

# The World of Thérèse

## France, Church and State in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century

by Rev. Leopold Glueckert, O.Carm.

### Introduction

The French church and state which Thérèse Martin knew so well grew out of a complex blend of historical factors. She lived her short life assuming, even taking for granted, a lot of things that never occur to us. There was a huge corpus of political and cultural baggage that made her immediate world what it was. Her writings demonstrate that she knew a great deal about world events, political issues, newspaper editorials, and so forth, both inside and outside of France. But this consciousness of hers completely eludes us today, unless we make an effort to revoke those issues which were never too far from her own mind. If we, a century later, intend to "put on" the mind of Thérèse to really learn from her in the manner that her thoughts developed, and to see things as she saw them, then we must tap into that huge category called "background" or "context." In this article, I propose to do just that.

The records tell us that Thérèse was born in 1873, entered Carmel in '88, and died in '97. These years perfectly span the formation time of the Third French Republic, from the first provisional governments as far as the Dreyfus case. They present a political crucible of the sort of wrangling and very stormy church-state disputes that were just too big to ignore. Thérèse grew up knowing every detail simply by reading the morning paper or talking with someone else who had. And yet that same resilient republic which so many good Catholics hated from its inception would eventually turn out to be rugged enough and adaptable enough to survive until the French defeat by Hitler in 1940.

Thérèse certainly found her own age a very exciting time to be alive. French colonies were being founded in Indochina, Africa and the Pacific. Missions were certainly a part of her thought and her prayer. The popular enthusiasm for discovery and conquest in faraway places was matched in the French church of her own day by a vigorous missionary zeal to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of those lands -- a zeal which Thérèse herself shared. She did not become the patroness of the missions by accident. And finally, most of her life also coincides with the reign of Pope Leo XIII, who adapted the Church so successfully to the modern world, and proved that there was genuinely life after Papal States.

So what I plan to do is to briefly discuss the political conditions within France, relations between the French state and the church, and the French Third Republic seen in the context of the world.

Thérèse was born in 1873, as were such notables as Enrico Caruso and Sergei Rachmaninoff. Pope Pius IX still had five years to live, but they would not be very happy ones for him. Former Emperor Napoleon III died in exile that same year, settling forever the question of his possible

return to power in France. There was a provisional president who was elected, and the beginnings of the Third Republic were finally, agonizingly, set into motion. The weather that year was pleasant. The harvest was good. The German armies were finally leaving France after a very bitter occupation following the Franco-Prussian war. And in the faraway United States, the gunsmiths of the Remington company decided to diversify their manufacturing - they started building typewriters.

It was time for some very hot political debate, and in a great sense, soul-searching, for these people of France, who suddenly found themselves without a government ... again. They asked: "How should we put it together this time? What will be most acceptable to the majority of French citizens? How should we avoid the mistakes of the past and still preserve the good things which have made France literally the center of Europe for so many centuries?" These were the questions on the minds of nearly everyone. The biggest problem was a built-in conflict, nearly a century old, between the two blocs of ideas which divided and polarized most French citizens in a way that we find difficult to even imagine. In one bloc, we have a union between religion and royalism. In the opposing bloc, we have the republicans, the revolutionaries, the anticlericals: the people who represented (as far as most practicing Catholics were concerned) atheism, anarchy, disorder, persecution, and everything else they wanted to avoid. But before we can understand the time of Thérèse, we must backpedal just a bit to consider the French Revolution itself.

## Part I

Although the big Revolution had occurred nearly a century before, nearly every political dispute of Thérèse's own time had roots there. And even though there had been no major upheaval of the same magnitude since Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, there were still many of the same questions of the whole knotty problem of church-state relations which were not yet resolved. These questions were still open wounds, which were festering, and creating great problems for otherwise good people. Before 1789, that is, before the Revolution, both the monarchy and the established church had been considered the two venerable pillars of society. Both were quite distinct institutions, of course, but they tended to blend together in the popular mind: when you thought of one, you were naturally reminded of the other, for better or for worse. So when the members of the National Assemblée, at the very beginning of the Revolution, set their sights on reforming the monarchy, the church was the next, obvious thing on their agenda.

