

## LOURDES, THE SOUBIROUS AND THE BROTHERS (final)

The numbers 397 and 399 of the Chronicle published the first two extracts of the article of Brother Arnaud Aguegaray on Lourdes, the Soubirous and the Brothers. The final extract appears at the time that the Sanctuaries feast the 150th anniversary of the apparitions, reminding us that the Brothers of Ploermel have good reasons to mark their attachment to the Maryan City.



*The sanctuary of Lourdes at the start of the twentieth century*

### **AFTER THE ARMY:**

These words, written at the end of the month of November 1876, were addressed to Jean-Marie who recently completed his military service. He decided to no longer join the FIC Institute. Start of quarrels that will change for a time the family harmony.

*My Dear Brother,*

*I read with sorrow in your last letter the discontent that you feel on the part of my brother-in-law and sister. I fear that you make too much of this, it is not in a moment of annoyance that we must talk or write. We must first "calm ourselves", "reflect" and "then act". Mary did not talk to me of absolutely anything, neither of the rock nor of the mill. You can arrange nothing until Pierre is of age. I advise you to keep quiet; I shall talk to no one of what you say in your letters.*

*you affectionately.*

*Sister Mary Bernard Soubirous*

### **AN OVERSIGHT:**

Jean-Marie married Madeleine Escalé on 8th February 1877, but did inform Bernadette only afterwards. An answer did not delay.

*I must say that I was surprised when reading your letter to learn that you were married. I was also rather sad. Not that I was angry that you had married, no, but it appears to me that it would have been fitting to hear of this two or three days before you marriage. It would have been a joy for me to unite my prayers, although quite feeble, to yours on that day.*

*I have not received a letter from home since August. Pierre wrote to me to announce the death of my dear little niece. Apparently Marie is very sad since the death of this dear child. This is life, sorrow and sacrifices, which make us see that happiness is not of this world.*

*I recommend especially that you do not neglect your religious duties. Do not forget that «wanting is power». I look forward to receiving news of you, send me some as quickly as possible. Adieu dear friend, your most devoted sister who embraces*

*I will tell you, close to your ear, that I found your letter rather cold. However, you tell me the name of your wife, it seems to me that it would not have cost much to let me know if she is of Lourdes and especially if she is of a Christian family. I hope, dear friend, that you will be a little more amiable the next time you write to me.*

### **TAKING CARE OF PIERRE:**

Between March and June 1877, a fragment of a letter emerged: without date, without letterhead, without complete text. It happened that a gift to someone of part of a letter from Bernadette, with its signature, was made. While reading it there appeared a new stress: Pierre completed his studies but remained jobless. There is reason to believe, with Father Andre Ravier, that the addressee of these short lines was non-other than Jean-Marie.

*Pierre cannot remain like that. It is time that he thinks of his future. You all wish to do things in your own way. You tell me things when they have happened, when you have decided everything. Why don't you tell me sooner?*

*I pray that you will say a thousand amiable things from my part to Madeleine, and offer her my most affectionate sentiments. Adieu, I embrace you all affectionately and recommend myself to your prayers.*

### **INDIGNATION:**

On 17 July 1877, Bernadette wrote, to Jean-Marie's address, this page expressing her indignation.

*My Dear Brother,*

*It seems that it is you and your wife that were the cause of Pierre's leaving the house. Tell me the good that it does for strangers having to care for our brother. Poor Jean-Marie, pay attention, reflect...*

*I am ashamed of you: what must the people of the city think seeing you disunited as you are, you who should give good example?*

*At present you have, the one as well as the other, a big head. You cause me a lot of sorrow in seeing the little union that exists between you, while you could be living happily and content by working and putting in a personal effort.*

### **A RAPID RESPONSE:**

This time the frank response of the brother was rapid since it was dated 23 July 1877.

