



THE SECRET OF THE MONASTIC CALLING

# THE JOURNALIST AND THE MONK

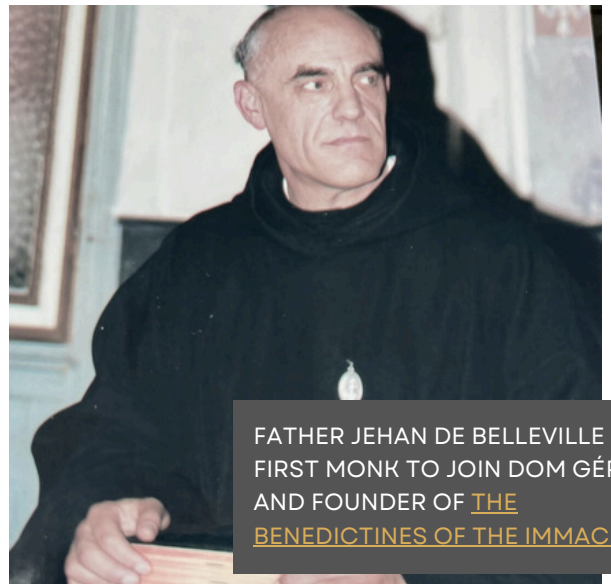
DEAR FRIENDS  
AND FAMILY,

In this letter, we would like to look at the meaning of the monastic life itself, its “usefulness” in a world that has abandoned God and is destroying itself at an alarmingly increasing pace. The vocation to contemplative life cannot be understood in the modern utilitarian calculus. It is an interior orientation, driven by a **thirst** that even the monk himself often doesn’t understand, the search for the immediate, personal encounter with God. We would like to share some insights on an article that was an interview between a secular journalist and Dom Gérard Calvet. We often get asked the same question that the journalist posed to Dom Gérard: what monastic life truly is and what is its “usefulness”....what is its secret?



DOM GÉRARD  
FOUNDER OF ST. MADELEINE  
MONASTERY,  
BARROUX

*“The monks made Europe, but they didn’t do it on purpose! Their adventure was first, and I should say exclusively, an interior adventure.”*



FATHER JEHAN DE BELLEVILLE  
FIRST MONK TO JOIN DOM GÉRARD,  
AND FOUNDER OF [THE  
BENEDICTINES OF THE IMMACULATE](#)

*“Listen to me, you want to know the secret of the monks? No one for over 20 centuries has discovered it. Their joy, their torment, their anguish, their burning anxiety and the slow progress of acquiring a peace conquered through sacrifice, their acts of thanksgiving .... All of this they carry **joyfully** to the tomb.”*



DOM GÉRARD (4<sup>TH</sup> FROM LEFT) AND THE FOUNDING COMMUNITY OF YOUNG MEN, WITH THE SCULPTURE AND ARTIST **HENRI CHARLIER**



Thus responded Dom Gérard Calvet to a surprised and intimidated journalist just trying to do his job. Nevertheless, this giant of traditional monasticism continued to respond in a way which left his interlocutor breathless. The one burning question that every Catholic faces in our times: how do we find our roots again in the faith of our forefathers and attain that sanctity that we so thirst for, but which seems out of our reach?

How do we make it possible for Holy Mother the Church to once again be able to fill her children with what they need to find this sanctity? We *seem* almost (*almost!*) incapable of accomplishing what our faith tells us we must do to attain this sanctity. Do we have the proper means?

The solution is more simple than we think: we must do as our forefathers did if we want to attain what they attained. ***We must give primacy to the supernatural realities, to prayer, and to contemplation.***



We contemplative religious get asked often, “What do you do all day?” It’s like the journalist who asked Dom Gerard what the secret of the monks is.

**How do you respond to a question which has a dimension that is completely “other-worldly”, or simply said, supernatural?** How is what monks and nuns do useful to society?

We need to understand that the contemplative life is to society and the Church what the heart or lungs are to the body. What happens when the heart or lungs are weakened by sickness? The whole body will be weak or even on its way to the tomb.