From the standpoint of the church and the religious orders in France, many of those who took leadership during the Revolution were very unfriendly to traditional religion. Although many of these people were noble, educated and high-minded individuals, they also tended to follow the thinkers of the Enlightenment. Among the reformers, there were many agnostics, Freemasons and Deists, but very few devout, practicing Catholics. This is the heart of our problem. Unfortunately, there was very little to admire in the leadership of the French church before the Revolution. Every single one of the bishops in 1789 was from a noble family, there were 110 commoners not even one. And some of these were also agnostics, in spite of their

offices. Many of these aristocratic prelates - those who were part of the problem - were from specific families where there was a long tradition of church service, mainly in the upper clergy, of course. One such dynasty was the de Rohan family; there was a Cardinal de Rohan at the time who was just the latest in a long line of bishops, prelates, and abbots going back for centuries. Another clan was the Tallyrand-Perigord family. Its latest champion was the famous Maurice de Tallyrand who would go down in history as one of its most astute politicians, as well as a famous turncoat. He began as bishop of Autun, even though he was one of those agnostics. He was a superb administrator, and very consistently followed what his family expected of him, which was to hold a bishopric or two open for them. He was quite good at that. Preaching, sacraments, liturgy were expendable, because nearly everyone considered them so.

People did not trust bishops to do those things well in the French church. Bishops were not expected to be theologians, but to create jobs. One had to look elsewhere for most of the holiness, most of the piety, most of the good, hard work which made their church a true "people of God." The virtuous were certainly alive and well -- France did not have a dead church by any means. But to find these best people you had to look in convents, in country rectories, in peasant communities. Living in some farming hamlets was almost like growing up in a novitiate, because of the many holy people there.

There was certainly no general elitism in these places. Still, many bishops were so far detached from ordinary, good Catholics and their concerns, that they were very much part of the overall problem. They were administrators and princes first, and pastors as a very poor second, if at all. The chasm between them and the lower clergy was immense. So when the crisis finally hit, the church went through the Revolution quite badly, as we will see. One can understand a few reasons why educated people of that time might view their church as an obsolete, dying institution, a block to progress, a refuge for superstition and emotional hysteria.

After all, the Deists of the Enlightenment had very effectively sold their image of the Creator-God as a "Divine Watchmaker:" a powerful and intelligent being, who could create this wonderfully complex universe with its interlocking physical laws, but who was likewise completely devoid of any emotion and feeling. In other words, the Deists' God was total intellect God, literally, didn't care about the world. So why should anyone else care in the slightest about making contact with this aloof, unfeeling Creator-Spirit? Can you imagine anything further from the way Thérèse looked at God? There was. only one century of difference, but it was. like night and day.

So for Enlightenment partisans, some church institutions had obvious social value, such as hospitals, schools, or work among the poor. Other practices like religious poverty, celibacy, intercessory prayer, penance, and fasting were looked upon as valueless (because God wouldn't care) and possibly even dangerous, insofar as they promoted ignorance and misunderstanding among credulous people about the scientifically perfect universe. Seen in this context, people in a cloistered convent might seem perfectly harmless to those of us who know something about them, but they represented a possible threat to people who were

schooled in the Enlightenment. They represented much of what these forward-looking modernizers hated and wanted to destroy. And they almost succeeded. Even a century later, the Lisieux Carmel represented the failure of the anti-clericals' earlier campaign to eliminate religious orders. When the Third Republic was founded; there were at least some of these anti-clericals, a "remnant of Babylon," who felt that they had to try again.

Beginning in the fall of 1789, a series of laws were passed which were intended to smash the political power of the church, and systematically dismantle the fabric of religious life. In October of that year, all church property was seized and sold to pay off the national debt. The original suggestion was made by a bishop (Talleyrand) who was already smelling a change in the political wind. In February of the following year; religious orders and congregations were abolished and all communities. suppressed, except for those doing "practical" apostolic work. Their property also went to the state.

In July of 1790, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was published. According to that law, priests. were ordered to take an oath to the state, and became salaried employees in what amounted to a national, state church. Religious vows could be declared null and void if the individual would simply ask for release before a civil magistrate; most religious were aggressively encouraged to do so. There were government commissions which made the rounds. of religious houses and insisted on speaking with each individual in the community. They proceeded to explain the great favor which was now being offered by the revolutionary government, (They assumed, of course, that the religious were all there as semi-prisoners, against their will, and not voluntarily.) There were some religious who decided to take advantage of their new liberation, and were released from all legal bonds to their orders; most of these, with their newfound "freedom," then began to look for jobs. But all the rest, those who decided to stay, were still not allowed to live in community, wear religious habits and pray in public. So they could continue, if they wished, in their obscurantism, but the government was not going to make it easy for them.

