

Transcription of the letter document from Mother Gertrudis Barril

May Jesus always be with us

For the greater glory of God our Lord and of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, and in honor of the holy memory of our holy founder, the Most Excellent Señor Don Antonio María Claret, I will share what I remember of his illustrious excellence.

First of all, I say that in the years 1846 and 1847, and in the following years until the servant of God was appointed Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, the entire diocese of Urgel, my homeland, and the Valleys of Andorra were imbued with the fragrance of holiness that spread from what was said about his illustrious excellence. Although he did not personally go to preach in those areas, there was a student who followed him to the places where his illustrious excellence preached, distributing little booklets, medals, and other objects of devotion. This student, who later became a priest, was named Don Miquel Yter, and we hosted him in our home, providing food for him and his little donkey. He was enthusiastically devoted to Father Claret; at the table and in all our conversations, we revered his illustrious excellence as a saint and apostolic man, according to general opinion.

During his missions in the Principality of Catalonia, His Most Illustrious Excellency deigned to reveal to our blessed Founding Mother (who was then a novice at the Convent of Education in Tarragona), Sister Antonia París y Riera, that she was chosen to found our Holy Institute and that Father Claret would assist her in this work and in the foundation of the first houses, which was exactly fulfilled. Besides the foundation in Cuba,



he negotiated for our convents in Tremp and Reus; in Cuba, he purchased the house and garden, which cost him no less than thirteen or fifteen thousand duros, and in the other two, he helped as much as he could, which I believe was no less than six thousand. When his illustrious excellence preached in Tarragona before being appointed to Cuba, the director of our revered Founding Mother wanted her to share with his illustrious excellence what she had understood in prayer regarding the foundation and Father Claret. She was very hesitant to speak about it and only revealed it out of obedience; but without giving him the opportunity to explain in detail, as her director wished, she told him to be certain that it would be fulfilled, as he already knew she was there, and that he should pray a lot, for in due time the Lord would arrange what was necessary. Our Reverend Mother also told me several times that during the same period and mission of Father Claret, he preached at the aforementioned Convent of Education and stated in a sermon that he was certain a religious sister from that community had spoken repeatedly in the parlour with an evil spirit in the guise of a relative. The nuns were frightened and exclaimed, 'Jesus, Jesus!' Then Father Claret said, 'Do not doubt it; it is as I say'. Before long, the religious sister fled the convent with a cousin of hers, causing the kind of disturbance one can imagine. This religious sister was named Maria Josefa Castells, and I mention it because it was well-known to everyone, further affirming what is said about his illustrious excellence, that he knew and foresaw future events.

Another similar case occurred in Cuba when we were still all novices, as his Illustrious Excellence had not yet received the rescript from Rome to profess us. One day, his Illustrious Excellence came to preach to us, bidding farewell to go on the holy pastoral visit, and in the sermon, he said, 'Be careful, for while I am away, the devil may deceive



some of you; remember that the Prelate has already warned you'. A few days later, one of the novices wanted to leave, ignoring the reflections made to her and disregarding the prediction of our most Excellent Prelate.

When I went to Cuba with eight other companions to wear the Holy Habit, ten young candidates for ordination who were going to join the mission of His Excellency Claret also went with us, all of us felt great encouragement and consolation in going to live under the orders and guidance of such a Holy Prelate.

Upon arriving in Cuba, His Most Illustrious Excellency visited us, and the joy we felt was indescribable as we had the opportunity to know and kiss the sacred ring of the Servant of God, and to hear from his holy lips the documents of perfection he gave us in that first exhortation. One of the things he told us was the utmost care we should take in keeping our place, like soldiers who would rather lose their lives than abandon the post entrusted to them; his holy words greatly encouraged us.

His Most Illustrious Excellency was very pleased to found our Holy Institute in that city, where there had been neither nuns nor religious education. He obtained the Royal Order through the Captain General without difficulty, and even more easily secured the rescript from His Holiness Pope Pius IX, who approved everything His Most Illustrious Excellency had arranged in our novitiate, granting the faculties to profess us according to his discretion and conscience. The sermons he preached during the ceremonies of canonically granting us the Holy Habit (for prior to receiving the rescript, it was only with the permission of His Most Illustrious Excellency) and our profession were so fervent that a



Canon who attended the function among the crowd exclaimed, 'If the Archbishop had said those things to me, I would die; I would die and go to Heaven'.

