

II. Trappist and Hermit in Nazareth

Today we will try to see what Nazareth meant to Br Charles and where the name “little” comes from.

He will say that his religious vocation was born together with his faith. He writes to a friend: *“As soon as I believed there was a God, I understood that I could do nothing else than to live for him alone. My religious vocation was born at the same hour as my faith.”* But Fr. Huvelin will make him wait 3 years. In 1988, two years after his conversion he will send him on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Huvelin senses his need to see and touch though he says that it’s a journey he did out of obedience. For many saints a pilgrimage to Holy Land was a turning point.

When he arrives it’s Christmas time and so he goes to Bethlehem. There he contemplates the glory of God that was pleased to dwell in a manger, between animals because there was no room for them in the inn. Jesus, God made man began his life in the lowest place. –

From there he goes to Jerusalem where Jesus ended his life. There again he sees the lowest place. He died the death of a slave in the Roman emperor, crucified between two criminals. In the end he had nothing, no clothes, not even a place to rest his feet.



He then continues his pilgrimage to Nazareth. He will go back there twice. It’s a little town under Turkish occupation. There is nothing attractive about it. The streets were dirty. But it’s precisely in those streets of Nazareth that he will experience a kind of theophany. The thought that *this* was the place God chose for his incarnation will be a shock and a call. In Nazareth he will realize that the lowest place wasn’t just at the beginning and the end, but every day of his life. In a flash he understands his vocation: to imitate Jesus of Nazareth, by following his downward movement to the lowest place. He will receive this intuition in the middle of the street as he’s walking. Our founders are people who travel great distances. Their great moments of insight don’t come to them when they’re sitting in a chapel but in the middle of the street, like L Sr Magdeleine at La Sainte Baume. It’s the first inkling of a new kind of contemplative life... in the world. Just look at the titles of books written about their lives: *From the Sahara to the Whole World, From One end of the Earth to the Other, Beyond Borders, Spiritual Itinerary*. They’re always on the move, going further.

Back in Paris Br Charles will hear a sermon by Fr. Huvelin saying that *“Jesus took the last place so utterly that no one has ever been able to get it away from him.”* These words are going to *“engrave themselves forever on my soul.”* He finds in the words « he went down » a synthesis of Jesus’ life. He doesn’t equate Nazareth with ordinary life the way we often do. For him Nazareth is about God’s choice to empty himself and become little. Perhaps this

discovery impressed him so much because it's among Muslim people that he had experienced a spiritual awakening. Islam is forever proclaiming Gods' greatness "Allah Akbar". It's against this background that the sudden discovery of his littleness speaks so forcefully. The same can be true for us as well. God's littleness doesn't truly speak until we have really seized his greatness.

Many things will change during Br Charles' life, but the one thing that remains stable is the desire to live Nazareth. If he enters the Trappists at 32 it's in order to live Nazareth: He writes to a friend,



I didn't feel I was made for preaching like Jesus in his public life, so I needed to imitate him in his hidden life as a poor and humble workman at Nazareth. I thought nothing would offer me this way of life better than a Trappist monastery

If he leaves the Trappists 7 years later it's also because of Nazareth. He writes to his cousin:

I am thirsting to lead at last the life I've been looking for these 7 years and more. I glimpsed it, guessed at it, as I was walking the streets of Nazareth where the feet of Our Lord had trod, a poor craftsman lost in abjection and insignificance.

Nazareth is what he seeks when he's young

He went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. You went down to live the life of poor working people, toiling for their living...at Nazareth.

...and when he's old "*He went down with them and came to Nazareth: all his life he did nothing but go down. He went down when he took flesh, he went down by becoming a little baby, he went down by obeying, he went down by becoming poor, abandoned, outcast, persecuted, tortured, taking always and everywhere the lowest place.*

From his conversion in 1886 until his death in 1916 there are 30 years...exactly the time of Nazareth.