We know that the Carmelites, as a religious family, were wiped out in the Revolution. This means that eight provinces of the Ancient Observance were eliminated; and there were another six provinces. of Discalced friars destroyed. This translates to 130 houses of the Ancient Observance with 721 friars, much diminished from the numbers of just a century before. The Discalced lost seventy-nine houses of friars and sixty-five monasteries of cloistered nuns. Some of the Discalced religious managed to maintain their identity long enough to refound a house here or there, but for the Ancient Observance, the suppression was permanent. There were no successful foundations after the Revolution, and still have not been. For the past two centuries, all French Carmelites. have been Discalced.

Some of these refoundations took place because the religious simply went underground to survive. Some communities, in effect, never really died out, even though their houses were gone. In both branches of the Order; there were priests or brothers or sisters who managed to maintain connections with one another. They lived a genuine "catacomb" existence until it

was finally safe to reemerge once the political storms had blown over. But such a success did not happen all that quickly or all that often.

We have the horrible image of many priests and religious being killed during the Reign of Terror, and there certainly were large numbers of martyrs. But since it appears that most of those sent to the guillotine were not Carmelites, it is fair to assume that most of our evicted religious simply blended back into the general population and attempted to carry on as best they could. In effect, these religious were condemned to the slow death of suppression. We do know of a Carmelite connection to the September Massacres of 1792, which began the bloodbath against the clergy and religious. This first episode of the Reign of Terror began at the Discalced Carmelite house on the Rue de Vaugirard. That house had been allowed to function a bit longer than others, principally because many of the friars of the community had favored many of the good changes enacted by the Revolution. But in time even these friars were turned out and the municipal government promptly turned their house into a prison for members of the "black clergy;" diocesan priests who refused to take the oath of loyalty to the government. Quite a number of these were killed in early September Massacres (there and elsewhere) were probably some 1400 people, including three bishops and several hundred priests - all killed by people who didn't know their names. It was a frightful example of generic, mindless fear, combined with a certain element of pent-up rage against the church for real and imagined offenses from the past. The revolutionary government was able to document the fact that there were no substantial charges against any of the individuals killed.

When it comes to Carmelite martyrs of the Revolution, we are probably most familiar with the sixteen nuns of Compiègne, the sisters of this particular monastery were steadfast enough to stand against the discriminatory laws, and thus became immortalized in the Dialogues of the Carmelites by Bernanos and Poulenc. Both artists do a fine job of highlighting the nuns' heroism, albeit without following much of the details of what really happened to them. It is worth noticing, by the way, that these sixteen very heroic women were executed only ten days before the virtual end of the Reign of Terror. I suspect that the spectacle of these sisters being sent to the guillotine, wearing as much of the Carmelite habit as they could piece together from bits of salvaged clothing, was just too much for public opinion to accept. I have a hunch that there was enough revulsion in even the most bloodthirsty members of the Paris mob, people who had seen thousands of prisoners killed for real and Imagined crimes, to see that these were not "enemies of the people" in any sense. Maybe the Reign of Terror had gone on just a bit too long. Within less than two weeks, Maximillian Robespierre, the Jacobin leader who was the heart and soul of the Terror, was himself captured and sent to the guillotine. Once he was dead, the Terror stopped as well.

By the time of Napoleon, only a few years later, one of the first things that the self-proclaimed First Consul knew that he had to do was finally work out some kind of peace between church and state in France. One of Napoleon's most successful actions was the signing of the Concordat of 1801 between France and Pope Pius VII. In so doing, restored effective peace with the pope and the French bishops, and they in turn allowed a certain degree of

compromise on such issues as the loss of church hands, the long overdue reform of diocesan boundaries, a certain amount of state influence over selection of bishops, and so forth.

But it is important to remember that the Concordat, while it ended the persecution and the cold war with the church in general, did not help the religious orders one bit. As shown, the religious orders themselves were seen as subversive organizations, as people who were preserving the obscurantism of the Middle Ages, as it was conceived; above all, since the orders were international, they were deemed "agents of a foreign power" (the one in Rome). Even among the bishops, the orders were not a high priority. So it would take quite a while before the religious in France would be able to make any sort of recovery.