One day during the feast of the Presentation of the Most Holy Virgin, while His Most Illustrious Excellency celebrated the Mass for the internal and external students, his words, ignited by Divine Love, sought to awaken the faith of the audience in the real presence of the Lord in the sacred host and exclaiming like St. Peter, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God', he raised his arms and remained for a few minutes as if entranced, barely touching the platform with the tips of his toes. All those present noticed it greatly.

Another day, during the Christmas festivities, he came to preach a fervent sermon, as were all the sermons delivered by His Most Illustrious Excellency. At the conclusion, we approached the grate to kiss the sacred ring, as was the custom, but he said to our Reverend Founding Mother, 'No, no. Today we must adore and kiss the Christ Child; the Most Holy Virgin will lend him to us later'. Upon hearing this, our Reverend Mother went to the cave of the Most Holy Nativity, which was adjacent to the grate, and taking the Holy Child from the arms of his divine Mother, she handed him to His Most Illustrious Excellency that allowing himself to be carried away by his fervent affection, he kissed and caressed the Child for a long time before giving him to the Community to kiss.

One day, after speaking to us about the Most Holy Virgin and the Immaculate Conception and Divine Motherhood, he said: 'Say this: O Mary, by your Immaculate Conception and Divine Motherhood, cleanse my heart and save my soul'. He had us repeat it several times



until we memorized it, but our Reverend Mother asked him to be so kind as to write it on a small piece of paper, which His Most Illustrious Excellency did very graciously. She kept it in her breviary all her life, and now I keep it in the same place as a relic of our Venerable and beloved Father.

One Holy Saturday afternoon, he came to preach to us and began exclaiming, 'Blessed be God. Praised be God; this means Hallelujah'. He pronounced these words with extraordinary fervor, as if he were beside himself.

Another day, he came to visit us inside the convent, and while we were sitting in a room listening to his holy words, His Most Illustrious Excellency noticed that it was drizzling and immediately stood up, saying to his companions, 'Come on, come on, lest there be a Scholastica here' and we all laughed at his remark, and His Most Illustrious Excellency added, 'I don't want it, I don't want it', and after allowing us to kiss his ring, he hurriedly left.

His Most Illustrious Excellency was very fond of holy poverty; he had only one cloak, and when it needed mending, he would send it to the convent, instructing them to fix it without delay; one afternoon, his companions thought he wouldn't go out in the cloak, so they brought it to change the sleeves. However, as it was a rather serious patch, it couldn't be done as quickly as His Most Illustrious Excellency desired and having decided to go out, he called for it, saying to the page, 'Eight hands (assuming four were working on it), and they haven't finished the cloak?'



Another day, he also visited the convent, and as always arriving unexpectedly, he noticed that one of the sisters was missing and asked, 'Where is the other one?' Our Reverend Mother replied, 'Most Excellent Sir, she is in retreat mending her Holy Habit'. He then asked, 'Does she not have another one?' 'No, Most Excellent Sir,' she replied. He said, 'I like this, I like this'.

He wanted the sisters to be very industrious and provided us with a great deal of work. In our house, all the clothing for His Most Illustrious Excellency, all his relatives, and nearly all the priests was made; he arranged for all the clothing and sacred vestments from the parishes in the capital to be brought to us, and everything was done at home; sometimes the steward would come with a servant loaded with pieces of fabric for albs and other white garments supplied by all the parishes, and every week they would be changed, washed, and ironed, so that it was a pleasure to see the cleanliness in the churches, which had been so neglected before his illustrious excellence and the sisters arrived. With so much work, we earned a lot and were not a burden to His Most Illustrious Excellency. Sometimes our Reverend Mother would say to him, 'Most Excellent Sir, don't you see how much money we have? We are not poor'. The Most Excellent replied, 'Better, better; look, I have just received three or four letters from different superiors in Spain asking for alms'. Our Reverend Mother responded, 'How can that be?' 'It's because they do not work', he replied.

He wanted us to pray a lot for poor sinners, slaves, and others. One day, he came to the convent, and our Reverend Mother said to him, 'Most Excellent Sir, it greatly saddens us to hear a poor slave being beaten, crying and screaming in the neighboring house'.



He replied, 'It is better that they hear it; that way, they will pray with more fervor for them and give more thanks to God for having called them to the cloister'.

When he was wounded in Holguín, the sorrow we all felt was widespread. Immediately upon receiving such sad news, they exposed the Blessed Sacrament and prayers were made in all the churches until he was out of danger. Upon his return, His Excellency came to see us and preached a fervent sermon and as we approached the gate to kiss his sacred ring, he showed us his scars, saying: 'Look, look at what they have done to me'. He was very happy to have shed part of his precious blood for our Lord. They brought his hat to change the lining, which was stained with blood, and of course, we kept it as a precious relic.

