

*Sorrowful and Immaculate
Heart of Mary*



Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary

ADAPTED FROM THE BIOGRAPHY

By Rev. Father Duffner , M.S.C.

BERTHE PETIT

Franciscan Tertiary

(1870 - 1943)

Edited by John M. Haffert

**A Message From the Sacred Heart
In Favor of the Devotion to the
Sorrowful and Immaculate
Heart of Mary**

**Nihil Obstat Daniel Duivesteijn, S.T.D.
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In obedience to the decrees of Pope Urban VIII and of other Sovereign Pontiffs, the writer declares that the graces and other supernatural facts in this volume as witnessing to the sanctity of servants of God other than those canonized or beatified by Holy Church, rest on human authority alone; and in regard thereto, as in all things else, the writer submits himself without reserve to the infallible judgment of the Apostolic See, which alone has power and authority to pronounce as to whom rightly belongs the character and title of Saint or Blessed.

**At Fatima, Our Lady Revealed
Her Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart
and Its Power in Union with the
Sacred Heart of Jesus**

**PRAYER TAUGHT TO THE CHILDREN DURING
THE THIRD APPARITION OF THE ANGEL**

"Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which He is offended. And through the INFINITE MERITS OF HIS MOST SACRED HEART, AND OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, I BEG THE CONVERSION OF POOR SINNERS."

**SECOND APPARITION OF OUR
LADY AT FATIMA, JUNE 13, 1917**

"In front of the palm of Our Lady's right hand there was a heart encircled with thorns which pierced it. We understood that it was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity, and that she wanted reparation."

**SIXTH APPARITION OF OUR
LADY AT FATIMA, OCTOBER 13, 1917**

"I saw Our Lord, and Our Lady who appeared to me to be Our Lady of Dolours."

**VISION OF THE FIVE FIRST SATURDAYS,
DECEMBER 10, 1925**

The Most Holy Virgin Mary appeared to Lucia, with the Child Jesus by her side. . . She held a heart surrounded with sharp thorns. At the same time the Child Jesus spoke:

"Have pity on the Heart of your Most Holy Mother. It is covered with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment and there is no one to remove them with an act of reparation."

Then Our Lady said to Lucia:

"My daughter, look at my heart surrounded with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You, at least, try to console me. . ."

LAST VISION, JUNE, 1929

" . . . Our Lady was beneath the right arm of the Cross (. . . it was Our Lady of Fatima with her Immaculate Heart . . . with a crown of thorns and flames...)."

Appreciation of Berthe Petit

I cherish a vivid remembrance of Mlle Berthe Petit, whom I met in Switzerland during the 1914-1918 war. I much appreciated the devotion to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary. I am of the same mind as Cardinals Mercier and Bourne that it recalls what the Blessed Virgin has received from God, both the grace of the Immaculate Conception as well as what she herself has done and suffered for us. This invocation of the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary seems very opportune in our days of universal suffering and trial, as appears by the Consecration to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary made by several Bishops in various Dioceses of France and Belgium.

The grace of the Immaculate Conception and the initial plenitude of her charity considerably increased in Mary her capacity for suffering from the greatest of all evils, which is sin. It is in proportion to one's personal love of God that one suffers from sin, because of the offense given to God and the souls lost by it.

Thus the Immaculate Heart of Mary was sorrowful in proportion to her purity and spotlessness, and in the measure of her initial charity, in which she grew every moment until the hour of her death.

When we say "Immaculate Heart of Mary" we recall what she received from God in the first instant of her conception. When we say "Sorrowful Heart," we recall all that Mary has suffered and offered for us in union with her Son, from the words of holy Simeon to Calvary, and until her holy death.

Rev. Garrigou Lagrange. O.P.

“My Mother’s Heart has the right to the title of Sorrowful. I desire that it be set before her title of Immaculate because she herself has won it . . .”

The Message of Berthe Petit

When, in the early eighteenth century, St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort exposed his special form of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, he observed that “She has scarcely been seen since the first coming of Jesus Christ . . .” “Mankind,” he commented, “as yet too little enlightened and instructed concerning the Person of the Son, might have become too strongly and humanly attached to the Virgin Mother.”

It was reserved therefore, he said, for those whom he calls “the apostles of the latter days” fully to reveal her. He foresaw these apostles “as saints who will surpass in sanctity the majority of other saints, who bear upon their shoulders the bloody standard of the Cross — the crucifix in their right hand, the rosary in their left hand, and in their hearts the holy names of Jesus and Mary. . . Mary will raise them up, by order of the Highest, to extend his empire over that of the wicked.”

When shall that hour come? God alone knows.

Father Faber, commenting on the prophetic note sounded by Grignon de Montfort, described him as one who lived, as it were, in touch with the Last Judgment. His message, indeed, is the fruit of this special vocation. He called for a more ardent love for Mary, with a great understanding of her intimate connection with the second coming of her Son. His "secret" is the universal mediation of Our Lady; a devotion which now, some two hundred years late, is gradually taking concrete shape in the Church. "To approach Jesus" he wrote, "we must go to Mary, who is our mediatrix by intercession. To approach the Eternal Father, we must go to Jesus, who is our mediator by redemption."

Since that time, the Blessed Virgin has indeed stooped to earth many times, to bring to us what may truly be the ultimate graces of "the latter days."

A little over a hundred years elapsed between the death of Grignon de Montfort and the commencement of the apparitions of Our Lady. The giving of the miraculous medal in 1830 was followed in 1858 by the great events of Lourdes. In 1846 came the manifestation of the Sorrowful Virgin at La Salette. In 1871 occurred the less known visions of the Blessed Virgin at Pontmain. Forty-six years later the wonderful revelations of Fatima took place in 1917. In 1933, Belgium was favored with two quite independent series of apparitions at Beauraing and Banneux, which have both been recognized by the episcopal authorities.

Each of these heavenly manifestations differs from the others, in varying beauty, but the same theme is common to all: the urgent, poignant, almost beseeching appeal of our Holy Mother for prayer and penance. The world in its blindness of sin is whirling to its doom . . . She implores her children to rise and labor, to cast into the scales of Divine Justice a sufficient weight of prayer and reparation, above all of love, to out-balance the ever-mounting load of evil.

Quite recently a particular aspect of Our Heavenly Mother

was revealed to a humble, saintly woman, Berthe Petit, who passed to her reward as recently as 1943.

For many years, this holy Franciscan Tertiary, while leading a life of hidden sufferings in the world, a voluntary victim for the expiation of sin, received repeated revelations from Our Lord of his desire that the whole world should be publicly dedicated to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Our Lord deigned to expound this to Berthe: "My Mother's Heart has the right to the title of Sorrowful. I desire that it be set *before* her title of Immaculate because she herself has won it. The Church has recognized what I myself did for my Mother: her Immaculate Conception. Now it is necessary and it *is my wish*, that this title which is by right my Mother's should be understood and recognized. This title she earned by her identification with all my sufferings, by her sorrow, her sacrifice, her immolation on Calvary, and indeed for the salvation of mankind."

On July 2, 1940, Berthe heard Our Lord say to her: "This is the last succor which I give before the end of time: the recourse to my Mother under the title which I desire shall be hers throughout the whole world."

Does not all this link up in mysterious connection with the prophecy of St. Grignion de Montfort, that the reign of Our Blessed Lady should be fulfilled in the latter days?