He will often associate Nazareth with the word *abjection*. It seems a very strong word to describe Nazareth. But it's a word that he took from psalm 83. He considered that psalm to be the one that gave thanks for religious life. *Happy are those who dwell in your house O Lord, forever singing your praise.* He used to pray the psalms in Latin and that's where he got the word abjection.

The threshold of the house of the Lord I prefer (*elegi abjectus est*) to the dwellings of the wicked. You could translate, *I prefer to be marginalized in the house of God than to have a dwelling among the wicked.* The word abjection, described a manner of being in God's house. It's an idea that he had picked up in reading Saint Francis de Sales.

He will write,

O my God, allow me to understand this blessed abjection that was your lot on earth, your lot in Nazareth, where, through your incomparable grace, I've been led to live.

In his meditation on this psalm he compares abjection to a woman he loves:

O holy and blessed abjection, mother, daughter and sister of all other virtues, and especially of the love of Jesus, love of neighbour, of true humility and pray... Yes, I have chosen you, but how badly I practice you, how badly I kiss you.

Each religious congregation has a page of the gospel, an aspect of Jesus' life that they want to imitate. For those who follow Br Charles it's the page of Nazareth. But it's so important to not confuse the *last place* with *being crushed*. If Br Charles searches for a life of abjection, it's because he wants to keep Jesus company. If Jesus is to be found there, it is a place of blessing.

Trappist

Having returned from his pilgrimage to the Holy Land he will set about searching for a congregation. The key word that articulates his desire is the word "imitation". He writes to a friend,

*The Gospel showed me that the first commandment is to love God with all one's heart and that love had to be the beginning and the end of everything. Everybody knows that the first effect of love is **imitation**. So what I had to do next was to enter the Order where I could find the closest **imitation** of Jesus.*

In a meditation he will write:

My God, I do not know if some people can see you poor and willingly remain rich. Can they realise they are so much above their master, their Beloved, and not want to be like you in every way within their power, to be like you most of all in your lowliness. I'm sure they must love you, my God, but I think there's something missing in their love. In any case, I for my part, cannot conceive love without a need, a compelling need, to be alike, to do the same, and most of all to share all the hardships and trials and troubles of life. To be rich and secure and live comfortably off my property when you were poor and needy and toiled for your living. As for me, I couldn't do it, my God. I couldn't love like that. The servant should not be greater than his master.

He will go on searching for a year. He decides against active orders because that would mean following Jesus in his public life. He is called to Nazareth, and therefore he looks more towards the contemplative orders. Fr. Huvelin sends him to the Benedictines but he doesn't like elaborate liturgies and singing.

He goes with his cousin Marie to a Trappist monastery and there he sees an old monk coming back from the fields. His robe is torn and his shoes are covered in mud. Br Charles is enthralled. This at last is an order that lives Nazareth !

During his studies at the French Seminary in Rome, Fr. Huvelin had known dom Polycarp, who was to become abbot of Our Lady of the Snows. At one time he himself had thought of becoming a Trappist. Due to the anti-religious laws being passed by the Republican government, the Abbey had made a small foundation in Akbes, in Syria, where the monks could seek refuge should their lands be confiscated. Dom Polycarp had set off for Syria along with 20 other monks 10 years earlier. Aware of his attraction both for poverty and the Orient, Fr. Huvelin will send Br Charles to Our Lady of the Snows with a suggestion that he ask for Akbes.

Very few people were informed of his decision to enter the Trappists. While having an intense desire to embark on a life that would be for God alone, leaving his family meant being torn away from what was nearest and dearest to his heart. His return to God had been mediated by his return to his family. He had been an orphan and leaving them was the greatest sacrifice possible. But God had given his all in Jesus and he wanted to respond by also giving his all. His sister Mimi asked him to go to the photographer so that she could have one last photo of

him before he left. The departure was set for Jan 15, 1890. In his mind his going was forever and he would never ever see them again. At 7:10 in the evening he was weeping as he left Marie de Bondy's place.



