themselves to Her.

Your growth in the interior life has already made you discover many things. This awareness of the presence of God or of His absence proves that you have been made sensitive to the beauty of the spiritual life by this divine presence that you have relished, and of which, afterwards, you have had the sentiment of being deprived. It is a normal progress in the life of the soul. But, to go further, one must not allow oneself to become lax by abandoning all forms of prayer or all calls to act according to one's faith.

Those who drop everything, prayer, Mass, etc., seem, for a moment, not to have any worries, to be liberated from the sometimes exacting demands of an ideal that was simply glimpsed; but their laxity merely leads them further from the true happiness which they only seek more, the more they lose it.

4. Doubts

Never worry if at some time you have doubts about the spiritual life. These doubts, strewn along our path at times, vivify the soul – that is, if they are not a systematic rejection of the reality of the spiritual life. These involuntary doubts demand of the soul a greater capacity for passing through these phases of dryness, in order to arrive, afterwards, at the oasis of a profound interior joy with a renewed and purified love.

5. Personal Religion

We can never say that religion is our personal business, no more than we can have our own personal sun. Nor can one say either, “*My life is my business*,” for our actions are never without spiritual or social repercussions. Without judging him, let us look at the actions of a person who is drawn into alcoholism or loose living in one form or another; does not that person cause a lot of suffering around him? So, our actions can promote, according to our choice, peace and joy for ourselves and others, or become a burden for others and a cause of remorse to ourselves.

6. Freedom... Independence

“*You want to have freedom of opinion, you want to live your own life, be independent.*” In that case, you are preparing the chain which will make you a slave, first of yourself and then of the situation you will provoke round about you.

This concern for independence would only imprison you

more in the selfishness of “*your own life*”.

Wherever you are, there will always be people around you. Right away, that calls for selflessness. You cannot be independent from events, from unforeseen events which occur anytime. You must build with basic elements, that is, be open to everything around you, be affable, because true happiness consists in promoting happiness.

7. Admiration for Your Mother

I understand so well your thought: “*What my mother tells me seems ridiculous to me at times; but at the same time, I admire her.*”

Your mother talks to you about spiritual beauty. She tells you about her interior joy in spite of the suffering she must bear. What a paradox, which seems all the more aberrant when all

around you, you see the examples of a life that seems easy without any reference to the spiritual life. So your mother's words appear ridiculous, and yet you admire her, and with good reason.

The Lord, in His teaching, seemed ridiculous to the people of His time when He said: “*Whoever wants to be the greatest must make himself the smallest... Forgive seventy times seven times... Render good for evil...*” And what about the beatitudes, etc.?

In an age when we have the occasion,

more than ever, to practise this teaching, you understand your mother's attitude, in spite of everything, and you admire her. Keep this admiration of your mother which she deserves, doing so in spite of the contrary thoughts that assail you because one day you will thank God for having given you such a mother.

8. Fear of Suffering

You say that “*you are afraid to suffer, you do not accept suffering*,” and yet, you are already suffering. Your letter proves it, dear child. But you suffer more from the fear of suffering. So you make a mountain out of fears, or out of troubles which you may never have.

Trust in life; it has also its good aspects, its pleasant things, its joys. This mother who suffers, do you not admire her because of her fidelity and hope, of her joy and confidence? So, joy is not incompatible with suffering.

9. Why Suffer?

“*Why must a person suffer to reach God?*” It is not precisely suffering that makes us reach God, it is love, true Love. Suffering can bring about an awakening in a person and favor a return



On September 14, 1991, in Rieti, Italy, His Exc. Bishop Joseph Molinari and Marie-Paule were photographed with the large group of young people present for the trip to Greece, Turkey and Italy, in honor of the Triumph of the Cross.

to God. God is Love, Goodness, Holiness.

Through our baptism, a sacrament of light and a source of divine grace, the soul is called to rise towards God. *"Wanting to attain God,"* is to taste already on this earth a profound joy while waiting for the eternal felicity.