Berthe Petit, the third daughter of a well-to-do Catholic couple, was born at Enghien, in Belgium, in 1870. Her father was a notary. From her earliest childhood the little girl was in touch with heaven. At four years old she had a vision of Our Lady. Somewhat later, in a Convent chapel she saw the tabernacle open and the Child Jesus, emerging, came towards her. As He made the sign of the Cross on her forehead, He said: "You will suffer always, but I shall be with you." On her first Communion day, when she was ten, her vocation of expiation was revealed to her: "I must



Berthe Petit, apostle of Devotion to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary. Photograph was taken two years before her death.



Berthe Petit, 39 years of age.

suffer a great deal,' she said to a nun, her teacher. "I must be like Jesus."

"Who told you that?" the nun enquired.

"The little Host which was my Great Jesus,' was the child's astonishing reply.

As the years passed, the fuller meaning of this suffering was made clear to her; and with full knowledge of what her sacrifice entailed, she offered herself to God "as a victim" for the salvation of souls and especially for the souls of priests.

A school friend thus describes Berthe as she was at that time: "Her piety, though deeply touching, was quite unostentatious. Delicate, gentle, resigned, she was like a pretty, fragile flower. There was something ethereal and ideal in her nature."

But Berthe was not, at any time during her long life, one to hold herself aloof from the generality of human beings. As a child she combined an intense spiritual life quite beyond her years, with a charming gaiety.

In later life, when she was favored almost daily by heavenly intercourse, and at the same time suffering continuous physical pain as an expiatory victim, she cheerfully took her full share of work in her mother's house. She was always a creature of hidden sanctity and great simplicity.

She left the Esquermes Bernardine nuns of Ollignies at eighteen. "You take all our hearts away with you," said Dame Marie Hortense, the Mother-Prioress, as she bade her goodbye, adding shrewdly, "But you leave your heart with none."

Berthe's two sisters were already married, so that she now became her parents' sole companion. Although her great wish was to become a nun, she promised to remain at home till she was twenty. She refused to go to any "parties," but her gentle gaiety brightened many small family gatherings. She played the piano well and had a lovely singing voice,

and in those days of "music at home" she was often in request.

Very soon, however, this happy easy life broke up. Monsieur Petit lost all his money through unfortunate investments, and he and his wife and daughter found themselves quite suddenly in complete poverty. Henceforth they would have to earn their daily bread.

They left their home at Enghien and settled in Brussels where Monsieur Petit had hopes of a situation. Berthe was the chief sufferer through this change of fortune. She realized at once where her duty lay. It was indeed relentlessly summed up for her by her spiritual director (a Capuchin), before she left Enghien. "Father Godefroid said to me," she wrote in her notes, "All is finished, my poor child! Your vocation is mapped out for you. You must stay with your parents in their misfortune. You wanted to dedicate yourself to Our Lord. . . . You will devote yourself to them instead. That will not prevent you from being the spouse of Our Lord. You will be his crucified spouse. Go and tell Our Lady all this."

Obediently Berthe knelt at Our Lady's altar and offered through her to God the abandonment of her life's dream. But she made a compact with heaven. She prayed that her sacrifice might be the source of "one more priestly vocation. . . . instead of a poor nun, a holy and ardent priest. . . . to bring many souls back to God."

Quite simply she told Father Godefroid of her petition. "He blessed me," she wrote, "and said: 'Your prayer will be granted. Perhaps one day you will know it.' "

Berthe took up her new life in Brussels in a mood of serene self-sacrifice. Her father was unable at first to earn enough for their needs. She had to work also. But what could she do? In 1888 a young girl of her upbringing was totally unprepared for any career. But her courage and perseverance enabled her to find employment. She plied various small trades: she made wreaths for first communicants, she painted

cardboard boxes and sold them full of chocolates. But soon she took up private teaching — the profession *par excellence* of the impoverished gentlewoman in those days.

Her life was exceedingly hard. Rising at five o'clock, she heard Mass, then put the house in order before setting off, on foot, for her daily work. Out of economy she never took a tram. A penny bun, eaten in haste, was all her midday meal. After teaching again during the whole afternoon, she returned home to prepare the family supper. In the evening she played the piano for a while, to please her father and mother. After this long day, she still had to correct her pupils' homework — a task which often kept her up far into the night.

"It seems to me," she wrote afterwards, "that I could not live through another two years like those, so painful were they."

It soon became obvious, in fact, that she was physically unable to continue such an existence. On her state of chronic suffering supervened a serious attack of rheumatic fever. For the third time in her young life she received Extreme Unction.

Happily, however, Monsieur Petit at this juncture obtained a post in a notary's office, and comparative ease crept back into the family life.

When she had recovered a little strength, Berthe's bright intelligence enabled her to be of real assistance to her father in his work. He taught her the first principles of law and she collaborated with him in a treatise concerning Death Duties, which is still considered authoritative.

Throughout her life Berthe was always scrupulously obedient to spiritual direction, particularly essential in the case of such an unusual soul. From 1888 to 1895, she was under the care of Father Jarlan, of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. His judgment of his young penitent as set down in a declaration made in 1910, is most interesting.

“I could not say,” he wrote, “that I saw no faults in her. . . She was extremely sensitive and in the first moment of reaction she expressed her hurt feelings in words that were all the sharper for her natural wit. It was easy, however, to make her admit she had been in the wrong.” In spite of the recognition of this imperfection — how slight a one indeed, due to the high mettle of this vibrant character — he declares that she was “attuned to heavenly things; athrill for suffering.” He adds: “She had but one ambition: to become the living host, holy and acceptable to God, of which St. Paul speaks.”

Berthe remained in constant touch with the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament. In spite of increasing ill-health she took an active part in her work. The Superior, Father André, when founding a lay confraternity, chose her to be its first directress. Sister Mary Magdalen of the Cross — her name in this Third Order — was henceforth called upon for endless new duties; always at the service of the associates, she was overwhelmed with requests for advice, for religious instructions, visits to the sick, etc.

She was later on to find that this way of life was not for her, since such a multitude of occupations obliged her to neglect her parents. It had been for their sakes that she had renounced her cloistered vocation. Unhesitatingly, when this became clear to her, she resigned her position as directress.

But in 1893, while still filling that position, she was favored with one of the most special graces of her existence. At Christmas time she felt impelled to renew her self-immolation as a victim for the sanctification of priests, in a more solemn manner. She drew up, for her own guidance, a most stringent form of offering, in which she formally renounced her own will in every thing.

“I sacrifice with all my heart and quite freely myself, my tastes and satisfactions. I willingly consent to be nothing more than an ever-docile instrument in your hands.

I offer to your sovereign dominion and abandon to your wishes the whole of my being and each of my faculties. I renounce my will and every personal desire to acquiesce fully in your good pleasure. I dedicate myself as your servant and your slave, perfectly and lovingly submissive to all your designs. . . . I hold myself ready to answer your first call when you look for a heart to comfort you by sharing your sorrows, your humiliations and your failures in your contact with souls. I give myself up to you to be your personal possession, entirely dedicated to your use, that I may be the insignificant shadow which, by allowing you to remain hidden, gives you the means of directing and guiding all . . . I express this vow with the particular intention of becoming, if you will it so, the voluntary victim of your love and your justice, for the priesthood, for the souls of all priests, but especially, O Jesus — if you have accepted my sacrifice — for the soul of the priest of my life. . . .”