A sacrifice which seems to have cost me all my tears because since that day, I have never cried again. I seem to have no more tears.

In his letters he will often mention make mention of this date. He will say that fasting and keeping vigil never cost him anything, but leaving his family was his only, his true sacrifice.

Seventeen years later he writes to his cousin, *The years pass and far from numbing the pain of separation they only make it sharper.*

But if each year he keeps memory of the day of the greatest sacrifice, it's not just to wallow in sadness, but it's so that he can renew his offering. It will be the starting point for a new life. He writes:

*It's the day when 8 years ago, I left my family, shedding so many tears in order to be all for You, my beloved Lord. You have dried my tears, you have made this day into a day of rejoicing, a kind of **day of birth** because to live for you is true life. It's an intermediary between the day of our birth in the world and that day where we will be born in heaven.*

Far from asking him to sever his ties with his family, the Trappists will always encourage him to keep in touch with his family, especially Marie de Bondy. She had been such a source of blessing in his life that they thought she could well keep her role. She will be a humanising influence in the life of this man who could have a tendency to being strong willed. During the rest of their lives they wrote to each other every two weeks. She kept all of his letters.

Akbès

He took the habit on the feast of Saint Alberic, and so he took the name Br. Marie Alberic. He should have stayed at Our Lady of the Snows for his novitiate, but there was a chance that he would be summoned for active duty as a reserve officer and so he was immediately sent to Akbes. Life there was austere indeed, but that didn't seem to trouble him in the least.

« *Our Brother Marie-Alberic seems like an angel in our midst* » wrote the Abbot of ND des Neiges. « *He's only missing wings.* »

His great joy is to think that he is here "**forever**" but his new novice master writes to his sister about his new novices. *Can I be frank with you? I find them too perfect for them to last.*

He was clear sighted indeed. In br Charles' case problems arose very quickly. He had imagined life at the Trappists according to his own desire. Life in Akbes was poor, but not poor enough for him. He hadn't yet been a Trappist for a year before he wrote to Fr. Huvelin:

You hope I've poverty enough. No, we are poor in comparison with the rich, but we are not as poor as our Lord was, not poor the way I was in Morocco, not poor like St. Francis.

The little monastery in Akbes had good lands which they could cultivate but what they were lacking were suitable roads in order to bring their goods to market. Who could better suited to supervise the work on these much needed roads than this novice who had received the Gold Medal from the Geography Society? Br Charles obeyed but inwardly he grumbled: Jesus of Nazareth wasn't in charge of workers.

At this time the Pope asked the Cistercians of the Reform to unite into a single congregation. That meant modifying the rule. It involved some small changes but to Br Charles these were not small things! He writes to his cousin:

« butter and oil are now being allowed to add flavour to the food. So since the last few weeks we no longer have our beloved food cooked only in only salt and water. They put something fatty in our food...you can understand that I regret this...a little less mortification means giving a little less to God and a bit more money spent means that we have a little less to give to the poor.

They want him to study theology and so he has less time for manual work. He writes to his cousin: *It's a matter of obedience and I must say that it's something I enjoy because it's interesting. But I will be happy on the day that it ends and I can follow Jesus in his poor little workshop in Nazareth.*

One day he will be sent to pray beside the body of a local Christian who has just died. He is struck by the difference between the housing of the poor and the Trappist monastery. *What a difference between this house and where I live. I pine for Nazareth.*

While living in Akbes, he will witness the massacre of Armenian Christians by the Turkish army. He writes to his brother in law:

In the town closest to here, the army killed 4500 Christians in two days. Europeans are protected by the Turkish government. And so we are in security: They have even placed Turkish guards at our door to make sure that no one hurts us. It's terrible to be on good terms with those who are slitting the throat of our brothers. It would be better to suffer with them than to be protected by their persecutors.