At this point, it will help to briefly distinguish two trends within the French church: Gallicanism and Ultramontanism. Gallicanism favored a strongly national church which was relatively independent of Rome, although technically "in communion" with the pope (whatever that actually meant in practice). The other tendency was Ultramontanism, which favored a very close collaboration between France and the papacy. Now in theory these two trends will continue, with a few modifications, all through the next century, until the time of Thérèse. By that time, both of them were beginning to wither and die, or more accurately, blend together and salvage the good points of both. The "good" reason for Ultramontanism in the nineteenth century was the need to respond to the post-revolutionary society with a strongly centralized church, uniform in doctrine, clerical lifestyle, discipline, and governed by an infallible pope and a watchful Roman Curia. The Gallicans, on the other hand, favored a strongly French church with only ceremonial ties to Rome. They believed that the church would lose all influence in modern society unless it had very deep roots in the national character and local institutions, with only a very loose federal, collegial structure.

In practice, this boiled down to something a bit less noble, such as which way money was allowed to flow. Historically, contributions sent from France to Rome were always among the first items to be eliminated whenever this problem came up. Essentially, the bishops were declaring a degree of financial independence from the need to support the papacy beyond what they felt was a properly symbolic level. Likewise, there was a great deal of pride and national sentiment in the Gallican position. They stressed the idea of a "splendid isolation" from foreign tampering, and glorified the concept of totally independent French prince-bishops who were supreme and unfettered in their own sees. They were not too favorable to religious orders, of course, since orders tended to be too international, and governed by the pope or by a Father General who lived somewhere other than France.

Unfortunately for the Gallicans, they discovered only too late that, by the time they nearly eliminated Roman influence (near the middle of the eighteenth century), they had isolated themselves from just the people who could have helped them against the revolutionary government. Ironically, the eighteenth century Gallicans doomed their church, because they were no longer able to appeal for any sort of international sympathy or aid. Just by way of contrast, we might recall that someone as recent as Titus Brandsma gloried in the idea that he belonged to a universal church which had nothing whatever to do with Dutch nationalism. He

was able to speak both in Holland and in Germany with much greater authority, simply because he was not bound to the political policies being promoted in those countries.

By contrast, the Ultramontane position was strong on centralization in Rome and all of the control that its policy implied. But it was also much better at following the global perspective, and not being swept away by national politics which, after all, have a way of changing around very quickly. Above all, the centralized Roman church was always much better at promoting mission activity in foreign lands, which of course weren't strong enough to have national churches. So from the perspective of what the church probably needed, at least in the nineteenth century, the centralized model seemed to work better when it was allowed to work at all.

## Part II

Now after the fall of Napoleon's Empire and the return of the monarchy in 1815, we have a long, extended period of what is collectively referred to as "the Restoration." I'm joining together several different regimes here because, for our purposes, they are all relatively equivalent to one another. We are going to ignore the differences between the Bourbon monarchy (which lasted for fifteen years) and the Orleanist monarchy (which ruled for the next eighteen years), as well as the very brief Second Republic, followed by the Second Empire (another twenty-two years). Both of these were controlled by the nephew of Napoleon I, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. He was elected president of the republic, then connived to get himself crowned Emperor Napoleon III. But all three of these regimes, at least in part, restored the principle that the monarchy (or the empire) protected and supported the Catholic Church. All three also went on to restrict the church, too, so it was not an entirely happy marriage. The church was certainly protected by these three regimes, but once again, it was not really helped.

By "help" I don't necessarily mean financial support -- money really had nothing to do with what the French church needed. What I'm referring to is the kind of help that persecutors give the Church: reining in some of the normal disorder making people rethink why they are following the Gospel, forcing discussion and defense of values, and so forth. Persecution is never comfortable for the Church or anyone else, but it has a way of keeping us fairly "lean and mean."

The restored church of 1815 was not the same one that had provoked such hatred in 1789. Although it had been shorn of much of its land and wealth, the Restoration church was much more spiritual and zealous, better disciplined and far more conscious of Gospel values than its predecessor. Most of the old prince-bishops had either died off, or been replaced, or had simply resigned and fled to save themselves. By the end of the nineteenth century, Catholics had regained their confidence and political power, especially in more conservative provinces, such as Thérèse's Normandy.