During midnight Mass, Berthe solemnly repeated these vows before the altar, in the secret of her heart. How immediately the generosity of God leaped to meet the generous abnegation of his creature, she has related in her own words — disjointed, breathless words:

“It was the moment of the Elevation. After having adored Jesus in the Host and in the Chalice, I raised my eyes to the Monstrance,¹ and my whole being became permeated with intense love and oblation towards him who deigned to accept my poor soul as victim. . . . There was no longer any Monstrance. . . . An immense Cross. . . . my Jesus was attached to it, and at its foot stood Mary, my Mother, and John, the beloved disciple. What sorrow in the Virgin’s attitude, what compassion in the unforgettable features of St. John! A secret voice said to me: your sacrifice is accepted,

¹ It is the custom in this church to expose the Blessed Sacrament during Midnight Mass.

your prayer granted. . . *This is your priest.* You will know him one day.

"My eyes were rivetted on the vision. I contemplated the Crucified, my Mother, St. John whose features became engraved in my memory. Little by little, all faded away. Only the Cross remained. . . solitary. . . empty."

Not the least strange part of the events of this wonderful night is the fact that two friends of Berthe, kneeling beside her at the time, also saw the luminous Cross, though the rest was hidden from them. Both were privileged souls, set apart for a special holiness.

Berthe was not destined to meet "her priest" for another fifteen years. When, in the fullness of time, the meeting came, he told her that on that Christmas night, he was acting as sub-deacon at Midnight Mass, far away, in France, and thus was standing at the left of the celebrant, just as in her vision she had seen St. John standing on the left of Christ crucified.

This priest, the Abbé Louis Decorsant, was born in northern France in 1866. He was thus four years older than Berthe. After brilliant studies he received his degree of Doctor of Law in Paris, and was contemplating an early marriage. No idea of becoming a priest had yet crossed his mind. One day, however, when praying before the crucifix, he became aware of the call of the Divine Master, a call so imperative, so urgent and unmistakeable that he could not but obey. Giving up his plans of marriage and of a legal career, he set himself at once to follow his vocation.

This event took place just sixteen days after Berthe had sacrificed her own longing for a religious life, and asking God to raise up a priest in her place, has pleaded for that one human consolation: that she might see and recognize him.

Louis Decorsant was ordained a priest in July 1893, a few months before her Christmas vision. During the fifteen years that were to elapse before their meeting, Abbé

Decorsant served as a curate in Vincennes. His work was hard and his apostolate fruitful. Constant preaching, long hours in the confessional, besides the writing of several books of apologetics and Christian theology, laid a heavy strain on the young priest, and in 1908, he was compelled, by failing health, to resign his curacy. He thought of looking for a chaplaincy in some convent, but before making any decisions he went to Lourdes, to beg the guidance of Our Lady. It was there, at that crisis of his life, that he met Berthe Petit.

During those fifteen years, Berthe continued to lead her hidden life of sanctity and suffering. In her innumerable illnesses, she recognized the hand of God, and indeed, in her constant visions and heavenly colloquies Our Lord and his Blessed Mother made three things clear to her: firstly, that she was an accepted victim of expiation for sin; secondly, that her acceptance of her sufferings was helpful to "her priest," whom she would undoubtedly one day meet and recognize; and thirdly, that Almighty God had chosen her for a definite mission which would be revealed to her in the fullness of time.

During the many pilgrimages she made to Lourdes, Our Lady often spoke to her with sweet familiarity and several times assured her that the meeting with her priest was drawing very near.

Berthe confided to her intimates that the Blessed Virgin was wont to appear to her during her nights of suffering, in the likeness of "a blue silhouette ringed around with silver." Bending over her in a gesture of pity, she brought "incredible peace."

In July 1908, Berthe fell so gravely ill immediately after one such pilgrimage that it seemed improbable that the promised meeting could be realized upon earth. Nevertheless, after once again receiving Extreme Unction she slowly recovered a certain measure of health. But from that time until her death, thirty-five years later, she was completely

unable to retain any food whatsoever. Her life appeared to be sustained physically as well as spiritually by her daily Communion. Those around her noticed that when directly she received the Blessed Sacrament, she was visibly invigorated, whereas she had been weak and faint before. It might be presumptuous to attempt to decide whether this enforced fast had a physical origin or was entirely part of her mystical life. She herself wrote that Our Lord had told her plainly that He "*wished her to live by Him alone.*" "Be an ever ready victim," said Our Lord to her at the time. "Accept your life with greater courage. You can still help the priest whom you will meet."

Towards the end of September, Berthe felt an irresistible impulse to return to Lourdes. Barely three months had elapsed since her last visit there, and as she was scarcely convalescent from her dangerous illness, it is not to be wondered at that her immediate circle opposed her project.

Encouraged only by her confessor, Berthe remained quite firm and set out on her journey accompanied by a friend. In Paris, where she spent a night on her way, she again received the same promises from Our Lord during Holy Communion.

The fulfillment was now closer than she dared to hope. As Berthe and her companion took their seats in the train for Lourdes, a priest entered their compartment. He was not a fellow traveller; he was only there to say goodbye to one of his parishioners. He exchanged a few courteous words with the two Belgian ladies and went away.

This seemingly commonplace incident was the turning point of Berthe's life, for she had unhesitatingly recognized "her priest." The face which the young unknown Abbé had turned towards her was the face of St. John the Evangelist as she had seen it during her Christmas vision, fifteen years before! In a radiant silence she gave thanks to God. . .

It is interesting to note that she made no effort to get

in touch with this priest, whose name she did not even know. Humanly speaking, it was improbable that they should ever meet again.

Berthe prolonged her stay in Lourdes, no doubt under Providential guidance, for a month later the same priest arrived there also, and, by an extraordinary coincidence, engaged a room in the apartment house where she was lodging. As he left the station on his arrival early in the morning, he met Berthe and her friend on their way to church. Recognizing them, he stopped to speak, suggesting that they should assist at the Mass which he was about to say in the chapel of the "Hospitalité du Rosaire." He would offer it for their intentions.

Berthe, moved beyond measure, took refuge in her characteristic luminous silence. When the Abbé Decorsant raised the Sacred Host, at the Consecration, the countenance of Our Lord became visible to her, and these words resounded in her soul: "This is the priest for whom I accepted your oblation."

The Abbé, who as yet knew nothing of his mystical dependence upon his new acquaintance, testified later "that he had never, until then been so profoundly aware of the presence of God as during that Mass."

Three days later, Berthe received an order from Our Lord to reveal her secret to her priest.

