

# A CONVERSION: A MIRACLE!

## CONVERSION: MYSTERY

What is a conversion? In the dictionary, it says: "The act of converting; the process of being converted; an experience associated with a definite and decisive adoption of religion; something converted from one use to another; mutation." To those definitions, I would dare add another that can be summed up in one single word: mystery. Why? Every time we listen to the account of a conversion, we never manage to understand it, to find a logical reason for it and even less to explain it appropriately with all the rationality we may claim to possess. In fact, all the conversions I have come to know about are nothing less than a miracle! For nothing in the times we are living, with the exception of a Work such as the Army of Mary, is conducive to a soul being able to gain Heaven. On the contrary!

If I bear witness today, it is simply to prove that it is only through a miracle that I am here. On my own, I can do nothing, I am nothing. I owe everything to the Lady who fills me with graces every day of my life.

## CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

I was born of practising Catholic parents. I am the third of four boys. At home, everyone went to Mass every Sunday and there were no questions asked. I served Mass on weekdays, rotating with my brothers and a few other boys in town. In spite of the illness that often laid my mother low, she would go to Mass every day and she said many rosaries. She always welcomed, with open arms, people who came to the house or who called. She never complained about anything or anyone. Furthermore, our Sunday meals were often shared with the parish priest or priests passing through.

As an adolescent, I began to distance myself somewhat from religion, and the values I had received from my parents were being compared with those of the world to which I was opening. I found it more and more difficult to resist outside pressure. Little by little, I began to adopt what, at the outset, I was easily able to reject and I began to hang around with people who were not very recommendable for the health of my soul. My mother did not hesitate to warn me and gave me two "weapons" with which to fight against this worldly invasion: a scapular and a rosary.

## NOT VERY RECOMMENDABLE FRIENDS

In college, I thought that, in order to be accepted, I had to bend to the demands of the elders... It was in that frame of mind that I participated in the initiation of the new students and that, afterwards, I continued to frequent quite regularly discotheques and evenings of pleasure. I began to neglect my studies, and if I was recognized at school, it was not because of my academic performance... My mother feared for my future, and how right she was! Unfortu-

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nately, two failures in my first fall session did not prevent me from beginning my second year of college following the same behavioral pattern, which led to another failure. My career risked being compromised. My dating with girls was disappointing.

## SALUTARY DATING

One evening, I admitted to a friend that I was tired of the kind of life I was leading and I hoped to meet a good girl so as to find peace again. A short time later, I met a beautiful young blond girl, named Johanne. We dated, and little by little we drew closer to one another. I saw in her all the qualities I was looking for. She had wonderful values and such a good influence on me that my mother immediately saw the positive effects in my conduct. She congratulated me on my choice and did not hesitate to urge me to be careful not to lose her.

Johanne and I had fairly similar tastes and we shared the same family and religious values. She possessed what I sought most in a woman: purity. I saw in her the ideal woman and mother. Everything in her pleased me. And yet, there was a detail I was unaware of...

## THE ARMY OF MARY?...

In fact, Johanne revealed to me, one Saturday night, that she and her family were members of the Army of Mary and that they regularly attended ceremonies where they prayed, listened to conferences, etc.

Perplexed, I sought information about this movement from those around me. With the answers that were given me, I had in hand weighty arguments to counteract what Johanne was explaining to me. I tried to find out and understand, but my manner of proceeding hurt her. I attacked the Army of Mary, but deep down, she was the one I was attacking. Given the difficulties that arose between us, those around me suggested that I break off the relationship. It upset me to leave a good girl like her just because of a matter of a religious nature. On the other hand, I hoped that this problem could be solved and I said to Johanne: "If we get married, I will never accept to let you go to Army of Mary meetings alone. Either we go together or you do not go at all. What kind of message will we give to our future children if we are opposed to each other on such an important issue?"

## "LIFE OF LOVE" – THE GRACE

That is when Johanne's father, calmly but firmly, unravelled, one by one, all the arguments I had against the Army of Mary and suggested I read *Life of Love*. "You have the choice," he said, "but remember one thing: grace does not come by twice."

Subsequently, everything went very

quickly. Johanne was invited to participate in a pilgrimage with the Army of Mary. At the same time, I began a new job at Mirabel, where, being lonesome for my family, I began reading *Life of Love*. What a discovery! In spite of the comments from my family who were warning me of the dangers of the Army of Mary, as soon as I stopped resisting, I was overcome by the strength and love the soul discovers as it reads the volumes of *Life of Love*.

