

Mother's Success and Difficulties

Mr. Mathew, Holy Cross Associate, Viralimalai

Respected Sisters, Dear Students and Holy Cross Associates – A very good Morning to you all.

My Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Foundress Mother Claudine Echernier.

I express my gratitude to the Lord Jesus and those who have given me this chance to say a few words about our Mother's Successes and Difficulties in her life.

You are all well aware of the life history of our Mother Foundress. So, standing before you and speaking to you about our Mother, is like selling a needle to a blacksmith. I hope, the theory of Consumer Surplus is not applicable here, since hearing about our Mother is always so sweet. It is like a happiness of a young mother who loves always to hear the babbles of her little child.

Now let us recall the difficulties our mother faced in her life and how she succeeded it.

The French Revolution had made the life of the people worse. The threatening of war from British on one side, the scarcity for food and other basic requirements on the other side, had led the common man's life to immorality. While the political and social scenario was like this, the religious activities were still worsening due to Jansenism theory. To add fuel to fire, the Pope Pious VII was arrested by the anti Church policy of the Napoleon Bonaparte during 1808. In the middle of this chaos, the little girl Claudine was born on 29th May 1801 in the Parish of Feterne in Chablais. Her father was Francis Echernier and her mother Anne Dutruel. Being the first born child of this poor family, she had to shoulder her eight siblings. Her mother's sudden death and her innocent father's arrest had made her life more difficult. But she held the Holy Rosary firmly in her hand and bound all her difficulties into the wounds of our Lord Jesus. She learned sewing at Savoy and trained her brothers and sisters in religious faith which increased their values to live a true Christian life. The poverty of the family slowly receded. Thus the first difficulty of survival was successfully handled by our Mother.

Secondly when she was 27 years old, she went to Chavanod and helped the Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Joseph Delalex. She understood the need of catechism for the children in that parish. Even though it was difficult to find suitable place or time to teach catechism, she made herself available to take classes for the children in the kitchen itself in the midst of cooking and other activities. Her vision of "everyone should know the desire of the Lord and fulfill the same" has been brought under focus and she succeeded in this also.

Thirdly when a marriage proposal had come, it became more difficult for her to take immediate decision. After thinking it over for a while “To be or not to be” she finally and prudently took the decision to offer herself to the service of the humanity and to God - a life of role model to others. She happily gave ten percent of her earning to the Society of Saint Francis De Sales.

Together with Rev. Fr. Peter Mermier, she started the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1838 with just ten young girls. When she started this, she had no financial help; no bank balances, no political power, no intellectuals or educated people to support or not even she had a roof to live. When others mockingly twisted their lips and doubted the survival of this congregation, she believed in crucified Jesus and in his care and guidance. The belief was like a bird singing for morning daylight, even when it is darkness out there. Before she entered Heaven in 1869, her faith yielded good results and she witnessed 59 branches of this congregation in France.

Her endurance in difficulties and subsequent success transfigured the Holy Cross Associates like me and now we are born spiritually, as our Lord said to Nicodemus.

As our Mother had done, we also share whatever we have with the poor and needy. When my wife and I decided to spare ten percent of my monthly income and did so, the shower of blessings came upon us from the very next month. At first, my salary got increased. Then within a short period, I received two Cash Awards from my Office. Next year I got Promotion and salary hike. Till now we keep our vows and we are with the Mother Foundress.

I sincerely thank Sr. Josephine Chinnarani who guides us in our unit at Viralimalai and Sr. Humbelin for her able guidance and all Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod and those who arranged this seminar.

Thanking You.