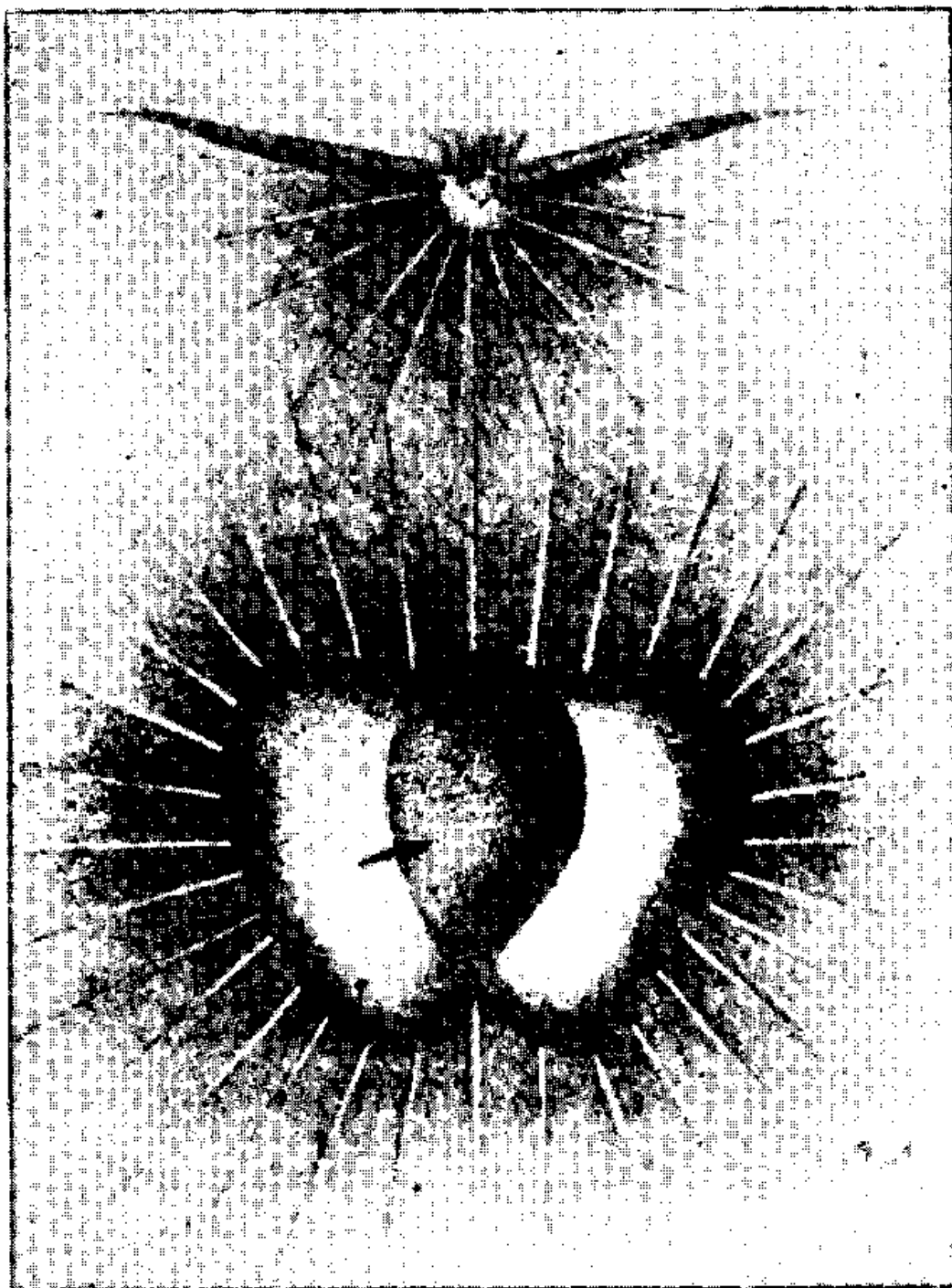
Abbé Decorsant appears to have accepted this communication with instant complete faith and confidence. He too was at a turningpoint in his existence. He had come to Lourdes to obtain Our Lady's guidance as to his future and the guidance had been granted to him with astonishing clarity and assurance. This quiet, unassuming lady whom he had met in circumstances so apparently accidental, was not only, he felt sure, a privileged soul, but she was also entrusted by God with a mission. And he was now called to aid her in that mission.

It was therefore without hesitation and with great peace and consolation of spirit that he accompanied Berthe and her friend back to Paris.

As Berthe assisted at his Mass in the Basilica of Montmartre, Our Lord said to her: "Be faithful to my grace, my work shall be accomplished."

In French the plural was marked in a manner impossible to render in translation: "Soyez fidèles." The injunction was addressed to both Berthe and "her priest."

Abbé Decorsant lost no time in obtaining the consent of his superiors to his domicile in Brussels, where he took up residence in a convent. His health was now quite restored and he devoted himself to preaching, and giving retreats. Under the guidance of Father Masselis, a Redemptorist who had been Berthe's counselor for some years since Father Jarlan's transfer to Paris, he became her spiritual director, and later, when she had obtained the privilege of a private oratory, he was her chaplain.



The Holy Spirit represented by a shining dove enlightens and inflames the whole world with love, through the Hearts of Jesus and Mary wounded with the same wound.

October, 1920, Our Lord exalted the merits of the Sorrows of his Mother in these terms: "The title of Immaculate belongs to the whole being of my Mother and not specially to her heart. This title flows from my gratuitous gift to the Virgin who was to give me birth. My Mother has acquired for her heart the title of sorrowful by sharing generously in all the sufferings of my Heart and my Body from the crib to the cross. There is not one of these Sorrows which did not pierce the heart of my Mother. Living image of my crucified Body, her virginal flesh bore the invisible marks of my wounds as her heart felt the sorrows of my own. Nothing could ever tarnish the incorruptibility of her Immaculate Heart.

"The title of 'sorrowful' belongs therefore to the heart of my Mother, and more than any other, this title is dear to her because it springs from the union of her heart with mine in the redemption of humanity. This title has been acquired by her through her full participation in my Calvary, and it precedes the gratuitous title 'immaculate' which my love bestowed upon her by a singular privilege."

Personal Consecration

Composed by Berthe Petit

Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, dwelling pure and holy, cover my soul with your maternal protection so that being ever faithful to the voice of Jesus, it responds to his love and obeys his Divine Will.

I wish, O, my Mother, to keep unceasingly before me your co-redemption in order to live intimately with your heart that is totally united to the Heart of your Divine Son.

Fasten me to this heart by your own virtues and sorrows. Protect me always.

“The calamities which I foretold are come to pass, therefore it is time and it is my wish that the nations should turn to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of my Mother.”

The Mission

Our Lord had given his servant to understand long before, that he wished her to prepare herself for a special mission to be assigned to her in due time. On August 4, 1909, it was made known to her that St. Catherine of Siena would be one of her special guides. Later on, St. Michael was given as second patron.

It is an interesting and significant fact that it was only after she had established close contact with her priest that the nature of her mission was made known to her.

She saw the Divine Heart of Jesus wounded, and close to it, touching it — Berthe uses the word “adhering” — the Heart of Mary, pierced with a sword. She heard these words: “Cause my Mother’s Heart — transfixed by the sorrows which rent mine — to be loved.”

She had the same vision and heard the same words on December 31 and January 30.

On February 7, 1910, Berthe saw the Hearts of Jesus and Mary "interpenetrating" one another. The Dove of the Holy Spirit was poised over them. This time Our Lord said to her: "You must think of my Mother's Heart when you think of mine; live in this heart as you would in mine; give yourself to this heart as you would to mine. You must foster love for this heart, so wholly one with mine."

At that time Berthe's visions were greatly multiplied. She received fresh revelations concerning the devotion almost daily, and each unfolded some further aspect of Our Lord's desire. On one occasion, she saw the two hearts emitting rays of light, while she heard these words: "I have told you the wish of my heart concerning my Mother's heart: love it and cause it to be loved. This love will be the source of graces for you and for the world and will draw down great blessings upon you. Yield yourself to my love. My Heart's wish will be confided to you."

