

My dear Friends,

I am returning to England on April 5, and my address will be as above until the end of June, when I go to live in Camberley, Surrey, with two of my sisters. I do not know that address exactly as yet, so will give it to you in the next letter. I am very happy that I could spend nearly a year in lovely California and at the very devoted Centre at Krotana. It is built on a little hill in the middle of the big valley of Ojai, which is an Indian word meaning "the nest", and is entirely surrounded by purple mountains. Just recently the highest mountains have been topped with light snow, for the weather has been quite cold.

As I cannot have a dear little cat, I have been making friends with the numerous birds which live here. Mrs. Catharine Mayes gave me a sack of corn, and every day I scatter a big mug-full of corn and sometimes bread crumbs, outside for the birds.

These last days of mine are very full of talks at different houses. Last night, at Mrs. Mayes', we talked about Saints. I have always been immensely interested in Saints ever since, more than sixty years ago, just before I went first to Adyar, an American lady visiting London, gave me Evelyn Underhill's "Mysticism", which has now become a standard work upon the subject. As the years passed I accumulated quite a library upon the Saints, which has now been given to the Centre at Huizen.

The Saint of Saints, the best known and most beloved of them all, the "little poor man" as he called himself, is St. Francis, the first of many to receive the Stigmata. He is immortal for he was more like the Lord Christ than any other. The great doctor of the Inner Life was the famous Teresa of Avila and her young friend, St. John of the Cross. Teresa was of a noble Spanish family, beautiful in her youth and always gay. I think she had it in her to be a Saint from the very beginning. She developed great interior powers of prayer and meditation and wrote a detailed description of them in her book, "The Interior Castle". That and her own autobiography are intensely interesting. Nearly all her life she was terribly ill, never free for one day from pain. Yet that sick and ailing body did not prevent her from journeying all over Spain and founding convents of her reformed Carmelite Order. The Order is ancient, but at that time its original Rule had been so mitigated that nuns lived quite a social life and in comparative comfort. She instituted a reform against bitter opposition. But her enduring fame rests on her wonderful interior life. She had "interior locutions" in which she seemed to converse with Deity, as did also St. Catherine of Siena and the little English Saint, the Lady Julian of Norwich. Teresa called Deity "His Majesty", and even argued with Him at times. She wrote one day, "I look down on the world as from a great height and care very little what people say or know about me. Our Lord has made my life to me now a kind of sleep, for always what I see seems to me as in a dream, nor have I any great sense of pleasure or pain."

But the great Saint was pre-eminently sane and full of common sense. She wrote: "It is a great grace to practice self-examination; but too much of it is as bad as too little, as they say. Believe me, by God's help, we shall advance more by contemplating the Divinity than by keeping our eyes fixed on ourselves." She was always gay, on occasions dancing and playing the tambourine. She could not bear people who always went about looking very solemn and serious.

St. Catherine of Siena, like Terese Neumann today, lived for years without food or drink. She was a very lovely and gracious person, and although quite a young girl, had a big family of devotees, numbering among them some of the young nobles of the district, who all called her Mother. She learnt to read miraculously, but her numerous letters were written by a young noble who made himself her secretary. One day a young nobleman of Siena was what we call "framed", unjustly accused and condemned to death. He was so furious at the injustice that he would listen to no priest. But Catherine conquered him, as she did everyone who came near her, and he said he would cheerfully accept death if she would stand near him at execution. This she faithfully did and her dress was spattered with his blood.

The young, unlettered girl actually persuaded the Pope to leave Avignon and return to Rome. She used often to fall into the deep trance called ecstasy, when the soul is abstracted and the bodily functions diminish almost to vanishing point. This happened to her once at the Pope's court, and a worldly lady there who was critical of Catherine's holiness, ran a big pin into her foot, but Catherine never felt it.

I have a great affection for the Curé d'Ars, the peasant priest of a remote little village in France whose fame as a confessor spread all over Europe, until hundreds of people would come to his little church, and line up for hours awaiting their turn in the confessional where the saintly priest used to sit many long hours a day. He had a marvellous penetration into souls. No one could deceive him. If one of his penitents tried to cover up or not mention some sin, he would say, "But you have not told me about so-and-so."

I once had a great devotion to the Little Flower, St. Thérèse of Lisieux. She was famous for her "little way" of offering to God all the little things we do every day. As she lay dying of galloping consumption, she said to her sister Pauline, who had been her Mother Superior, "I shall pass my heaven in doing good upon earth." And she kept her word. The convent at Lisieux has volumes of letters sent in describing miraculous healings and appearances of Thérèse after her death. I myself knew an Irish soldier who was healed by her. As I also met a girl who was cured at Lourdes. Everyone knows the lovely story of Our Lady's appearance to little Bernadette in the grotto. Franz Werfel, a German Jew fleeing from the Nazis, made a promise that if he got to America he would write the story, which he did under the name of "The Song of Bernadette." Before he died he became a member of the Roman Church, which does not surprise me. But his book was filmed and I saw the film nine times, I loved it so.

Bernadette became a nun at Nevers, and twenty-five years after her death when they dug up her body to verify relics at her canonisation, it was undecayed, as fresh as if only sleeping. This phenomenon sometimes occurs with saints. There is no explanation but I sometimes wonder if they have unconsciously developed all the spirillae in their atoms instead of only four as we all have? The same thing happened with St. Teresa and St. Francis Xavier.

Wonderful as are the things which sometimes occur with the Saints, the most beautiful part of their lives lies in their supreme character, their charity, their selflessness, their devotion and extraordinary will which enabled them to overcome all difficulties and suffering, their eager willingness to bear insult and obloquy. One of the qualifications for Canonisation is the evidence of virtue practised to an heroic degree. Thérèse of Lisieux showed this, for during the nine years of her short conventual life she suffered what St. John of the Cross calls the "dark night of the soul" almost without intermission, and she could write: "Suffering stretched forth her arms to me from the very first and I clasped her hand with joy." To a novice, grieving over her faults she said: "If you are willing to bear with the trial of not being pleased with yourself, you will be offering the divine Master a home in your heart."

Some of the great Saints, though not all, attained to the full Path of Union, and to the vision of "the King in His Beauty." St. Augustine wrote: "Step by step was I led upwards.... and thus with the flash of a trembling glance arrived at THAT WHICH IS." He could say no more, nor could St. Paul. That ineffable finding can never be described in words. As Light on the Path says: "Call it by what name you will, it is a voice that speaks where there is none to speak, it is a messenger that comes -- a messenger without form or substance -- or it is the flower of the soul which has opened. It cannot be described by any metaphor."

Your affectionate friend,

Clara Codd

Postscript from Miss Codd: As I leave America once more, I particularly wish to thank with a very full and warm heart, the American members of my letter group who have made it possible for me to end my days, which cannot be many, free from material anxieties. That I have peace and security is their doing, and I -- and perhaps Greater Ones than I -- will bless them, forever. And I especially wish to thank with warmest gratitude, my very faithful secretary, Ruth Doak.