*My Dear Sister,*

*I do not know to what I can attribute your so sensitive questions concerning me that worried you so much. Be assured that this caused me much sorrow. According to what you say in your letter that I and my wife caused the departure of our brother and also caused all the discussions that you reproach me so severely. I am amazed that you talk to me of all this without knowing all the motives. You make me see that you have more confidence in what others say than what your brothers say.*

*As to Pierre, if he left the house and myself, it was not our fault, when we give notice we must depart. For Pierre you tell me that he is watched over by strangers, but you know well that he is at the Grotto with Father Sempé and that he is better off than at the house.*

*In my next letter I shall give you more details concerning all of this and I pray, my dear sister, that you will not listen to all that can be said to you, for money makes one say many things that are not true. I have nothing more to say at this time. We are both well and Pierre is also well. We hope that this letter also finds you well.*

*Your brother for life. Jean-Marie Soubirous*

### **SOOTHING:**

Just so, Father Sempé, Superior of the chaplains of Lourdes, addressed, on 24 July 1877, a calming letter to Bernadette. He certifies that her two brothers are working at the Grotto to everybody's satisfaction and that it would be fitting to encourage and console young Pierre who «cried a lot upon reception of the last letter» from Nevers.

On 5th September 1877, Jean-Marie wrote the following accompanied by a small gift.

*My dear Sister,*

*I admit that your last letter caused me a lot of sorrow: you judge me badly but you may request news concerning me from whoever you wish in Lourdes. Also dear sister I await one of your letters as soon as possible. You would please me very much. I say nothing further for the moment. (..)*

*Adieu, my dear sister; I await your prompt letter with impatience. I leave you and embrace you with affection. I am your brother for life.*

*Jean-Marie Soubirous*

### **WE SHALL MEET AGAIN:**

The family followed the Calvary of Bernadette. And the «Community Journal» of Nevers relates the visit of Jean-Marie to his sister on 18 December 1878.

They had not seen each other since 1866! «*Oh! Jean-Marie*» exclaimed the visionary. Bernadette was brought down in her armchair to the parlor of the Mother General. «The meeting engendered a deep emotion in both persons.» Jean-Marie was satisfied with his visit but remained somewhat sad to leave his bedridden sister. They were never to see each other again.

Nothing more came forth from the reunion. Emile Zola who followed the events interrogated Jean-Marie in his shop of the Merlasse, near the Grotto. «*He found her much changed, wrote the celebrated writer, sick, talking little but affectionately of the family, interested in her relatives with a tender tranquility. She did not complain and gave him good counsel.*»



*The shrine of Bernadette at Nevers*

### THE FOLLOWING DAYS:

Father Moniquet in his, *Divine History of N.D. de Lourdes* - (1912), gives precise details on Jean-Marie whom he had met in 1909. «*Of medium height, rather small, a round head, a full face. A stocky hand on which shined a ring. Slow in speech and movement, calmness at its maximum. An affability without affectation.*»

In 1911 he lived in the «paternal house» named «Moulin Lacadé» and sold souvenirs in the Merlasse area. But on order from Bernadette he would not open on Sundays. And at the foot of the castle he built a little chalet that he rented during the season.

### THE DEPARTURE:

Jean-Marie Soubroux rendered his soul to God at the (Moulin Lacadé) of a cruel illness Christianly endured. He married twice. From the first marriage seven children were born. The eldest became a priest at Bétharram and died as a missionary at Buenos Aires. Widowed in 1890, he remarried and had a last child.

The Telegram evoked the figure of the departed. «*Good, helpful, simple, living a quiet life, recluse, happy only with his own. Nothing annoyed his modesty more than the respectful thoughtfulness of the pilgrims. He never wanted to be a somebody in his noble city and yet the solicitations were not lacking.*» The Notre Dame Annals added, «*His funeral, simple and imposing, showed the high esteem of his co-citizens, all the City of Lourdes were there.*»

He rests in Lourdes at the cemetery of l'Egalité in the family vault whose names are registered in history.

**Bibliography:** - Father André Ravier: *The writings of Saint Bernadette and her spiritual way*, Paris, LeThielleux, 1986 (the essential in one volume). See also the many writings of Father René Laurentin.

*Br Arnaud Agueraray*



*The paternal house of Bernadette*