However, one problem remained. The church (the hierarchy in particular) continued to identify with hopeless royalist causes. (even after the Bourbon monarchy had been replaced in 1830), and promoted anti-republican sentiment. Unfortunately, they were generally not following the best of their own people. Most of the new prelates, the ones named after the Restoration, were very good bishops. They were generally holy, learned, hard working individuals. But they could not seem to let go of that old idea that royalism was essential to a free church. It was not until the time of the Third Republic, the time of Thérèse, that we begin to see the first glimmers of a new and conciliatory attitude: that maybe a strong, healthy, free-standing church could live within republic. Maybe all would get along. Maybe the mission efforts of the church would work after all ... even alongside republican institutions. Perhaps if one built in some basic controls within the republican constitution (who would even have thought that a century before?), maybe one might even be able to build the best church France ever had.

During the first Restoration of 1815, (the restoration of the ancient Bourbon family which had ruled France for centuries) the church was the most protected ever, but it was also the least effective.

After 1830, we have the Orleanist regime of King Louis Philippe -- from a junior branch of the Bourbon family -- which was administered largely by ministers. rather than the king. The most famous of these was François Guizot who, incidentally, was elected to Parliament from the district which represented Lisieux. This fact tells us something of the Lisieux voters: Guizot was a Protestant, but the voters were still broad-minded enough to go outside their own religious community to elect a deputy with obvious talent. Admittedly Guizot was a strong Conservative, but for the times in which he lived he developed a very good policy for France, and deserves to be remembered for that. One might also note that it was during the Orleanist period that the Carmelites were actually reestablished in France. Many of the convents of nuns had actually been restored secretly after the first restoration. It was not as though they were clandestine houses, just that they were "off the record," with no formal permissions. By 1880, when Thérèse herself was already considering religious life, there were 113 monasteries. of Discalced nuns in France. But only sixteen of them were "legal;" only sixteen of the total had gone through the red tape of getting the government's authorization, with all of the permits, clearances and legal safeguards to ensure their future as a functioning religious community. All the rest were a bit on thin ice. But the mere fact that nearly a hundred unofficial, illegal monasteries were still alive and flourishing indicates something about the enforcement procedures. Most magistrates, judges and police officials, agnostics or not, Freemasons or not, were certainly able to see that these sisters were doing no harm to the people at large. So when it came to "keeping the peace" in their districts, they nearly always asked "Why bother them?"

By 1839, the Discalced friars were able to begin refounding their community in France, too. And even though they sometimes continued to experience difficulties, the growth was fairly steady through the end of the century. In 1838, the year just preceding that event, the monastery of Lisieux was founded on the Rue de Liverot. The founders were sisters from the

monastery of Poitiers. I believe that Lisieux was one of the "legal" monasteries but once again, in Normandy, people were rather solidly religious. They liked the idea of having sisters nearby, praying for them and their needs, so they could overlook the legal niceties. It was probably a good reaction.

Following the overthrow of the Orleanist monarchy (1848) we have the Second Republic, the one with Louis Napoleon Bonaparte as president; but within four years this folded into the Second Napoleonic Empire, with the same man crowned as Emperor Napoleon III. He certainly was not the military genius that his uncle was, but as a political leader he was, I believe, far more successful. For one thing, he simply lasted longer. Likewise, he was able to keep the French people happy, proud, strong, growing and developing without the constant warfare that had monopolized so much of his uncle's genius for so long. Napoleon III did fight several wars of his own, but they were usually short, and at least at the beginning, successful for France. The one large exception was the final one, the Franco-Prussian war, which was his undoing.

One notes with interest that the same Louis Napoleon, before he got himself a crown and a number, was a wandering exile himself. He had made a couple of pathetic attempts to seize power in France, and also participated in a revolution in the Papal States (1831), of all places. He would have been captured by the police if it had not been for the good graces of the Archbishop of Spoleto, Giovanni Mastai-Ferretti (the future Pius IX). So, when the failed revolutionary became Emperor of the French, he made it a point to protect the Papal States and to support the pope's general foreign policy throughout Europe. I'm sure there was an element of gratitude there, but his best motive was just good political sense. Napoleon III was sharp enough to see that support of the French Catholics was crucial to his survival. He was a fairly conservative leader, and realized that all of the more radical forces were firmly against him; so the Catholics were too important to ignore.

