

The Letter to Anne de Guigné's Friends

2015**Centenary of the death of Capitaine de Guigné
and of the conversion of his daughter Anne
Examples of courage which involve us.**

July 22nd 1915: Capitaine Jacques de Guigné died as a hero during the assault of the Crête du Linge in Alsace. How can we not remember at the time of this centenary, the courageous figure of this young father of 31, who had been obliged to leave his family in 1914, to fight for France? He who, after several successive wounds, went back to the front, his convalescence hardly finished.

Although, before his marriage, he always put his family before his military career, he left the army to help his father at the death of his mother, but once the war had started, he felt he had to defend his country; it was his duty.

The evening before the terrible battle, as an exemplary christian, he went to confession, sensing perhaps his probable death. He managed to scribble on a military card these simple words: "*I bless Anne, Jacques, Magdeleine and Marie-Antoinette*". This was the final paternal blessing which was soon to coincide with the sacrifice of his life. We know what the consequences of the offering of the life of Jacques de Guigné, recently promoted to the rank of captain, were for his eldest daughter.

But Anne's mother was not oblivious to the dazzling transformation of her child, which constituted a true conversion, a radical change which was to last.

July 29th 1915: the news of the death came to the parish priest of Annecy-le-Vieux, who then had to summon up all his courage to break the news to the family. At 9 o'clock p.m., Mme de Guigné knew that she would never see her dear husband again. Overwhelmed by grief, but still courageous, Anne's mother went to mass the next day in order to gain from Our Lord's sacrifice the courage and strength to go on living the life that God wanted for her until the end of her days.

At the age of 28, Mme de Guigné became a widow, with four very young

children. Anne suffered from the death of her father and saw her mother's grief. Even more than that, her heart understood the ordeal that her mother was undergoing. Her desire to comfort her mother was sincere and profound. Thus, this little girl of four was able to hear the call to conversion uttered by her mother and to respond to it with unlimited generosity. *"Anne, if you want to comfort me, you must be good..."*

A courageous woman who, in spite of her immense grief, did not neglect her duties as a mother in the education of her daughter. This was indeed, a time of grace enhanced and stimulated by suffering.

As for Anne, there was no hesitation between the call of her mother and her response. This courageous response, both in actions and truth, changed the life of the child and brought to her mother a balm of consolation which was badly needed. Little Nénette became increasingly tender and affectionate and at the same time was making great efforts to dominate her rebellious character. She encouraged her mother, who had taught her the elements of faith from an early age, to keep looking upwards. *"Don't cry, darling Mother, daddy is in Heaven and is happy for ever."*

We may think that, like the Virgin Mary, Mme de Guigné meditated on these words and kept them in her heart, realizing that the little girl was increasingly under the action of the Holy Spirit, whose influence she admired in the fruits produced in everyday life in such a clear and astonishing way.

After Anne's departure with the angels, there is a saying which helped Mme de Guigné to bear her exile on earth while waiting to be reunited in eternal life. *"A long life is a blessing for we can suffer a lot for Jesus."* Anne's mother died in 1978 in Cannes at the Villa St. Benoît.

At this Easter time when we celebrate the resurrection, the victory of life over death, although we are going through worrying and troubled times, the memory of these events should reinforce our courage and our hope. *"But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* (Jn 16,33) Jesus says to us and following him, St. Peter asserts: *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

The Missionary Family of Our Lady