Even if Fr. Huvelin had meant to withdraw as his spiritual director, it's to him that he will turn when problems begin to appear. In 1893, only three years after his entry he sends him a first draft of the community he dreams of.

Wouldn't it be possible to form a little congregation to lead this life? We would live only from the work of our own hands, like our Lord, who did not take up collections or live from offerings, nor did he have foreign labourers working for him while he sat back and supervised. ...Is it a dream dear Father? Is it an illusion from the devil or is it an idea and an invitation that comes from God? If I could be sure it came from God, I would start on it today and not tomorrow. Something else give me courage to undertake a project so little suited to a sinner of my unworthiness: Our Lord said that the one who had sinned greatly would be the one who should love greatly.

Fr Huvelin will endeavour to encourage him to persevere in his vocation but finally he has to face the fact that Br Charles isn't finding what he'd come looking for when he joined the Trappists. He finally writes to him, giving him permission to express his doubts



My dear child! I had hoped that you find what you were seeking for at the Trappists', that you would find enough poverty, humility and obedience in order to be able to follow our Lord in his life of Nazareth. I still regret that it has not been possible. Something too strong is pushing you towards another form of life, and it is causing you little by little to stand apart from those with whom you live. Inwardly you have become separated.

...Things have come to such a point that you can, and even I think that you must speak about it. Because in your soul there is a painful divide and you are no longer in the place where you find yourself: our soul is where it loves.

Br Charles is going to take that as if Fr. Huvelin had ordered him to ask for a dispensation from his vows and found an order. He immediately writes a Rule of Life for a congregation he wants to call the "Little Brothers of Jesus" and sends it to Fr. Huvelin. Even though the Rule contains some of the elements that are constant in his charism there's also a great lack of common sense. The Monastery is to be called a Nazareth and consists in three rooms. The furthest from the street is the chapel, the middle room is a large space where up to 18 brothers spend their days work and their nights sleeping. The room closest to the street is for guests. Silence is perpetual. Work had to not be noisy, bring in a good income and not occupy their spirits. He thought of weaving. The brothers would eat two meals a day: boiled grain for lunch and dry bread for supper. A bit of milk on Sunday. Huvelin is horrified:

What suffering I feel! If the permission that you are requesting is refused, consider it as coming from the will of God – remain and wait in the darkness! That's the only thing I see possible. Continue with your theology studies. If you superiors ask you to make another attempt, do it honestly. What most frightens me isn't the thought of you yourself leading this isolated life – but it's the idea that you have of starting a community. My dear child, I just don't see you as a spiritual director! Your rule of life is simply unliveable. I am absolutely convinced of that...To be honest with you, I was horrified! You were no longer entering into the life you had embraced. It was no longer the spirit of religious life but a separate spirit! That's what made me write to you what I did! Open up to your Superiors. Take simple obedience for a guiding light. But above all don't found anything.

Believe in my true, painful affection in Our Lord. H Huvelin

The Trappists decide to send him to Rome to study theology but in fact it's to have his vocation discerned by the Abbot General. There's an interesting exchange of letters. The monks are writing to have him named as their superior and he's writing to Huvelin about leaving. He will always speak about this period as being extremely painful. In spite of his impression that he was being called elsewhere, nobody saw his choice as being good. His novice master even spoke of « mental illness ». He couldn't help but be impressed by the questions felt by those around him. He will turn to Our Lady of Perpetual help, asking her to lead him on. Her sanctuary was just across the road from the Trappist Generalate. It's not that he was seeking consolations in a feminine figure but he was seeking new birth.

In his heart he had resolved to do whatever the Trappist General told him regarding his vocation. If he had been told to make his solemn vows and then be ordained, he would have done it in peace. It was a moment of extraordinary abandonment, and it's in this context that he wrote the meditation that L Sr Magdeleine will later reformulate into the Prayer of Abandonment.

January 23 after examination of his vocation Father General writes his decision to the Abbot of Our Lady of the Snows, « Who can resist God “? ... he is called elsewhere.