### Part III

Following the defeat of the same Second Empire in 1871, Napoleon was sent into exile, and the "dreaded" Third Republic began to emerge. The new regime was crafted, ironically, by about 400 monarchist representatives (out of some 650) to the National Assembly. These men knew they wanted a crowned head for France, but were deeply split over who should be chosen. These deputies were Legitimists, Orleanists and a handful of leftover Bonapartists, but they absolutely refused to compromise with one another. The three factions hated one another so totally, that the only compromise possible was suggested by Adolphe Thiers: "A republic divides us least." So, the new provisional republic was born in the shadow of three pretenders: the Legitimist Count of Chambord, the Orleanist Count of Paw., and the now exiled Napoleon III, elderly and sick, but still wanting to return. Each of these wanted to sit on the one throne. But then the Assembly decided that there would be no throne.

The new Republic was fairly conservative, at least at the beginning. But it immediately took on a life of its own as a result of three distinct crises (which nearly match the next three decades:

the 1870's, 80's, and 90's). Gradually that regime turned into a somewhat more radical republic, which for us means. more anticlerical and anti-church. But in time It also passed through that stage as well.

The first of the crises I referred to was the "16th of May Affair." The new provisional president was one of Napoleon's old marshals, Patrice MacMahon. He was a strong conservative who wanted to keep the throne warm for a king. He didn't care which one, but he knew he didn't want a republic. Eventually, he tried a few too many highhanded tricks to manipulate parliamentary elections. French voters hate being told how to vote, so they kept voting against MacMahon's candidates ever more decisively. He finally accepted the inevitable and resigned, leaving the field open to genuine republican leadership.

The second of the formative crises was the Boulanger Affair, involving the young, very charismatic, intelligent and popular general, Georges Boulanger. It was the classic case of a "man on horseback," who looked like the one to solve all possible problems of the corrupt and self-serving republican monstrosity. There had been an extraordinary number of scandals involving civil servants and unpopular ministers, kickbacks on government contracts, taking care of the family with public money -- an all too familiar pattern.

General Boulanger looked like the ideal man to lead a coup. He made all the right political alliances and was elected to Parliament by wide margins in many districts, including one in Paris which had long been a republican stronghold. All of the regiments in the Paris garrison were ready to rise in support of him. But Boulanger decided that, on the night that everyone expected him to seize power, he would visit his mistress instead. Nobody in France ever forgot it. He never got another chance. He had to flee the country in 1889, the centennial of the Revolution, and committed suicide a few years later. Boulanger was the glorious coup d'état that never took place. Finally, in the 1890's, we have the famous and very divisive Dreyfus case. In France it is still referred to as simply "The Affair." Tragedy marked the case of Alfred Dreyfus: an army officer of Jewish family, born and raised in Alsace, a province annexed by Germany in 1871, and therefore enemy territory. He was falsely accused of selling military secrets to the Germans. Within a few years the guilty party became known, but Dreyfus had already been convicted in 1894 and sentenced to Devil's Island as a scapegoat, and the army refused to admit the mistake. There had been evidence suppressed in his trial, and the fraud was exposed in the newspapers with traumatic results for the army and the Conservatives. This case exploded all over the political landscape very close to the time of Thérèse's own death. The bitterness of the battle which followed polarized church and state still one more time, just when it had appeared that some compromise was possible. Unfortunately, many of the army officers who had railroaded poor Captain Dreyfus were good, practicing Catholics. Most of them were also solid Royalists. They saw Dreyfus, the Jew, the Republican, as a symbol of everything which had to be stamped out at all costs -- he represented everything "bad" in the republic.

This final explosion was just enough to spoil the Conservatives' plans one more time. By the time World War I broke out, many of the best French generals would be both devout Catholics and backer: of the republic: Foch, Pétain and others.

The life of Thérèse spans the final years of Pius IX and most of the reign of Leo XIII. This era saw many laws passed against church institutions. In 1875, independent universities were founded by the church to compensate for their exclusion from the Sorbonne and other venerable institutions. In 1879, there were laws against the Jesuits; in 1850 came laws against other religious orders, though not as severe as those of the previous century. By 1882 there was mandatory secular education for all children. Catholic schools were still allowed to function in addition to state schools, but not in place of them.