The contemplative life has been diminished and the enemies (spiritual and physical) have worked against them, knowing that to destroy the work of God in the core of the Church’s spiritual system they would need to wound Her “heart” or Her “lungs” profoundly.



*“What led men and women to leave the “world” for this other reality which they could not see, or touch?*

***“I will tell you the reason, but the reason itself is saturated with mystery:***

***IT’S THIRST.”***

***Dom Gérard***

ARCHBISHOP LEFBVRE AND DOM GÉRARD

The journalist sitting across from Dom Gerard was thinking of European civilization, which is largely attributed to the development of monastic life. He was thinking of the achievements of the monks; the manuscripts, the art, the schools, the magnificent buildings, the productive farms, the discoveries and inventions and musical talents, the preaching of crusades, the impact on governments, and counsellors for popes. He describes details like the Abbey of Cluny **“on which depended more than 1400 religious houses in the 14th century, where princes or even bishops came to hide their identity under the poor aspects of a monk who guarded the pigs.”**

What led men and women to leave the “world” for this other reality which they could not see or touch? Dom Gerard answers:

***“I will tell you the reason, but the reason itself is saturated with mystery: it’s thirst.”***

**Thirst for everything which is eternal** and apathy for everything which we know is finite. They saw another reality, more real than the reality which their senses could perceive. **They lived in the reality of God**, Who took flesh and sanctified every human aspect that exists in order to use these material realities to go to the immaterial realities.

Regina Pacis Monastery



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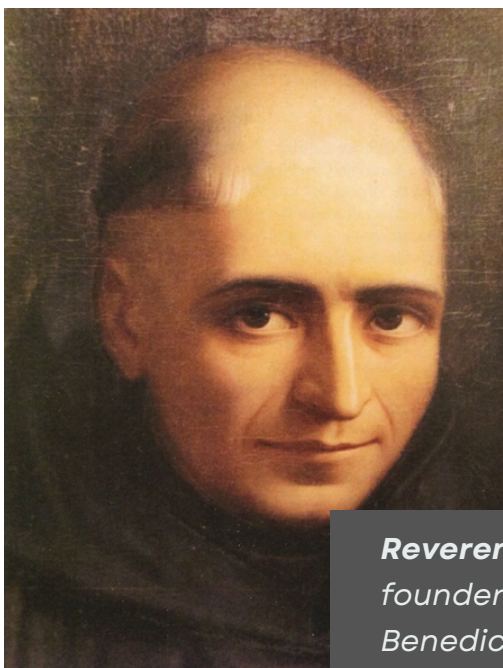
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*“The monks made Europe, but they didn’t do it on purpose. Their adventure was first, and I should say exclusively, an interior adventure, and the catalyst was the **thirst for the absolute.**”*

*“The liturgy oriented their regard constantly towards the invisible to the point of making the monk stretch upwards with his entire being towards the **realities that do not pass.** Before being schools of science at the center of civilization, **the monasteries were a finger silently pointing to heaven,** an obstinate reminder that another world of beauty and of truth exists, for which this world is only an awkward preparation.”*

*Dom Gérard*

The solution is to bring back the contemplative life, being this **silent finger pointing up to heaven**, to remind souls that they were not made for this earth, to offer prayers of intercession and reparation. The contemplatives are the heart and the lungs of the Church, and until they are given the place that is due to them as representing humankind on earth **adoring its Creator**, we will not see a change in the situation. We need to go back to prayer, real prayer, real adoration that changes our lives and kindles this thirst for the eternal things.