He writes to a friend called Br Jerome:

« It is the will of God that I follow this attraction that pushes me outside the Trappist order towards a life of abjection and humble work which has been haunting me for such a long time. »

February 14 he makes a private vow of chastity and poverty which is defined as *never having more in his possession or at his disposal than a poor workman can have*. His idea of poverty is never purely spiritual; it always has a social dimension.

He decides to return to Nazareth where 8 years earlier he had discovered his vocation. It's a bit like the prophet Elijah who, in a moment of crisis, returns to Sinai, the place where everything had begun for Israel. Both return to the source in order to find a way to live today. But in both cases they will hear something new.

Br Charles would have liked to go to the Holy Land on foot but Fr. Huvelin makes him accept money for his fare from the Trappists and on Feb 17 1897 he sets sail. His manner of dress took inspiration from St Benedict Labre, the beggar saint of Rome. He wore a long blue and white striped shirt over blue cotton trousers. On his head he had a thick woolen bonnet around which he had wrapped a turban. A massive Rosary hung from the leather belt that girded his waist. He thought the outfit sang the beautiful poem of the divine abjection but the Poor Clare sisters said that it only made him look miserable and ridiculous.

Fr Huvelin had written to him a few days earlier:

Yes, like you my dear child, I picture you in the East. I prefer Capernaum or Nazareth or some Franciscan convent, not in the convent, but in its shadow. Just ask to use the spiritual resources of the convent and live in poverty at the door. This, my dear friend, is what I can see possible. Don't think about gathering followers around you and still less of giving them a rule. Live your life, and if followers come, live the same life together. But make no rules. On this I insist.

Nazareth will be an important moment in his formation. He will arrive Ch de Foucauld and leave 3 and a half years later as Charles of Jesus.

The day he arrives is the feast of Ste. Colette. The Poor Clares have adoration all day and Br Charles hurries over there. After prayer he will offer them his services as a workman. The monastery was being built. They offer him a room but he sees a tool shed and prefers that. He will christen it “Our Lady of Perpetual Help”, nailing her picture to the wall. The Mother of Jesus had been given to him in a moment of trouble and now like the Beloved Disciple, he took her into his home.

He says that he will stay there « forever ». But already after 6 months he gets the idea to go on begging rounds for the Poor Clares who are in desperate need for money. Later the thought will come to him that it was a mistake to leave the Trappists. He could have stayed and become superior and done some good. Fr. Huvelin will have an important role in calming him



down and getting him to *stay*.

Nazareth is the time when his deep spiritual personality will take shape. There will be moments of peace interrupted by moments of restlessness and dryness.

How does he live ?

He keeps a monastic structure to his day. He writes to his brother in law:

You ask for details about my life. I am staying in a solitary shed. It backs on to the Sisters' enclosure and I am their happy servant. I am alone there. It is a gem of a hermitage, perfectly solitary. I get up when my Guardian Angel wakes me (usually about 3 am) and I pray and meditate till time for the Angelus. Then I go over to the Franciscan convent and go down to the grotto that was part of the Holy Family's house. I stay there till about 6 am, saying my rosary and hearing Masses. It delights me deeply to look at the rock walls that Jesus once had before his eyes and touched with his hands. At 6am I go back to the Sisters, set up for their Mass and serve it at 7am. Then I do whatever I am told to do. If there's an errand I do it, but that's very rare. In general I spend my day doing odd jobs in my little room near the sacristy. I stay in the chapel from 5 to 7:30 pm. After that I go back to my dear hermitage. I read till 9pm and go to sleep. I read during meals; I eat alone. I see nobody at all but my confessor once a week and the Sisters when they have to tell me something, which happens rarely.

He basically did errands and served as sacristan. As for the garden a sister recalls that, "He didn't know how to plant a lettuce!" The meals he speaks of to his brother in law consist in a piece of dry bread. The sisters gave him milk but he would give it away to a poor widow who each day. Fr. Huvelin is always encouraging him to eat more and sleep half an hour more. But he will always be very extreme.