A few days later, while she was on a pilgrimage to St. Anne, in Alsace, this promise was fulfilled by the complete revelation of her mission. It was to obtain the consecration of the whole world to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Berthe was at that time on her way to Rome, accompanied by her Mother and the Abbé Decorsant. She broke her journey at Siena, where she had more than one vision. While assisting at the Abbé's Mass in St. Catherine's room, she saw the Divine Face under the crown of thorns, in a great glory of light, at the moment of the Elevation. Our Lord said to her once more: "The world must be dedicated to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of my Mother, as it is dedicated to mine. Fear nothing, no matter what suffering or obstacles you may meet. Think only of fulfilling my will."

On Easter Sunday, at Rome, again at the Abbé's Mass, Berthe saw the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, fused with one another under the wings of the Dove. This time she

invocation, as I have inspired it, should be approved and diffused throughout the whole Church . . . It has already obtained grace. It will obtain more; until the hour comes when, by consecration to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of my Mother, the Church shall be uplifted and the world renewed."

In describing the revelations and commands which she received during her visions and ecstasies, Berthe states with simplicity: "Our Lord said to me. . . Our Lady said to me. . ."

Questioned as to the manner in which she perceived or heard these messages, she explained as follows: "The words are pronounced in tones so clear and firm that I am forced to listen. They are impressed on my consciousness. I would not hesitate to die in testimony of their truth."

St. Theresa of Avila describes in similar terms her own experiences: "It depends on us," she wrote, "whether we listen or not to human speech, but the Word of God imposes itself."

A new phase of Berthe's mystical life was now about to open. Up to 1912, her visions had concerned purely religious matters, but on July 12 of that year she had the first of many revelations concerning world events. Our Lord made known to her during Holy Communion that the heir to the Catholic Empire of Austria-Hungary would be assassinated. "A double murder. . . It will be the first of those events — full of sorrows — but from whence I shall yet bring forth good — which will precede the punishment. . ."

On the day following the tragedy of Serajevo, Our Lord announced to her: "At this moment commences the ascending curve of preliminary events, which will lead to the great manifestation of my justice."

Throughout the war of 1914-1918, Berthe, who spent all those years in Switzerland, was constantly warned beforehand of the calamities that fell upon the nations, but at the

invocation, as I have inspired it, should be approved and diffused throughout the whole Church . . . It has already obtained grace. It will obtain more; until the hour comes when, by consecration to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of my Mother, the Church shall be uplifted and the world renewed.”

In describing the revelations and commands which she received during her visions and ecstasies, Berthe states with simplicity: “Our Lord said to me. . . Our Lady said to me. . .”

Questioned as to the manner in which she perceived or heard these messages, she explained as follows: “The words are pronounced in tones so clear and firm that I am forced to listen. They are impressed on my consciousness. I would not hesitate to die in testimony of their truth.”

St. Theresa of Avila describes in similar terms her own experiences: “It depends on us,” she wrote, “whether we listen or not to human speech, but the Word of God imposes itself.”

A new phase of Berthe’s mystical life was now about to open. Up to 1912, her visions had concerned purely religious matters, but on July 12 of that year she had the first of many revelations concerning world events. Our Lord made known to her during Holy Communion that the heir to the Catholic Empire of Austria-Hungary would be assassinated. “A double murder. . . It will be the first of those events — full of sorrows — but from whence I shall yet bring forth good — which will precede the punishment. . .”

On the day following the tragedy of Serajevo, Our Lord announced to her: “At this moment commences the ascending curve of preliminary events, which will lead to the great manifestation of my justice.”

Throughout the war of 1914-1918, Berthe, who spent all those years in Switzerland, was constantly warned beforehand of the calamities that fell upon the nations, but at the

same time heavenly voices assured her that "the proud race and its hypocritical and ambitious ruler would be chastised on the very soil of their unjust conquests."

As has been already noted, Pius X had not considered the time ripe for a full recognition of Berthe's message. After his death, in the early days of the war, Cardinal Mercier transmitted to his successor, Benedict XV, a letter from Abbé Decorsant. After recalling the history of the devotion, he communicated to the Holy Father the latest revelations made to Berthe:

"The calamities which I foretold are come to pass," Our Lord said to her in September 1914, "therefore it is time and it is my wish that the nations should turn to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary. Let one and the same cry arise from every soul: Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us! Let this prayer, revealed by my love as a supreme recourse, be approved and indulgenced, not only partially and for a small part of my flock, but for the whole universe, so that it may spread like a breath of healing and purification that shall appease my wrath."

The response of Rome was neither immediate nor complete, but when Italy entered the war in May 1915, the Holy Father, in a letter to Cardinal Vanutelli addressed the following recommendation, through him, to all the bishops of the world:

"Let us raise our prayers, now more ardently and frequently than ever, towards Him who holds in his hands the fate of the nations, and let us all confidently implore the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, sweet Mother of Jesus and our Mother, that by her powerful intercession, she may obtain from her Divine Son the rapid cessation of the war and the return of peace and tranquility."

In September of the same year, the Pope granted an indulgence of 100 days for every recitation of the ejaculation.

In his Pastoral Letters of June and September 1915,

Cardinal Mercier recommended the devotion and in that of March 7, 1916, he announced that, during the Good Friday ceremonies he would, "in his inmost soul" dedicate his diocese and "as far as in him lay, his beloved country" to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The only one among the hierarchy to overpass half measures and fulfill the message in its integrity was, curiously enough, our own Cardinal Bourne. The revelations were brought to his notice on May 1, 1916, by Father Condamin S. J., Professor of Sacred Scripture in Hastings, England.

Cardinal Bourne responded immediately to the appeal. He not only enriched the ejaculation with an indulgence of 100 days, but in his Pastoral Letter, on June 18, 1916, he clearly prepared the way for the public consecration of England, which he afterwards brought to pass.

On September 3, he wrote in a Second Pastoral:

"It has ever been the practice of the children of the Catholic Church to beg in all their cares and anxieties, the help and intercession of she who was privileged to stand by her Divine Son, dying on the Cross, and we desire today to exhort you, dear Reverend Fathers and dear children in Jesus Christ, to place all your prayers and supplications under the protection of the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary. Jesus Christ, Our Lord might, had he so willed, have dissociated his Holy Mother from sorrows and awful sadness of his Passion and Death. Such was not his will. Having bestowed upon her, by his own free choice, in view of her Divine Motherhood that complete immunity from original sin, which we name her Immaculate Conception, he willed to ask her acceptance of the fullest share in his sufferings for our redemption, that it was possible for any creature to receive.

"That acceptance she gave freely, unhesitatingly, and in fullest measure for our sake; and thereby merited from her Divine Son a place and power of intercession that belong

to her alone. We should fail to honor duly her Divine Son, were we to forget and fail to honor, praise and use the power which he has willed to bestow upon her in return for the sorrows which united her heart so closely and so intimately with his in the supreme sacrifice of his life.

“Nowhere in Christendom should honor be paid more readily to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary than here in England. Of old, in the days of united faith, her purity and her sorrows were ever held in loving veneration. Throughout the realm, Our Blessed Lady, St. Mary, God’s Mother, were terms and titles dear to every English heart. England was, in very truth, Our Lady’s Dowry.

