

The Letter to Anne de Guigné's Friends

Renée de Tryon-Montalembert (1920-2007)

At the beginning of this school year 2015/2016, we would like to devote this editorial article to Renée de Tryon-Montalembert who was both the kingpin by all the work she accomplished and also, more profoundly, the testimony, throughout her life, of a spiritual accompaniment.

Born on May 8th 1920 at the Vieille-Ferté, baptised the same day, Renée received her first communion, like Anne, at the feast of the Annunciation on March 25th 1928. To prepare her, her mother gave her a little book on the life of Anne de Guigné, the little girl who died six years before, leaving behind her a perfume of saintliness.

After a brilliant schooling “at home”, Renée's family had to go into exile during the second world war. Renée studied at Aix-en-Provence where she obtained two degrees in two years. One in Philosophy in 1942, and the other in Law in 1943. This was followed by her active participation in the *Foundation of Judeo-Christian Friendship*.

In 1948, she obtained her doctorate in Law. She became the delegate responsible for children on probation at the Nancy law court and, subsequently, at the Auxerre law court.

We often forget to say that Renée was an excellent violinist !

From her earliest childhood, following in Anne's footsteps, Renée wanted the gift of her life to have an ecclesiastical dimension: “*This dynamism of your Love calling me from my earliest years*”.

The encounter with the Dominican spirituality from 1949 up to the 70's, with its joys and its crosses, led her to receive the Consecration of Virgins in Paris on December 8th 1973.

From that day onwards, Renée received the “grace of abundance”.

Her love for Christ and His Church led her to take many initiatives which would be impossible to enumerate here. Let us just remember, in union with Saint

John-Paul II, the creation in 1986, of the Mary Advent of the 3rd millenium – one year for each mystery of the Rosary up to the year 2000. A Rosary of years ! She called this Rosary *“the treasure of the order of preachers. With the Rosary, she said, it is God's Mother herself who takes us by the hand to help us to discover, understand and savour in our hearts all the splendour of the revelation”*.

We can remember that already, at the age of seven, Anne recited the rosary every day and her governess told how in September 1918 she became Apostle of the Rosary: *“Are you a member of the Rosary Demoise ? You know, it is not difficult: one gives one's name, one recites the rosary and... one obtains many indulgences – and, even more persuasive: and then we shall be members of the same family.”*

Renée continues: *“I was still a very young child when my mother put the book about the life of Anne de Guigné into my hands. I think it was, above all, Anne's face that struck me and which was for me like a revelation of the presence and the tenderness of God.”*

Each one of us must reflect the light of Christ. This is the motto, taken from Saint Paul, that Renée took as her own: *“De claritate in claritatem”*. Renée's one desire was to make the face of Christ appear in all its beauty. This is the meaning of the “consecration of virgins”.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”. This beatitude was dear to Renée because the Beloved reveals His face to the pure in heart. She loved above all this saying of the little Anne de Guigné: *“I wish that for Jesus, my heart should be as pure as a lily.”*

She added: *“Virginal love can only become a lily if it is rooted in humility.”*

“No small devotions. Only the great illuminations of Faith.” She spoke of adoration taught to children and quoted Peggy: *“Children are new creatures... they take Heaven by force...”* How many fruits of saintliness there are !

“There will be saints among the children” Saint Pius X had said. Renée tried to find them and to make them known, in order to influence all the children on earth to follow Jesus.

Thus Renée de Tryon-Montalembert revived the Cause of her great friend in Heaven, the Cause for the beatification of Anne de Guigné. She worked in close collaboration with the Postulator of the Cause and did remarkable work. The result was Pope John-Paul II declaring the little Anne de Guigné 11 years old, “Venerable” in 1990.

In order to enter and dwell in the Kingdom, Renée held the hand of a little girl for 80 years: *“Anne is always with me. It is like a very pure friendship which refreshes, encourages and fortifies me”*.

It was also Renée who created this *Letter of Anne de Guigné's Friends*, after having been Vice-President herself of the Association.

But she always wanted to go further and take a wider view. In the dusk of her life she saw the arrival of what she had desired for so long. They all hurried to the symposia organized by *Enfance et Sainteté* and entrusted to Anne – children, parents, teachers and catechists.

Supported by the review *Enfance et Sainteté* that she had started in 1984, she became president of the Association and at the same time entered the nursing home *Marie Thérèse* in Paris. Let us not forget that from 1997 Renée “sanctified” all that she did through the suffering and the evolution of Parkinson’s Disease which she endured in union with the Pope John-Paul II, afflicted by the same disease. Had she not written herself when talking about Anne: “*What counts is not the amount of suffering, what counts is Love.*”

To reflect deeply and propose a form of saintliness specific to each age, Renée reminds us that that we are all concerned: “*Make the right saintliness for each season sing*”, she used to say.

She was in front of the Holy Father the day Anne was declared Venerable: “*Holy Father, here is a book on the saintliness of childhood and another on the saintliness of old age*”. In spite of her great weakness, humble, persevering, loving, she continued to “work for the Church” without weakening, linked to the Sacred Heart to which she was so attached.

Renée left this world in the light of the Resurrection on Easter Tuesday April 10th 2007.

She went from light to light to find the “*Three that make One*” as she named the Holy Trinity.

Odile Gautron

From the book by Sister Edith-Mary, o.v., “*Prier 15 jours avec Renée de Tryon-Montalembert*”, Ed. Nouvelle Cité.