**Reverend Father Jean-Baptiste Muard**

founder of the Pierre-qui-vire

Benedictine line of the monks of En-Calcat, Barroux and the [Benedictines of the Immaculate, Taggia Italie.](#)



REVEREND FATHER JEHAN DE BELLEVILLE  
AS A YOUNG NOVICE

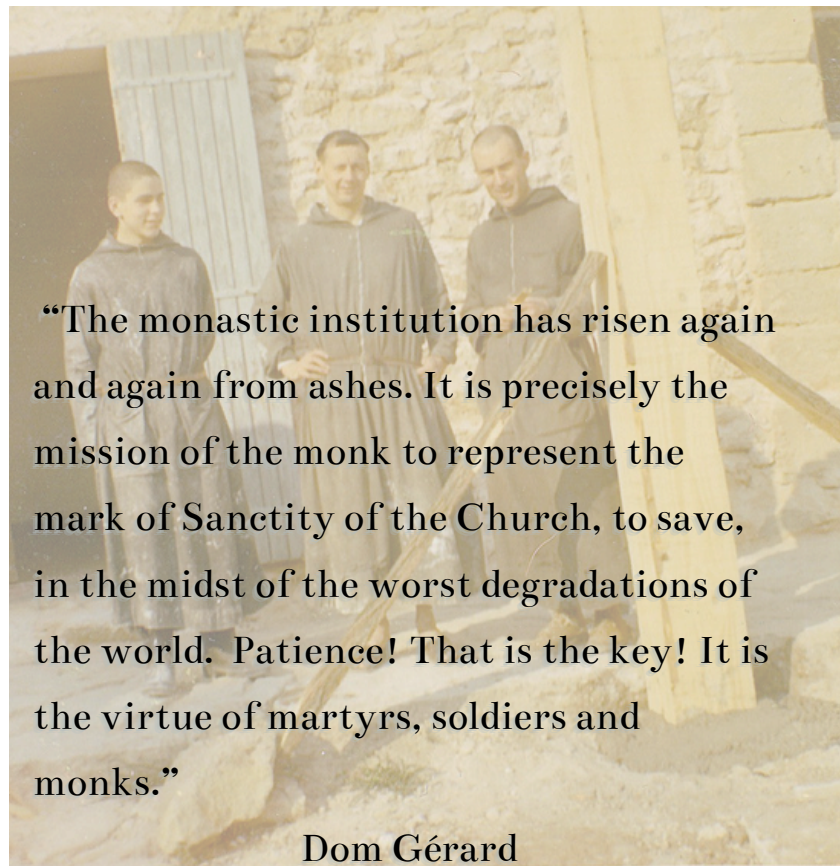
*“**We are the children of the desert fathers** who braided baskets and sung the psalms; and that which they accomplished spontaneously, our Patriarch St. Benedict wisely established as a rule of life by the singing in choir seven times a day and once in the night, the significance of which represents eternity.*

*The day that the postulant discovers that his life does not draw its value from some kind of usefulness for the world, that he doesn’t fit into any kind of social classification and does not justify his existence by some service he could render; this very day, he becomes a monk.”*

*Dom Gérard*

There are many souls who feel that they have been violently detached from their true roots. They are **touched by this thirst for eternity.** Young and middle aged, GenXers and Millennials, coming from all sorts of backgrounds and in every state of life.

They desire to follow this call into the “desert”, which can take many forms in our day and age, and God is fulfilling in them a life resembling that of our forefathers in the Faith. It is the silent martyrdom which will rebuild Christendom. “The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.” **“God is faithful!” and He will continue to call, to draw souls toward all that which is beautiful and everlasting.**



“The monastic institution has risen again and again from ashes. It is precisely the mission of the monk to represent the mark of Sanctity of the Church, to save, in the midst of the worst degradations of the world. Patience! That is the key! It is the virtue of martyrs, soldiers and monks.”

Dom Gérard

“To see God one must die.  
The risk of death is integral  
to the monastic vocation.”  
Dom Gérard

“Unless the grain of wheat falling to the ground die, itself remaineth alone, but if it die, it brings forth much fruit.” Jn. 12:24

Through this death to self and to the world, this sort of white martyrdom, monks copied manuscripts, drained the swamps, planted seeds, built monasteries, learned philosophy, perfected the sciences, sculpted, painted and wrote. They built Christendom.



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