“It is, therefore, not with the idea of introducing any new devotion, but rather in order to give fresh meaning and greater force to thoughts long cherished by us all, and deep-rooted in the history of our race, that we desire to consecrate this renewed effort of prayer, which the special circumstances of the moment so urgently demand, to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary. The world is full of sorrow and suffering of every kind — the sorrow of mothers, of wives, of widows, of orphaned children; the sufferings of the wounded, of the dying, of the maimed; the weary round of hard, daily, tasteless toil. All these sufferings and sorrows are the price and conditions of victory, if they be rightly accepted and used. The Mother who stood by the Cross can understand and realize their value, and obtain from him who hung thereon, the light and grace that men need to turn them to account for God’s honor and their own salvation.

“For these reasons, we desire and enjoin that in all the churches and public chapels of our Diocese, either on Friday, September 15, the Feast of the Seven Dolours of Our Blessed Lady, or on the following Sunday, during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the ‘Stabat Mater’ be sung, to be followed by the recitation of three Hail Marys and of the

invocation (repeated after each Hail Mary) 'Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary pray for us; in order that, by this public homage, all our Diocese, and, in so far as in us lies, our whole Country and Empire, may be solemnly consecrated and dedicated to Our Blessed Lady under this special title.'

In 1917, in his Pastoral Letter of Quinquagesima Sunday, Cardinal Bourne, while exhorting the faithful of his diocese to earnest prayer accompanied by almsgiving to obtain the mercy of God in such critical times, added this further recommendation:

"We place again our intercession under the care and protection of the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, and with this object we ordain that the Act of Consecration which we send herewith, be recited in all the churches and chapels of our Diocese, immediately after the "O Salutaris," at the principal Benediction, on the first Sunday of Lent, and again recited at Benediction on Friday, March 30, the feast of the Seven Dolours of Our Blessed Lady. We commend to the clergy and faithful the daily recitation of this act of Consecration, to which we have attached an indulgence of 200 days.'

Cardinal Bourne had requested Father Condamin to ask Berthe, through the intermediary of her spiritual director, for the text of an act of consecration. "I have told Made-moiselle Petit," replied the Abbé Decorsant, "to obtain this during one of her thanksgivings, after Holy Communion." She wrote down (in French) the following prayer, which she affirmed was dictated to her by Our Lord himself:

"O Lord Jesus who, on Calvary and in the Holy Eucharist, hast shewn thyself to us as the God of love and mercy; kneeling humbly at thy feet we adore thee and beg once more for thy forgiveness and for thy divine pity in the third year of this unexampled war.

"And remembering that, by thine own act on Calvary,

the human race, represented by thy beloved disciple John, gained a Mother in the Virgin of Sorrows, we desire to honor the sufferings and woes of our Mother's heart by devoting ourselves to it in solemn consecration.

“It is but just, O Mary, that our souls should strive henceforth to venerate thee with special homage under the title of thy Sorrowful Heart — a title won by sharing in the whole passion of thy divine Son and thus cooperating in the work of our redemption — a title due to thee in justice, and dear, we believe, to Jesus and to thine own heart wounded by the wound in his.

“We consecrate, therefore, O Mary, to thy Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart ourselves, our families, our country, and those who are fighting for its honor. Have pity upon us; see our tribulations, and the anguish of our hearts in the midst of the mourning and calamities that lay waste the world. Deign, O Mother of God to obtain mercy for us that, being converted and purified by sorrow, and made strong in faith, we may henceforth be devoted servants of Jesus Christ and of his Church, for whose triumph we pray. O Mary Immaculate, we promise to be faithful clients of thy Sorrowful Heart. Intercede for us, we beseech thee, with thy Son that, at the cry of thy Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart, his divine power may speedily bring to pass the triumph of right and justice.

“Sacred Heart of Jesus, have pity on us.

“Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us and save us.”

Berthe continued to be favored by constant visions and communications. Sometimes she was entrusted with messages for Cardinal Bourne, whom Our Lord always named “My apostle Francis.”

“I desire that my apostle Francis should renew the solemn consecration of his country on that day when, as the fruit of my Mother's ‘fiat’ — at once joyful and sorrowful — I

appeared on earth, as Saviour of humanity?’

Once again, Cardinal Bourne obeyed, renewing the dedication at Christmas.

Berthe’s notes, at this time, give the reader a curious perspective of a war, fought as it were, on a spiritual plane — its fluctuations explained in terms of merit or expiation. Abbé Courtois, in his writings and sermons, is wont to insist on the following axiom, specially pertinent in the present crisis, which in its turn supports Berthe’s revelations of an earlier date. “The cataclysms of history,” he says, “are but the projection upon the surface of the globe of the state of conscience of mankind.”

It should be noted that each time these public devotions were performed in England, * the British armies swept forward to unexpected victory. Marshal Foch observes, in his “Mémoires” that, strangely enough, the English seemed scarcely aware how these successes could have come about.

When the tide of battle turned against the allies, in the dreadful spring of 1918, Our Lord said to Berthe:

“My apostle Francis must cast off the sorrow and anguish caused him by the trial affecting his country’s armies. It is a necessary trial, for after my protection had helped them to conquer, they attributed the glory to their own arms. It is a check which will show these soldiers that human means are powerless to dam the invading floods.’

On Good Friday, which was a tragic day for the Allies, Our Lord appeared to Berthe covered with his Precious Blood, saying to her: “If my voice had been listened to and my orders executed, I should, this day, have put an end to the effusion of blood shed by men for an illusory victory. Yet among many victims, I reap an abundant harvest of souls, and the trial, being prolonged, breaks down the senseless pride of many who ask no more of life than its pleasures, or who only think of persecuting the Church.’

Already on September 6, Jesus made the prophetic

revelation which was to be verified only too well by the events which followed the Armistice: *“The leaders of this nation (Germany) who clearly see the peril of invasion with which their country is threatened, are preparing by tactics which no one suspects, and in full agreement with him whom I have pointed out to you as a scheming, hypocritical enemy of my Church, a plan which will temporarily save their nation. In consequence, she will not immediately receive the punishment she deserves.”*

Nothing can be more evident than the fact that when Berthe Petit uttered these predictions, as coming from our Savior, neither she nor anyone else (except, of course, the high-ranking conspirators of the Masonic sect), was, humanly speaking, capable of foreseeing that these events would be speedily realized.

Again, a month later, Our Lord said: “Without my intervention, obtained by my apostle Francis, through recourse to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of my Mother, the victory would have belonged to those who strained every nerve during so many years, to prepare and organize a great war for the attainment of their own ambitious ends. Material force would have overborne justice.”

On October 28, she heard Our Lord say: “The world is hanging on the edge of utter cataclysm. My justice cannot preside over the machinations of those who work in their own interests to forward a peace totally unworthy of the name. Peace can become real through my intervention alone.”

On the day of the Armistice, she heard this final condemnation: “All this I have permitted, because my desire concerning my Mother’s Heart was not fulfilled.”

Then followed the request, that the Archbishop of Westminster should once more consecrate his country to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, in thanksgiving and according to the formula given anew to

Berthe. The ceremony of consecration was made with great solemnity on May 24, 1919. In a letter to Abbé Decorsant, Cardinal Bourne asked Our Lord to "bless his correspondent abundantly, and Mlle Petit whom God had chosen as instrument of his goodness."