In this whole web of political wrangling arid bitter hard feelings, those who eventually brought about a reconciliation were the Catholics far-sighted enough to know that peace was essential. One person who gets high marks for this, of course, is Leo XIII. He did not share the sense of "hurt" which had paralyzed Pius IX, but still saw the truth of much of what Pius defended. This was the same Leo XIII who was born at Carpinetto Romano, where we find a lovely little cloistered monastery today. This is also the man who named one of the most successful healers in the French hierarchy, Cardinal Lavigerie.

Michael Lavigerie had been trained as a scholar and pastor, with studies in Lebanon, where he came to know firsthand about Moslems and Maronite Christians. He was appointed Archbishop of Algiers, a rather awkward colonial diocese with almost no native Catholics. Still, he turned out to be a wonderful choice: this was the man who founded the White Fathers and White Sisters, who became a first rate reconciler and missionary. He was also instrumental in the abolition of the slave trade, which was a major block to conversions among black Africans. In 1881, the pope appointed him Vicar Apostolic of the ancient see of Carthage, then made him a Cardinal and named him Primate of all Africa, as rewards for a job well done.

But then he asked something much harder. Leo XIII told Labigerie that he was the man to facilitate a dialogue with the republic. To do this, he would first have to convince the Royalists to abandon their siege mentality. "Rally to the Republic" -- this was the political program known as the Ralliement. Convince Catholics to support the good things the republic does, and the church will be fine. Lavigerie was apprehensive, but the pope just nodded wisely and said "I know you'll do the tight thing." And he did.

Six weeks. later, the French Mediterranean fleet docked In Algiers. The Governor was away, and Lavigerie was the ranking dignitary in the city. He was therefore expected to provide a luncheon for these naval officers, most of whom, naturally, were Royalist Catholics. So he decided to propose a carefully worded toast to the republic. This is what he said:

Union, in view of the past which still bleeds and the future which is always menacing, is at this moment our supreme need. Union is also -- may I say -- the first wish of the church and her pastors at all degrees of the hierarchy. Most certainly the church does not ask us to dismiss

either the memory of France' past glories or those whose loyalty and services pay tribute both to them and to their country. But when the will of the people has been clearly stated, when the form of government they choose has nothing in it contrary to the principles which alone can give life to Christian and civilized nations and when, in order save one's Country from the pitfalls which threaten it, sincere adhesion to this form of government becomes necessary, then the moment has at last arrived to declare that the period of test arid trial is over and we all must unite, despite sacrifice: which arise to work as one for the future and the salvation of the country.

The toast goes on, but here we have the gist. When these officers heard these words, one could have heard a pin drop. Then they silently filed out of the room in protest, at which time a small band which the Cardinal had organized outside struck up the Marseilles, the republican anthem. Needless to say, the blast was heard all over the French empire. Every royalist family felt outraged. Lavignerie was insulted by countless letters and newspaper articles, and many of the best contributors to his mission funds told him that he would get nothing more from them. And he got no support whatever from the rest of the hierarchy. Perhaps worst of all, even the Republicans offered no sign of friendship or recognition of his courageous stand. Lavignerie would eventually die (in 1892) before the storm blew over, probably feeling very much a failure.

But a few years later, about the time Thérèse was nearing death herself (could we posit some cause and effect here?) there were two bishops, then three more, then some major prelates who finally stood up and declared that they agreed in principle with the efforts at reconciliation. Leo XIII had already written an encyclical specifically for France called *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes* in which he also supported the Ralliement: the partnership with the republic in all things which did not go against Christian truth. Within another decade, virtual peace was at hand.

This whole series of bitter memories, not only of the republics of the past, but of all the persecutions, the stormy origins of the Third Republic, France's crushing defeat by the Germans in 1870-71, and the national pride that had been violated, ... these were all still open wounds. We have the "16th of May Affair," the traumatic Boulanger and Dreyfus crises, and all of the name-calling and verbal attacks which were exchanged. But gradually, they began to break down.

Many have seen Alain Cavalier's film *Thérèse*. It very accurately reflects these conflicts with its well crafted lines, such as the workman's "Vive la République." There was also the doctor who said to the mother superior, "This monastery should be torched and burned to the ground." When this film ran in France during 1986, that statement was greeted with sporadic applause. These issues are not dead, even today. Far from it. Not all of the hurts are healed, even now, but we are getting there.

Thérèse's life and work took place in the wake of these events; they were front-page news in the world that she knew and prayed for. If we plan to see what she did in context, then we

also, as contemporary believers, must, be willing to look beneath the surface to appreciate and treasure them as they really were.