My soul quivered more and more in unison with that of my beloved Johanne who was so far away, in Italy, on pilgrimage with the members of the Army of Mary.

I continued reading and, after her return, I continued dating. With her and her family, I spent hours speaking of spirituality. I discovered what rich and genuine spirituality could be, centered on the three pillars that are the Eucharist, Mary and the Pope. Our religion seemed to me so simple and so beautiful, thanks to *Life of Love*.

## ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE – A LITTLE FAMILY DEVELOPS

We were engaged at Christmas 1991. We were still quite young (I was 21 and Johanne was 20), but we were confident in the future. Under Mary's maternal protection, the special graces were not long in coming. With each step we took and in spite of the difficulties, we received confirmation that we were following the right path.

The wedding was set for August 22, 1992, which, without our knowing it, was the feast of Mary Queen. Father Hervé Lemay was our spiritual advisor, and he received special permission to bless our union in Saint Vallier de Bel-lechasse church.

I was so happy! I gave thanks to God, for I felt I had married a pearl. We took up residence at Saint-Janvier-de-Mirabel where I worked. Despite the fact that we were far away from family and lonesome, it was not long before we gave two little souls to God: Charles and Jean-François.

## PROGRESSION IN THE WORK

For my part, I kept committing myself more and more, becoming a member of the Family of the Sons and Daughters of Mary and then of the Oblate-Patriots. I read some books by Raoul Auclair, Marc Bosquart and Gabrielle Bossis. Having to travel a lot, I listened to Father Philippe Roy's catechism courses on cassette. I also had the time to say my rosary, and sometimes even the fifteen decades. This strengthened my soul and conditioned me to become better.

During this time, wishing to give another soul to God, we were looking for a bigger home, but without any luck because of a lack of financial means.



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Our plans were put on hold until later, with the promise of placing a statue of the Virgin wherever she would lead us. At that moment, everything seemed to be against us. Even the dates for my holidays, which had been delayed until the fall, were not convenient for me, but I had no choice. Now, at the end of the summer, a man from Montmagny who had heard that we wanted to move closer to our families, offered me a job in the region. He wanted to meet me the following Monday, and thanks to my delayed holidays, I was free!

#### A NEW JOB

I accepted the job that was offered me. All that remained was to find a home for our little family. As I recounted to my family the results of my interview, I was surprised to hear my older brother tell me that, on that same day and without reason, he had visited a house that was for sale or rent. It suited us perfectly and we rented it on the spot. Then one of my cousins who had a truck offered to move me without it costing me very much, with the help of my father and brothers. Under Mary's protection, the providential events followed one another.

Then Alexandra, Laura, Sarah and a beautiful boy, Benjamin, came to complete the family and fill the house. And, as promised, we set up a statue of the Virgin on our grounds.

#### SPECIAL PROTECTION

Like all families, our children are very active and love to play, with all the risks this entails: cuts and scratches and bruises that are not too serious. But one day in May, Laura received a hard blow on the head from a baseball bat. Following the traumatic shock, she lost consciousness. Johanne called the ambulance, and as she waited, put the Miraculous Medal and Marie-Paule's picture on Laura. From emergency, she was transferred to the *Enfant-Jésus* Hospital in Quebec City for more advanced tests.

She had a fractured skull, but there was only very minor cerebral bleeding. She did not need an operation, left the hospital after two days, and to everyone's surprise, was jumping on her bed on the morning of her departure. She is our little miracle girl. There were no side effects to this adventure. Even the doctors were astounded by the evidence of the miracle granted us by the Lady of All Peoples.

Our life continued with the joys and small daily worries. I was looking to improve the family's financial position, for there were many needs. I was offered good jobs, but I would have had to move the family elsewhere or be absent for long periods of time, something I did not want to do because Johanne and I had agreed that we wanted to have a large family and I did not want to be far from them.

Some time later, again in the month of May, Charles, our oldest son, developed worrisome symptoms. After a consultation at emergency, the verdict fell. He was suffering from type 1 diabetes. That was quite a shock. We felt



**The Fournier family - The parents, Johanne and Denis, with their six children: Charles (15 yrs), Jean-François (13 yrs), Alexandra (11 yrs), Laura (9 yrs), Sarah (7 yrs) and Benjamin (3 yrs).**

badly for our son Charles who would have to live with this handicap for the rest of his life. Prayer sustained us. We could only entrust ourselves to Mary and ask her to give us the strength to accept the trial. Life continued on its course. We knew that, in spite of the trials, the Lady was always watching over us, for we had the proof of this.