One can imagine that a man who had gone around all of Morocco on foot wasn't going to find it easy to settle into a *gem of a hermitage*. He will soon complain of dryness in his prayer.

Darkness and dryness: everything is painful whether it be holy communion, prayer, meditation, everything, everything, even to tell Jesus that I love him. I have to hang on to a life of faith. If at least I could feel that Jesus love me...But he never says it to me.

Fr Huvelin tells him to put his meditations into writing, « *because it's a way of contemplation that really suits you. It helps you to be clear in your thoughts.* » He will proceed to write thousands of pages in little notebooks that he makes himself.

He also copies out passages from some of his favourite authors. He reads a great deal of Saint Theresa of Avila, St John of the Cross and especially St John Chrysostom.

How did he meditate Scripture ?

He held that you shouldn't read long passages at a time, a chapter or half a chapter at most...but you should read the same passage several times during the day and use it for your meditation.

His method was to begin with the question: 1° My God what do you want to say to me ? 2° Here's what I have to say to you. 3° Not speak any more and just look at the Beloved.

All of these meditations will help him a great deal but they don't always help those who read them! You can find himself drowning in sentimental, repetitive meditations that go on and on. When you read Br Charles' spiritual writings, it's good to keep in mind that 90% of them come from the 3 years he spent in Nazareth and reflect what he was living at the time. Perhaps it's more important to pay attention to the quantity and regularity of his Scripture meditations than their actual content.

He will slowly be shaped by the Word. His knowledge of Jesus will deepen like the steady drip of water that that carves the hardest stone. His formation came straight from the pages of the Gospel. When L Sr Magdeleine read his life for the first time, she finds him to be a "living gospel". In fact he wanted his whole life to cry the gospel, and in order to do that, he needed to know it well.

He had composed a kind of portrait of Jesus that he called the Sole Model. It consisted only of Gospel quotes grouped around certain virtues. Too often we think we know the Gospel and we end up only listening to the Gospel according to ourselves. But Br Charles will keep working away, scratching at each word and letter until the words begin to reveal THE Word and he sees the true face of his Beloved Brother and Lord.

The other factor that shapes his life in Nazareth is the Eucharist

He had a key to the Sisters' chapel and would spend hours there adoring Jesus present in the Eucharist. The Eucharist was the place where Jesus incarnation was continued today. He has a very physical concept of Jesus' presence, rejoicing that he could be a few metres away from His Lord. In fact it's faith that draws you close, not the number of metres.

Little by little he will make the connection between the Gospel and the Eucharist. It will question him. He cannot separate the body of Jesus in the Eucharist from that of Jesus in the poor. He will write to Louis Massignon:

I think there is no saying in the Gospel that made a deeper impression on me and more transformed my life than this one: Whatever you did to one of the least of these you did it to me. I few remember that these are the words of Uncreated Truth and come from the same lips that said, "This is my Body, this is my Blood," how compellingly we are moved to seek out Jesus and love him in the "least ones", the sinners, the poor.

It's this discovery that will unify his life, finding his one and only Lord both in the sacrament of the poor and the sacrament of the altar. It's a heritage that he leaves us. A Beni Abbes he will want a single light to illumine both the Tabernacle and the Gospel. His meditation of the Word slowly turned him from a life that was a centred on *Jesus and me* to "*Jesus, me and other people*".

His stays in Jerusalem

It's not surprising that the Poor Clare sisters liked him so much. He reminded them of Saint Francis. So they found an excuse for sending him to Jerusalem where the superior of the Poor Clares there, Mother Elisabeth of Calvary, wanted to get to know him. He will

immediately have a great admiration for this woman who reminds him of Saint Theresa “Head of ice and heart of fire”.