When His Excellency came to Spain, appointed as confessor to Queen Isabel, he agreed with our Reverend Mother that a foundation should be established as soon as possible in the Peninsula. Once in Madrid, he obtained the Royal Order from His Majesty and the brief from the Nuncio to carry out this foundation in Tremp. He arranged everything so that he could be in Barcelona upon our arrival, timing it so perfectly that as the steamer carrying His Excellency entered the port of Barcelona, it passed right by our ship. We were supposed to undergo quarantine due to a missing crew member; however, upon learning that His Excellency was there, we wrote him a note explaining our predicament. His Excellency negotiated with the captain general of the Navy to absolve the captain, and quarantine was not necessary. His Excellency sent his chaplain and page to the dock to accompany us to the palace of the Bishop of Barcelona, who was then the Most Excellent Señor Palau. Both prelates insisted that the poor nuns dine at their table. What dignity!



During the meal, we observed everything our Most Excellent Father did, which we already knew from others. He ate little and chose the least delicate dishes. As plates were passed around while he talked, His Excellency encouraged our Reverend Mother, who faithfully imitated him, to eat. Several gentlemen canons and priests were present at the table, including the Reverend Father Xifré. His Excellency said to our Reverend Mother, 'Look, that priest is the superior of the Congregation'. He then added with much grace, 'Once I went to preach in Mataró, where I believe Reverend Señor Xifré is from, and it was Good Friday. They held a devout procession, but I did not think it appropriate that they carried a large cake in it!'

He also told us that one day he sat at the confessional before dawn, as was his custom, and there were many women, some of whom were saving spots for the ladies who would come later. His Excellency said, 'and there was a woman who had a boy, and she put a shawl on him and he sat next to her to save a spot; when day broke, the women started to stir, and I said, 'What is this? Is there a boy here?' With these cheerful conversations, His Excellency concealed his unusual abstinence. In the afternoon, both prelates accompanied us to the convent of the Augustinian nuns, where we were to stay until His Excellency returned to Madrid, and we continued our journey to Tremp. Several times, His Excellency came to confer with our Reverend Mother about the matters of our Holy Institute and other things because he loved her dearly in the Lord and had great trust in her. Noticing this, the Augustinian nuns (commonly known as the Magdalenes) begged him to ask if he would deign to bless and impose simple gold rings on them, like the ones we wore, to replace the ones they were given when professing, which resembled those worn by ladies in the world and which they could not use. They were devoted to seeing ours, and



His Excellency granted them indulgences by kissing them. His Excellency came very well prepared to introduce the custom of using simple and devout rings. One day, he came at three in the morning due to his constant lack of time, and despite it being such an inconvenient hour, the church and streets were filled with people attending his Mass and receiving Holy Communion from his sacred hand.

Since that date (June 1859), we no longer had the comfort of seeing His Excellency or hearing his holy words, but correspondence continued through letters he wrote to our Reverend Mother, which she preserved as precious relics. I still keep them, and we will always treasure them. These letters number sixty, with the first six written from various points in Cuba during the years 1852 and following, until he was called to Madrid and appointed confessor to the Queen. The others are from Madrid, Aranjuez, San Ildefonso, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Ávila, and other places he visited with the Kings, and finally from Rome and Fontfroide shortly before his precious and holy death. I will copy some excerpts from these letters that confirm certain events from his Holy life.

On February 23, 1860, he wrote from Madrid: 'I will see how I write the little book for the exercises for the children. You will know that I have just given exercises to the gentlemen and another set of ten days to the ladies of this Court. Now I have preached for three days during Carnival and the first of Lent. I beg you to commend me and have me commended to God. I need it: I have gone through great tribulations, which have calmed down somewhat but not completely. Besides moral and political pains, I have also suffered from physical illnesses. Blessed be God who offers us the Chalice of the Passion of Jesus Christ'.



On April 13 of the same year, he wrote from Madrid: 'Thanks be to God, I am now enjoying good health and I am currently busy making a novena to the Blessed Sacrament with an inexplicable attendance here in this Court. During Lent, I have preached a lot here and I also went to El Escorial, where I preached extensively, and I held a mission in the town of Valdemorillo, where everyone confessed, and I also confirmed more than a thousand people from that town. When I see the need for divine doctrine and the hunger the people have for life, I am eager to go out and run around the world preaching the divine Word.

Every day the Queen loves me more, and this troubles me because I see it as a bond that holds me back; but I trust in the Lord that when He wills, He will arrange everything according to His liking and pleasure'.

