

December

Saturday last I was working quietly in my room sorting items and shelving others, but wondering also about the article I could write for December. A retreat day was scheduled for the morrow and I wanted to be attentive and meditative. But the article should be written! After supper, and after putting the last things away in my room, I walked down the long hallway to the chapel. Everything was quiet there. Part of my prayer time was to ask God for a sentence that would honor Mother Marie Anne for the needed article. God answered!! It was: “Mother Marie Anne kept much in her heart.”

December and Mother Marie Anne have more in common than I ever thought. She was full of quiet, of inner silence, of worried thoughts, of confidence in the Love of God—inner hurts coming from those around her. So many wanted to hear abusive lies! The great silences of Mother Marie Anne brought tears to me when I thought of unjust statements that were said about her and the silence she maintained about losing her place as Mother Superior of the burgeoning community.

At Christmas, there is the quiet of the falling snow. There may be a blizzard, but we are safe in the house as the wind shakes the outdoor trees. There may be just enough snow and “peace on earth” so that people can manage to drive or walk to their church for Christmas Eve and we hear “Silent Night!” and recall silently the Christmas celebrations that were in the quiet past.

When she could, at night Mother Marie Anne walked with a candle to lighten her way through the Sisters infirmary. It helped patients to see the quiet smile upon her face, as she poured a drink from her pitcher of water to those awake and thirsty. She could be just as quiet when she was summoned to various offices to be corrected or to receive a new menial assignment. She let no harsh words escape her lips. Silence helped her hear more clearly God’s Will for her.

But in the loneliness of dark nights, Mother Marie Anne’s tears and sobs were sometimes heard by nearby Sisters—and certainly always heard by God. The “tears” no doubt could testify: “Mother Marie Anne keeps much in her heart!” But she knew that God was like the Christmas Star leading her through deserts of misunderstanding to the green hills of hope. She prayed, as did a weary Mary and Joseph : “Trust in God”! “Trust in God!”

December is a good month to see the changes from summer to wintry blows. There is the icing over small streams and various country ponds. Looking around one can see scampering animals that hide from sudden icy rain, find shelter in trees with holes and hidden acorns and other saved-up foods. There are leafless trees whose branches seem to mourn because their leaves are gone--and there are trees that brace against wintry storms. There are dark skies and cloud-coverings of stars and moon. Living through such days in her wintry life, Mother Marie Anne kept much in her heart—and waited. Better days were sure to come!! “O come, O come, Emmanuel!”

Yes, Mother Marie Anne kept much in her heart. She thought of the future of the congregation, much as a father of a family would wonder about his strength and or opportunities to keep his family together. Wrinkled paper, broken boxes, numerous sounds of bits of song or shouts of glee caused much meditation. Mother Marie Anne, instead, would be wondering about the future congregational schools and convents, about responding to the needs of people. What if suddenly all the Sisters would leave the present congregation? These “frosty snow and ice killers” kept many such cold “December” thoughts in her overburdened heart! But better days would come! Later years would lighten her darkened sorrows and bring many joys!

For Mother Marie Anne is also known now as Blessed Marie Anne Blondin! She is known, she is beloved, she is admired! Her heart now is filled with joy! People have recourse to her for help! Passing time and continued efforts of the congregation to serve and save have brought many “miracles”.

Her “December days”, perhaps, now mean bringing joys to children making snowmen and being kissed by “Mom” and “Dad”. It might mean going to see the Christmas Crib in church! There, one has great peace in looking at the straw and animals and little lambs! A lovely young mother holds to her breast a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. She may smile at you, as a marveling carpenter arranges a little bed of straw in a manger.

Just as Mother Marie Anne found joy from an eternal, patient God, you, too, can find peace and a pouring out of love from that same eternal, patient God. Like Mother Marie Anne—you, too, can know LOVE and TRUST in God! For, you see, Mother Marie Anne **kept much in her heart!** You can, too!!

A Merry Christmas to you all! God bless us—everyone!

Margaret Cantwell. S.S.A, December 2014