Huvelin is afraid that they’re going to use him to get money that they’ll make a “mendicant brother” of him. He writes to Marie de Bondy:

I had forbidden him to become a brother that goes around asking for money : but what can I do against a woman and a sister? I’ll never have more power over him than her...

Mother Elizabeth encourages him in his plan of founding a community. In spite of Fr. Huvelin’s insistence, the desire to belong to something keeps coming back.

What I’m secretly dreaming of, without admitting it to myself, what I can’t help dreaming of, is something very simple, for just a few people. It would be like those communities in the early church. A few people gathered together to lead the life of Nazareth, to live by their work the way the Holy Family did, and practise the Nazareth virtues as they contemplate Jesus.

Mother Elisabeth in fact would like to see him chaplain for the Poor Clares and encourages him to think of the priesthood. Fr. Huvelin had greatly desired it but Br. Charles always opposed it since it was out of line with abjection. But she will convince him that priesthood doesn’t take you away from imitation. To the contrary, abjection also resided in the trials and tribulations that accompanied the difficulties of priestly ministry.

But if he begins to warm to the idea of becoming a priest, it’s mostly because he needs to be one in order to begin the congregation he dreams of.

He returns to Nazareth after 5 months in Jerusalem and declares that he is on retreat from Palm Sunday until Pentecost. He wants to write up a Rule and finish it for the feast of the Sacred Heart. He calls it the **Rule for the Hermits of the Sacred heart**.



All his rules have 3 guiding principles that structure his spiritual desire :

- Imitation of Jesus of Nazareth
- Adoration of his presence in the Eucharist
- establishment among the most abandoned non-Christians

Although it has no official recognition, he will want to live according to his Rule and takes the name of **Brother Charles of Jesus**. He will begin signing his letters that way.

End of his stay in the Holy Land

The end of his stay in the Holy Land is marked by “wild ideas” that will worry Huvelin a great deal but that also indicate that the question of doing something for others is becoming acute. He is no longer in peace in his hermitage.

March 1900 he writes to Huvelin that he has met a poor widow whose son has a priestly vocation but can't follow up on it since he needs to look after his mother. So Br Charles thinks of "selling" himself to the St Vincent de Paul sisters so that in return they accept the poor widow into their keeping.

4 days later he suddenly writes him another letter with a totally different plan. He hears of a secret deal whereby the Mount of Beatitudes would be for sale. He writes to his family and to Fr. Huvelin asking them to find money to buy it so that it remains in the hands of the Church. A lot of money is involved, 13,000 francs. He insists so much that his brother in law ends up sending him the full amount. In fact the man who is "selling" it is a crook and the entire sum will be lost but for the time being Br Charles thinks that he is going to gain possession of the Mount of Beatitudes.

April 5, feast of Saint Mark he has a night of prayer and makes a discernment. He concludes that he must seek ordination and found the Hermits of the Sacred heart on the Mount of the Beatitudes. He would like to make his first vows for the feast of the Sacred Heart and so he walks to Jerusalem to ask the Patriarch to approve his Rule and accept him for ordination. His dress is so bizarre that he is made to wait all day. The Patriarch finally receives him, and thinking that this is just another of those crackpots that show up now and again in the Holy land, he sends him away.

Not knowing what to do next, Br Charles decides to set off for Paris to talk with Fr. Huvelin. When Huvelin hears that he is on his way he writes to Marie de Bondy, « The canon ball has been fired, who can stop it!"

There's an exchange of letters between Huvelin and M de Bondy, worried about this repeated instance of instability. The day after his visit Marie will receive the following note:

"I received your dear cousin... He ate and slept at my place. His attire was very bizarre, he seemed very tired and preoccupied. I think he may be sick, but he was very tender. He is truly a holy soul. He wants to be a priest. I told him how to go about it. He had very little, too little money. I gave him some. He knew exactly what I thought. I had sent him a telegram. But something stronger is pushing him. Has a director ever directed anybody? But I don't need to lead him, I only have to admire him and love him.