Between the two wars, warnings and injunctions concerning the increasing urgency of recourse to the Heart of Mary were borne in upon Berthe:

"It will soon become apparent," the Divine Master said to her in 1919, "how unstable is a peace set up without Me, and without the intervention of him who speaks in my name (the pope). The nation which is thought to be conquered, but whose strength is only temporarily diminished, remains a threat to your nation and to France. Trouble and danger will spread to all countries. It is because this peace is none of mine and wars will blaze up again everywhere; intestine wars, racial wars. What should have been so great, so true, so beautiful, so durable, is delayed. . . . Humanity is rushing towards a dreadful storm, which will divide the nations more and more. All human plans will be annihilated; the pride of the *Lords of the moment* will be broken. It will be clearly shown that nothing can subsist without Me, and that I remain sole Master of the destiny of nations."

As for the physical existence of the mystic, suffering became more and more her daily bread. The hyperbole is none in her case, since for the last thirty-five years of her life she took no earthly nourishment. Her continual and burning thirst must in itself have been a prolonged martyrdom and she was unable to retain the small amount of liquid she absorbed from time to time. Cardinal Mercier, whose fatherly charity enveloped her during so many years, granted her an indulgence of 50 days every time she should pronounce the word "sitio," knowing well that on her lips this had more affinity with her thirst for souls than with her bodily suffering.



Now that the initiative taken by Cardinal Bourne had faded out, it appeared as if the universal adoption of the devotion was as far off as ever. In vain the Abbé Decorsant continued to transmit to Rome the further revelations of his spiritual daughter. The Vatican remained silent. Our Lord himself confirmed to Berthe in 1922 "that the time was not yet ripe."

"My apostle will arise at the predestined hour. . . when the appalling cataclysm which approaches will have upset all the present calculations of mankind and their deplorable policies. My will concerning my Mother's glory will not be fulfilled at present."

Our Lady comforted her: "Events have taken place, acts have been accomplished which will prove to be the unassailable foundations of the work which you serve. It will attain its end with the full amplitude which is God's will."

But never once did Berthe receive any assurance that the fulfillment would come in her lifetime. Indeed it was not to be.

* England loves to recall over the radio each year the extraordinary victory gained on September 15, 1940 (Feast of Our Lady of Dolours). On that day a small group of young pilots destroyed 185 enemy aircraft intended to be the spear-head of the invasion. From that time forward the daylight attacks of the Luftwaffe ceased.

The Latter Years

Berthe, her mother and the Abbé were in Switzerland, for health reasons when the First World War broke out and were naturally unable to return until after the Armistice. While in this enforced exile, Berthe was received into the Third Order of St. Francis; an enrollment which was but as the crowning of her perfect life, since her immolation was always so complete.

When the family went back to Belgium, it was to find their little home destroyed and sacked by the Germans. The two ladies, therefore, took up residence in a convent at Overyssche, near Brussels; Madame Petit died there in 1922, at the age of 86.

During the remainder of her life, Berthe had no really permanent dwelling place. She lived for a while with friends, then in 1927, she settled in a small villa in the grounds of the "Clinique des Duex Alice," at Uccle, a suburb of Brussels. Here her private oratory — this privilege had already been granted to her some years previously — opened into her room. She could thus pass even the hours of her sleepless nights in adoration. The ten years she spent in that house were, she said, the happiest of her life. It was with sorrow that she found herself obliged to give it up when the Clinic passed into the hands of the Sisters of Charity of Ghent, who needed the villa for their chaplain. Berthe then decided to share a flat with a friend, in the same suburb, and this remained her home till her death.

It was unfortunately impossible for her to have her oratory here, which was a terrible privation to her.

“Recourse to my mother under the title I wish for her universally, is the last help I shall give before the end of time.”

It is very remarkable that, in spite of her chronic ill-health, she managed for so long to lead what was, in many ways, a normal life. She still travelled a great deal, visiting Rome, Lourdes, and Switzerland, and nearer home, she paid restful yearly visits to the Chateau de Louvignies, where she felt herself in an atmosphere of understanding friendship. It is here, in the very shadow of the little village church, that she now lies buried, her grave a center of widespread veneration.

Her immediate circle was becoming increasingly restricted. Cardinal Mercier died in January 1926; Mgr. Piéraerts, Chaplain to the Belgian Court, and one of her principal directors, in May of the same year. “Her priest” was called to his reward in 1934. Mgr. Legraive, auxiliary Bishop of Malines, another of her spiritual guides, passed away in 1940. Happily, Cardinal Granito di Belmonte, at one time Nuncio in Brussels, continued to correspond with her from Rome, and encouraged her until the end.

To add to her sufferings, a serious accident in which she sustained a bad fracture of her right leg, constrained her to complete immobility in 1939. Her doctor considered it almost a miracle when, eventually, she commenced slowly and painfully to get about once more, especially as her injured limb was now two inches shorter than the other.

It was thus, in bodily weakness and morally racked by the revelations she constantly received concerning the catastrophes about to come upon mankind, that she entered into

the shadow of the second great war.

On January 22, 1940, the following words rang in her ears like a death-knell: "Belgium will be invaded."

The horrible reality was to be confirmed in April. "The rapidity of events will take people by surprise," she said. "It will be the ruin of our country."

Indeed, on Friday, May 10, the die was cast for Belgium. . .

Calm in the presence of the general turmoil, the servant of God always tried to hold back those who thought to find safety in flight, and to reiterate once more the remedy for the agony of the moment. Our Lord insisted thus on July 2: "It is hearts that must be changed. This will be accomplished only by the devotion proclaimed, explained, preached and recommended everywhere. Recourse to my Mother under the title I wish for her universally, *is the last help I shall give before the end of time.*"

In the midst of the turmoil, Berthe was anxious to restore calm and confidence to those around her and she obtained the following assurance from her Divine Master on November 4, 1941: "The invader is at my mercy for the punishment he deserves. Justice will be done in everything. The chastisement is rumbling, the leaders feel it coming near, they dread it and they realize that they can do nothing to avert it. It is then that my judgment and the power of my will shall be made known. My work will never fall short of achievement. Belgium will again be prosperous."

And on December 8: "The safety of your country, internal peace and confidence in my church will revive through the spread of the devotion and the consecration which I wish in order that the sorrowful and immaculate heart of my Mother, united in all to my heart, may be loved and glorified. Deliverance will thus be the work of our two hearts, the triumph of our love for the people upon whom this

consecration will bestow confidence according to my promises.”

And on one of the days following came another assurance: “By confident consecration to my Mother, the devotion to my heart will be strengthened and, as it were, completed. This devotion, this consecration will be, according to my promise, a renovation for my church, a renewed strength for Christianity which is too often wavering, a source of signal graces for souls, who thereby will be more deeply penetrated with love and confidence.

“The clear light to be granted, through recourse to my Mother, will bring about, above all, the conversion of a multitude of straying and sinful souls: the pity of the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of my Mother will implore mercy for them from my heart.”

She was not destined to see the return of peace. More and more an expiatory victim in the hands of God, she drifted further away from the world. After a spontaneous fracture of her left leg, even her heroic resistance failed her. But she was never bedridden, except for the last three or four days of her life.

In 1942, a year before her death, she manifested with unexpected strength the spiritual passion that was the mainspring of her life.

In the course of the year 1942, Berthe Petit felt her strength steadily declining. Our Lord gave her to understand that she would not have the consolation of seeing the official triumph of devotion of which she was the “apostle,” but that the hour had come to bring this devotion to the notice of the faithful by means of pamphlets and the wide distribution of copies of the picture of his Holy Mother venerated at the Convent of Ollignies.



