

Providence, R.I.

July, 1949

My dear Sister Mariposa,

This particular school reminds me of a thriving hive of bees. Everyone is searching into the flowers of Catholic Doctrine, gathering the nectar provided by the various professors, and storing away the honey for present and future use. I am quite frank in saying that I should never have taken out time to write these arguments had you not made a certain statement in your letter that sort of riled me. "Since we have had such intensive training in the novitiate, and since we live a life constant prayer, it seems to me that your time would be more profitably spent if you were taking courses in the field in which you are studying." That is the guilty sentence!

"Since we had such intensive training in the novitiate!" My dear, I had an intensive training of two years. How much time each day was allotted to formal study of Christian Doctrine? You will be forced to answer not more than a half-hour a day. What is that when you consider the infiniteness of the God about Whom we studied? Moreover, it was of necessity brief in context, and from, at best, secondary sources. By our very profession we are bound to know God better day by day in order that we may love Him more here, and enjoy His dear Presence more keenly in the life to come. Doesn't St. John say, "This is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent!" If that be true of eternity, how necessary it is that we prepare for the one, great occupation of eternity. Why, were we to spend every moment of our lives in learning about God, we would still be like stammering, unschooled children, so vast and unsearchable are His ways.

Therefore it is our duty to learn about Divinity. Every duty has a corresponding privilege. Who can measure the enrichment of our spiritual life that comes with the weeks of concentration on God and His eternal

truths? We are lifted above the things of earth and enjoy a fleeting glimpse into the outer courts of Heaven as it were. Furthermore, isn't it a special privilege to sit at the feet of our own brother, Thomas, to listen to and hoard the wisdom that falls from his inspired lips, wisdom that was so lovingly commended by our Lord Himself? "Well hast thou written of Me, Thomas ....."

You are probably chuckling over what you consider my pardonable enthusiasm. However, I have not finished. All that I have said has concerned me personally, and you are probably thinking that I ought to remember that I have not joined a contemplative order as such. I am a teacher. Your statement that has brought this dissertation down upon your head recalled to mind your commendable zeal in teaching the secular branches no less than your care and concern about your religion class.

If I were to ask you which has first place in moulding boys and girls for right living you would unhesitatingly say the religion classes hold first place. I cannot give to another what I do not have nor can anyone else. To draw others to Christ we must be saturated with His spirit. How can we be saturated with it if we do not know it and understand it? Does not our Dominican motto read, "Tradere aliis contemplata" ?

We wouldn't dream of teaching Latin equipped only with what we had been exposed to in high school. As teachers we are constantly seeking more and more knowledge in order to perfect our teaching. First things should have first place. Consequently, it seems to me our study of Divine Truth has been far too inadequate to meet the demands of modern life. Personally I have always felt a certain handicap in teaching religion by a lack of background in the <sup>subject</sup> matter of religion. Methods I have learned without end. It has seemed that the know-how has been stressed, while the what has been taken for granted. Surely God expects <sup>us to</sup> use natural means in studying about Him no less than in studying about secular matters.

Therefore, this Summer School of Theology is without doubt a golden opportunity, or I should say a tremendous -and I mean tremendous- grace from

God to remedy the deficiencies in our religious training. I fear that we are not without a share in the guilt of a weakened faith. We cannot love what we do not know, and we only half love what we half know. Certainly lack of full knowledge leads to indifference, and indifference leads to mediocrity. An alert student is not the product of an indifferent teacher, neither is a fervent Catholic the product of a mediocre religion teacher.

I shall return to the classroom with an increased faith, I know. That my love for God is more fervid, I hope. Surely it is my own fault if it is not. I should like to shout from the house tops all these advantages. Therefore, after all this I expect that you yourself will be among the first to enroll in next year's session. Think it over seriously and you will admit all that I have said. Also remember that you were the cause of this lengthy sermon.

I shall be eagerly awaiting a reply. Meanwhile I commend <sup>to your prayers</sup> not only myself but all the Sisters.

Affectionately,

Sr.M.Bertranda, O.P.

Anything in this paper contrary to the teachings of the Holy Catholic Church, I hereby most humbly retract and declare myself a true adherent of said Church, "J. Courtney Murray to the contrary notwithstanding".

Sr. M. Bertranda McFleer, O.P.  
or

Pious Woman