On August 31, 1860, he wrote from the Royal Site of San Ildefonso: 'I am very glad that you liked the book titled "El Colegial." I see that the world is lost, and I don't know of another way to address this than through the formation of a good clergy, which, with their example and preaching, will guide the sheep of the Heavenly Father. I have no doubt that this can be achieved if what I am teaching at the Colegial is put into practice. The second means is the formation of youth of both sexes, and for this, I will write the little book you requested, but I cannot compose it until the return of Their Majesties. During the journey, I have to preach many sermons every day; there have been days when I have preached eight times, for example, to the clergy, to the people, to nuns, and to prisoners'.

On August 27, 1861, he wrote from La Granja: 'I am glad that you received the second



volume of El Colegial, and as you have time, please read it. At the same time, I published a booklet of ecclesiastical music, and you haven't mentioned receiving it; perhaps Father Currius did not send it.

Let's move on to another matter: three great calamities are currently threatening Spain: communism, protestantism, and the republic. Our Lord has made it very clear to me that we need to pray and promote devotion to the Trisagion and the Holy Rosary. Please do this, along with the other nuns, and inform Bishop Caixal. If you like, send him this very letter'.

On January 30, 1862, he wrote from Madrid, speaking of Holy Poverty: 'God wants a public testimony to be given in favor of poverty, since unfortunately today, more trust is placed in money than in God. I can only say that Holy Poverty, which is the virtue so loved by Jesus and Mary, should reign in everything and above all'.

It is very beneficial to pray and work. I am extremely eager to go out, running everywhere like a madman, but the Lord has clearly told me to wait'.

On July 1, 1866, he recounts the uprising in Madrid and then says: 'On this day, after finishing my time of meditation, I celebrated Holy Mass, and while giving thanks, the first shots were heard. As the revolutionaries ordered the church and the street doors to be opened, I withdrew to the altar of the Virgin at the main altar and stayed there praying until five in the afternoon when everything calmed down'.



On April 9, 1867, he wrote: 'I long to go to heaven to see Jesus beloved and praised by all the Heavenly Court. It will be the greatest satisfaction I hope to have, more than the glory that the Mercy of God could give me. I desire to go to heaven not for myself but to see God, Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, and the glorified Angels and Saints. For now, the Lord is guiding me along the path of sorrows and disappointments; they are quite strong, but the help with which the Lord supports me is also strong. Blessed be He!

I also know that you are going through your little trials, which I am very glad about; the best adornment of a spouse of Jesus is the sorrows and labors. Truly, Jesus is the Man of Sorrows, and the Blessed Virgin is the Queen of Martyrs; the more resemblance there is, the greater the friendship'.

In another letter from Madrid, he writes: 'From December 21 of last year until the 7th of this month, I have been at El Escorial, away from this Babylon of Madrid. Here in this Court, the people weigh heavily on me; all I can do is offer it to the Child Jesus. Oh, how much I desire to leave the palace! I desire it!!! Like the Kings of the East who left Jerusalem to go to Bethlehem to adore Jesus, I want to embark on the path of the Missions. This is what the Lord has created me for, not for court life; for me, the Royal Palace is my exile, my torment. May the Lord let me know what I should do'.

On January 2, 1869, he wrote from Paris: 'I am very pleased with the situation in Spain. Regarding the three degrees of darkness you inquire about, I will tell you that they are the three concupiscences that St. John speaks of: love of riches, pleasures, and honors... into which the Spaniards have fallen and continue to live, and God has punished them with



those three degrees of darkness that you saw. Just as Jesus Christ, for our sins, surrendered Himself into the hands of sinners and said: 'This is your hour and the hour of the power of darkness,' so also now, because of the many sins that have been committed, the Lord has allowed those powers and rare darkness. I have long foreseen this and have been saying so'.

On July 21, 1869, he wrote to me from Rome after responding to what His Reverence had written: 'Now let's talk about my affairs; what I had predicted for so long and so many times about what is happening in Spain has come to pass. I offered myself as a victim, and the Lord graciously accepted my offering, for all kinds of calumnies, infamies, and persecutions have come upon me. I had nothing else but the testimony of my good conscience, and thus I have remained calm and silent, thinking only of Jesus.'

Upon leaving Spain at the end of September, we went to France, and at the beginning of April of this year, I traveled alone with my chaplain to Rome. Upon arriving, I took steps to see the Pope, who received me with the most convincing expressions of love and affection. He said to me, 'My dear!' citing examples from the Holy Scriptures and the most compelling reasons to console me. He always spoke while I remained silent. When he gave me the opportunity to speak, I said, 'Holy Father, the disciple should not be more respected than his Master, nor the servant than his Lord'. Upon hearing these words and seeing my tranquility, the Pope expressed the joy he felt in his heart and began to speak to me about other matters.