Our Lady of Ollignies

Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary
Pray for us who have recourse to thee.

This picture, somewhat mysterious in its origin, was discovered at the time of the armistice of 1918 in the cellars of the boarding school conducted by the Bernardine Nuns where Berthe had been educated. On the departure of the troops one of the nuns was putting the place again in order. She found a piece of cardboard on which was pasted a pornographic picture which she tore off to consign it to the flames. To her great astonishment she saw that it was covering a very beautiful representation of the Blessed Virgin! The community put this in a place of honor and soon experienced that prayer before it brought signal favors.

Various indications prove that it is of French origin. When Berthe returned from Switzerland, where she had been during the War, and saw the picture in 1919, she recognized at once the two-fold symbol of the Virgin of the *Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart*.

The picture represents the Mother of God holding in her left hand a lily, symbol of her immaculate purity, the gratuitous gift of her Son, while the index of the right hand, resting on her breast, draws and fixes attention to her Sorrowful Heart, surrounded by flames and transpierced with a sword. The deep and far-seeing gaze of the Immaculate seems to contemplate with sadness the sins of the world — cause of the sufferings expressed on her gentle face which is leaning towards the right. The features resemble those of the *Pieta* (Sorrow Virgin) so well known in most churches.

On April 25, 1942, Our Lord, making allusion to the increasing tempo of the war, said: "A frightful torment is in preparation. It will be seen that the forces launched with such fury, will soon be let loose. It is, now or never, the moment for all of you to give yourselves to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of my Mother. By her acceptance of Calvary my Mother has participated in all my sufferings. Devotion to her heart united to mine will bring peace, that true peace, so often implored and yet so little merited."

In obedience to the commands of the Divine Master, Berthe and her friends lost no time in propagating the picture already referred to. It bore on the obverse side the invocation so dear to Cardinal Mercier and indulgenced by him and on the reverse side the form of Consecration used by Cardinal Bourne and which has, in addition, the imprimatur of the Bishopric of Tournai.

These pictures were, in a short time, widely spread and in demand everywhere in Belgium. When at the end of 1942, Marian solemnities were being widely celebrated to obtain peace, and parishes and religious communities were, in accordance with the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff, being consecrated to the *Immaculate Heart*, it was found that many of them had, in fact, been already consecrated to the *Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart*. The invocation so dear to Cardinal Mercier and to Cardinal Bourne was already well known.

From the time she was deprived of her oratory, Berthe was obliged to go on foot every morning to church, in order to receive what she called "her nourishment." Later, when she was too ill to continue this, a priest brought her Holy Communion daily. These moments were for her a brief respite in her suffering life.



Deeply humble, she was anxious above all to avoid notice. She begged our Divine Lord not to impose upon her a visible stigmata, and this prayer was granted. But her intimate circle knew that on Good Friday and many other Fridays throughout the year, she endured great pain in the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet, and also in her side. Her lips and her tongue became cracked and bleeding. The suffering in her head, similar to that caused by a crown of thorns, was with her continually, and she hardly ever slept.

She was frequently in touch with the souls in purgatory, especially with the souls of priests who still had to satisfy Divine Justice.

Like some of the saints, she "sensed" the effects of sin upon souls. For this reason it was repugnant to her to mix among a crowd. The devil often tormented her by physical manifestations, such as blows so heavy as to provoke a fall, diverse unearthly noises and exclamations of hatred.

At the very end of her long life of complete union with Our Saviour and his Holy Mother, Berthe, in common with many of God's chosen victims, knew all the darkness of spiritual desolation. She was, as it were, submerged in sorrow. Her plaint of spiritual and physical thirst came almost unceasingly from her pale lips: "Sitio."

The feast of Christmas did not bring her any consolation. Her sacrifice was being accepted in its entirety.

"When you surrendered yourself to Me as a victim," Jesus said to her, "you not only accepted to be united to my whole life and to my Calvary, but also to my sacred infancy hidden, poor, miserable, deprived of all, and offered as a holocaust."

On the day before she died, however, speaking of the world consecration, she said with a faint smile: "It will be accomplished." A few hours before her death, she cried with a loud voice: "I wish it to be known that I submit absolutely to all that God wills." Those who were tending her declare that it was difficult to believe that these clear

and ringing tones could be the utterance of one about to die.

But that same day, March 26, 1943, Berthe breathed her last, very peacefully, in her sleep. The majesty of her countenance as she lay for three days on her death bed, deeply impressed those who came in great numbers to look.

“It is as a son that I have conceived this devotion for my Mother. It is as God that I impose it.”

Epilogue

Although the cause to which Berthe Petit devoted her life has not yet received its entire fulfillment, the devotion to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary has spread surely, if slowly, since her death, as the following notes will show.

On June 21, 1947, Cardinal Griffin increased the indulgence granted by Cardinal Bourne to the ejaculation, from 100 to 300 days, and in 1951 Cardinal Van Roey increased the one by Cardinal Mercier from 100 to 200 days.

In the same year, Mgr. Richaud, Bishop of Laval (France) consecrated his diocese to Our Lady under that title, and the following year, the town of Laval was also specially consecrated.

In 1948, Mgr. Boone, Dean of the Collegiate Church of St. Gudule, in Brussels, made the dedication in the presence of the Papal Nuncio, Mgr. Cento.

From every quarter of the globe, America, Africa, Asia, the Philippine Islands, come letters to the Secretariat of the devotion (128, Rue de la Loi Brussels) announcing the

dedication of communities, parishes and families, and begging for pictures and biographies.

In Belgium and perhaps still more in France, the devotion is very widespread; the work of its diffusion is now centralized at Issoudun (Indre) at the House of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

Great interest has been awakened in Portugal by the relationship between the apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima on June 13, 1917, and the revelations made to Berthe Petit. According to the account of one of the visionaries, Lucia, the Blessed Virgin had appeared on that day showing her heart "surrounded by thorns on every side" . . . "the points of these thorns penetrated into the *channels of her heart*. . . She was all enveloped in light but the expression of her countenance was sorrowful."

Statues of Our Lady of Fatima, as the Sorrowful Virgin, have been executed by the great Portuguese artist, José Ferriera Thedim. One of these is exposed to the veneration of the faithful in the Carmelite Chapel at Coimbra, where Lucia has taken the veil.

A Portuguese translation of the life of Berthe Petit has been brought out by Father Manuel Cordoso de Carvalho, Secretary of the Archbishop of Coimbra.

At Fatima, Our Blessed Lady asked that her Immaculate Heart, that free gift of God's grace, should be specially honored. But it would not have been in accordance with her perfect humility had she exalted her own merits in proclaiming the glory of her Sorrowful Heart.

It is therefore incumbent on the faithful, as it were to complete the message of Fatima, by obtaining, through ardent prayer; the consecration of the world to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of the Mother of Our Saviour.

Was not the protection of Our Lady of Sorrows manifested in the second great war, when a totally unexpected aerial

victory saved the country from imminent invasion, on September 15, 1940, Feast of the Seven Dolours?

“In the hour of triumph,” Our Lord said to Berthe one day, “it will be made clearly manifest that I myself have inspired in those whom I have freely chosen, a devotion similar to that given to my own heart. *It is as a Son that I have conceived this devotion for my Mother. It is as God that I impose it.*”

Will He not, as God, overthrow all obstacles to its fulfillment?

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