The more we live in conformity with divine laws, the more we experience peace, in spite of the trials which, one day or another, come to us with greater intensity. The more a soul desires to live close to God and taste the secret pleasant things He lavishes, the more it must consent to detachment. It is not suffering that makes the soul happy, but the benefits acquired by this suffering accepted with love. To refuse suffering is to reject the beneficent grace and the light attached to it.

10. "Why Do I in Particular Have Faith?"

You have faith because you were born from Catholic parents and you were baptized. This is the most beautiful inheritance a child can receive, because baptism binds him to the Mystical Body of Christ and offers him its promises. May you keep this rich treasure and make it bear fruit in order to *"grow in age and wisdom before God"*. Those who voluntarily lose this inestimable treasure, come one day to bitterly regret its loss.

The daughter of rich parents can also ask herself: *"Why do I in particular have this inheritance, when other companions are so poor?"* If she is not concerned with making this treasure bear fruit, and allows herself all the pleasures, she will be bitterly sorry on the day she will lose everything.

However, what a difference between this earthly inheritance which is of profit for the hereafter only if it is used to do good, and the richness of the deposit of faith that makes us heirs of eternal Life if we use it to do good.

11. Rebellion

Here, your aggressiveness towards your mother proves that you are already turning away from her teaching. That is because there is conflict in you. The same words uttered by your mother to your brother or sister who is beyond or has not yet reached the age of this crisis, would be accepted with gratitude. In your condition, your rebellion is normal, but you must control within yourself this quick reaction which could lead you astray. Knowing this, you must be prudent. Above all, do not grieve your mother who loves you to the point of wanting to spare you all the disillusionment that overtakes those who want to live their life in independence, according to their personal ideas.

12. "The Answer"

The light you received is good. *"To suffer for God is to love,*

and this is the way we prepare our heaven."

13. Almighty God

Through His marvelous creation, God has shown man that He is Almighty. He showed us how far His love can go by giving us His only-begotten Son who came to give a meaning to suffering, a redeeming power.

Man, in his pride, provokes evil through hatred and wars. God has traced out a plan of love for each human being. If this plan of love were not sabotaged by men's foolishness, life on this earth would be much more pleasant. But good and evil exist side by side. The freedom given to man often leads him to perdition. God owes us nothing, but He gives us much. It suffices that we accept His conditions, His laws. It is normal that He act this way in order to reward those who will be able to prove their love to Him. If God gave us everything on earth without exacting anything in return, we would become terribly selfish, like certain children to whom their parents grant everything.

It is not God who wants evil, and it is not evil that forces us to love Him. It is with our intelligence that we understand the goodness of God, and it is with our heart that we are able to love Him.

Therefore, life is not unfair, because if we can take advantage of all that is offered to us, whether it is pleasant or not, to gain some merit, we taste the joys of the soul which surpass all the happiness the earth can offer.

God is not the cause of our suffering, but He encourages us to rise above ourselves, as His Son has taught us. Why would He spare us when He sacrificed His only-

begotten Son for our eternal happiness?...

Conclusion

You are only fourteen years old and you have read a lot. That is to your credit. Do not hesitate to follow the teaching of the Church, of the Second Vatican Council. At the present time, the children of the Church are rebelling against all teaching given for their good. But the crisis will pass. Starting from this psychological conflict which sets you, momentarily, in opposition to your mother whom you admire, you will understand better the universal crisis raging against the Church. Its secular wisdom, which is the happy fruit of the Holy Spirit's guidance, arouses, all the same, an admiration which will soon increase tenfold when the era of folly and contestations has wrought enough damage and caused enough suffering to calm overwrought spirits. The teaching of the Church will be the same and its children will return to the fold, happy to be welcomed by a real mother who forgives because she always teaches love.

Marie-Paule



The young people's world was at the center of Pope John Paul II's Pontificate. In 2002, he came to Toronto, in Canada, for the WYD gathering.