My occupations have been and currently are in the Sacred Ministry. In Paris, the capital of



France and Babylon of the world. I preached throughout Lent, delivering one sermon each week focused on the observance of God's Law. I heard many confessions, administered Communion, and confirmed individuals with the approval of the Archbishop of Paris.

Under the pretext of attending the Pope's 50th anniversary, I went to Rome. After fulfilling my duties to the Church, the Queen, and others at court, I requested permission to go to Rome to rest from my labors in France. I told her at parting that if she ceased to be queen, she could no longer command me, nor would I be obliged to obey.

Since I have been here, I have preached to a community every Sunday, and I have heard confessions and given Communion every day. This time the weather doesn't test me: I have been here three times: during my first visit, I fell ill; during the second, I did not feel well in the three weeks I stayed; and during the third, which has lasted four months, I have suffered a lot. However, now that it is quite warm, I feel better.

Right now, I am very busy with the preparations for the Council. Since I have been to and seen so many places, I am being asked about various points, and this keeps me very occupied. I expect great blessings from this Council.

I can tell you that the designs the Lord had for me have already been fulfilled. Blessed be God... I hope that what I have done has been pleasing to Him'.

Recently, he wrote from Fontfroide on August 29, 1870, saying: 'Very esteemed Mother in Christ, I have received your valued letter from the 23rd of this month, and having



understood everything you mentioned. I respond: Generally, the climate in Rome has not suited me well, and this year there have been special circumstances, including extraordinary heat: having to walk the streets of Rome from seven-thirty in the morning until two in the afternoon, and many days on foot because there were no rental cars available, almost every day. Finally, the very serious matter of the Council regarding the Infallibility of the Supreme Pontiff has all contributed to my distress. Thus, on May 23, I suffered a cerebral condition. I endured and suffered a lot; my friends were alarmed, and I am still receiving the remedies prescribed by the doctors.

Once the Superior of the Congregation learned of this, he came to find me and took me to Radesa so that I could recover with the change of climate and other circumstances, as I was quite unwell with a headache that would not leave me, day or night, to the point that it prevented me from sleeping or resting.

Fifteen days after I arrived in Prades, I received notice that the French government mandated that all recently arrived Spaniards had to be interned. Thus, I had to move to this country, which is part of the Diocese of Carcassonne, called Fontfroide, meaning 'Cold Spring'. It is a monastery of very good Trappist monks, and they treat me very well. Since I have been in this monastery, I feel much better, thanks be to God.

This is essentially what has happened: You already know that the bishops of Lérida, Huesca, Barcelona, and Tarragona have died.

The bishops of Spain have been persecuted by the locals; but God has protected us in



another way, as everyone has praised the Spanish episcopate for its conduct, morality, doctrine, and unity ...God be blessed and praised.

I send greetings to Penitenciario and others you already know from your affectionate servant Antonio Maria, Archbishop of Trajanopolis. P.S. If Mr. Currius or anyone else wishes to write to me, they should direct the letter to D. Lorenzo Puig in Prades, as it will reach me there, since I am hidden in this monastery due to the circumstances I mentioned, thanks to the Bishop of Perpignan who has guided and concealed me in this monastery.

For the past two years, the Lord has been testing me in various ways. Blessed be God'.

I do not stop to copy more letters because it would be too lengthy, but they are indeed very precious and contain documents of great importance, as he always worked for our sanctification with sermons, talks, and holy conversations while we could see him, and then through his writings. When founding a convent, he would write to our Reverend Mother asking her to request various books from the religious bookstore that he wanted to be read in the refectory, and he would pay for them.

I have always held him in high regard for his great holiness, and I can say the same for all the religious of our Institute, especially those of us who had the joy of receiving from his holy hands the sacred ring and veil of the Brides of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I have immense trust in his powerful intercession, and I invoke him frequently, asking him to obtain graces from the Lord for me.



I had forgotten to mention that we greatly noted his healthy modesty in his gaze, as I believe he never looked at any woman.

I also know from a reliable source that when the Kings bestowed the cross of Isabel la Católica upon him, upon arriving home he said to his page: 'Look, look what they have given me', expressing how little he valued the honors of the world.

May God our Lord soon place him in the catalog of saints of the Holy Mother Church. Amen.

I have written all this simply as I remember it, and I sign it in this convent in the city of Reus, on the 29th day of May, 1889.

M. Gertrudis de San Felipe, Superiora