#### TRIALS... THE LADY IS WATCHING...

In fact, on January 10, 2006, while renovations were being done for the company I worked for, a violent fire broke out and burned everything to the ground. It was an almost total loss.

Upon learning that the company's buildings were on fire – for I was not on the premises at the time – I thought of my computer and all my things. I immediately turned to the Lady of All Peoples asking her for her protection. Unfortunately, because of the violence of the blaze, nothing was left. The next morning, I went back to search through the rubble, hoping to find something intact, but without success, until a colleague drew my attention to a piece of furniture that was completely off to one side. It was my desk. I could not understand what it was doing there. It was almost intact. What a surprise to find various files, as well as our family picture which, in spite of the fire, the smoke and the water, was still nice. I hastened to bring it back home to show Johanne. We had received, once again, the confirmation that Mary was watching over us. She was protecting the family in a very special way.

This trial was very difficult for me and my colleagues at work. What would happen to the business? Would our jobs still be available? The general manager resigned and the future seemed quite uncertain. Despite all of that, I had the desire to apply for the position of general manager, but, in spite of my experience, someone from the outside was hired.

Seeing that there was no possibility for advancement or any improvement in the family's revenue if I did not pur-

sue my studies, I registered to attend university, with my wife's consent, all the while continuing to work at my job where I was quite successful, in fact. Once again, the Virgin was with us.

#### GENERAL MANAGER OF A COMPETING FIRM?...

She was with us to such an extent that I wondered if she had not placed microphones somewhere so that certain employers in the area could hear my conversations with my wife. In fact, one evening, the president of a competitor's firm called me, in order to offer me the position of general manager before it was posted. What a surprise! I no longer knew what to do: go and work for a competitor? What would my clients and my colleagues at work think of this? I risked losing my reputation. I thought that this was the Evil One's doing, and I said to myself that the Blessed Virgin would see to helping me out. I informed my employer of the situation. He made enticing promises and exerted a lot of pressure on me to stay, but I still went for the interview for the proposed position, and to my great surprise, I was informed that I was given the job. However, when faced with the contract to be signed, and completely confused, I decided to stay with the company for which I was already working. I liked this firm to the very depths of my being; I was quite successful in my work and I felt secure. In spite of that, Johanne and Father Denis Laprise did not understand my decision.

A few days later, I came back on my decision – a surprising reaction on my part –, saying to myself: "What do I have to lose if the Blessed Virgin is with me?" So I tried again a second time. Everything was against me, but I had Mary and my Miraculous Medal. I knew that I had already disappointed many people, but I accepted to ignore what those around me thought and, despite the fact that someone else had applied, I obtained the position. The reasons given were the valuable experience acquired in the past, but most of all, my values.

#### "LIFE OF LOVE": A FORMATION SUPERIOR TO ANY UNIVERSITY COURSE MANUAL

Today, I am reading *Life of Love* for the second time, and I am discovering even more in it: answers and explanations concerning sound management, the management of human resources, a family, etc. These volumes contain a résumé that cannot be found in any university course manual. I do not want to say it too loudly, but those volumes help me do a better job as a general manager and also to be a better father. I am not perfect, far from it, but I do my best. I have a few diplomas, of course, but not in administration. I rely on my personal experience and upon the information I gleaned over time in order to complete my tasks. For the rest, I leave it up to the Blessed Virgin to help me and to watch over the business. It is surprising how I understand today the situations of the past. I recall my

former job, my relationships at work, the behavior and the attitudes adopted with the authority, etc. The experience acquired there helps me a great deal today. However, I also understand that the present sheds light on the past. "If I had known...", I sometimes say to myself.

### **NOTHING CAN BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED**

Furthermore, in seeking to find again a greater spiritual fervor, this second reading of *Life of Love* has allowed me to assess my life and it has been a

good examination of conscience. Even if I won a few battles in the past, I can see that I will have to fight every day in order to maintain faith, hope and charity. Nothing can be taken for granted.

I am dreaming of the day when, like the great saints, I will have a heart burning with love for God and the Blessed Virgin. Sometimes there are nights when I think of my work and other things, but I ask Mary to give me the strength to advance and I say the prayer of the Lady of All Peoples whenever I come up against a difficult situation. I

have entrusted the firm, my future and that of my family to her. May she guide me there where she really wants me to be. May her will be done and not mine!

It is on my knees that I give thanks to the Lady for all she gives us, and I ask her to keep me faithful until I reach heaven. Before so many graces, the only thing I can do is to embrace and love with all my heart the cross the Lady puts before me and asks me to make it blossom. Glory to the Quinterinity!

**Denis Fournier**

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