

ST. JULIE BILLIART - NOVENA DAY 7 JULIE, THE REFUGEE

Take a moment to center yourself and enter into that sacred space deep within
"Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here"



JULIE'S VOICE

"Courage my daughters, courage. That's what we need in our century.
A lively faith must make us conquer all kinds of difficulties."

PRAYER

Slowly pray the psalm below, for yourself, for a refugee you know or for one of the people in the picture

Save me Lord from those intent on harming me
who plan to bring about my downfall.
Protect me from their anger and their evil deeds
and the poison of their words that seek to destroy me.
Their words are not to be trusted.
Protect me from their hypocrisy and evil schemes.
Do not let them triumph over me.

Lord, you hear the voices of the poor,
the homeless and oppressed.
Hear me now as I call on you in my need.
Let your truth and justice guide me so that
I may live for ever in your love.

Adapted from Psalm 139

JULIE'S STORY

In her life Julie experienced many times what it was like to be a refugee. With the advent of the French Revolution she was forced to leave her family in Cuvilly and take shelter in nearby Gournay. From there she had to be moved in a hay cart to Compiègne where her residence was moved five times because of the danger to her life. During this time Julie was paralyzed and only had her niece Felicity to help her yet she could say, "You know that in periods of darkness we can see nothing at all but we can do nothing better than wait for the sun to come out."

After the Revolution Julie moved to Amiens where the little congregation of Notre Dame was born. However, Julie's vision of how the Sisters must respond to the needs of the times clashed with those of a young priest who made up stories about Julie and reported this to the Bishop. The situation became really severe and eventually Julie had to leave her beloved France and move to Belgium, where the Bishop welcomed the valuable work the Sisters were doing. Julie was now in a country where she did not know the language or customs of the people. Yet throughout all these difficulties Julie relied on her good God, trusting that all would be well. The people of Belgium must have responded well to the refugees from France because vocations soared and schools were opened not only in Namur where the Sisters settled but in many of the outlying districts.

REFLECTION

As we think of the thousands of people today who are forced to leave their homeland, sometimes like Julie for religious reasons, we are reminded by Pope Francis that "the anxious face of the apparent stranger is the muddied, bloodied visage of Christ. It is easy to get used to the suffering of others: it doesn't affect me; it doesn't concern me; it's not my business." Throughout Julie's exile, she encountered courageous and good people who put their own lives at risk to welcome and support her.

Take time to look at the picture with your heart and ask yourself: what am I doing to help and support refugees today? What is my attitude? Do I see them as an annoyance, a problem for politicians or a piece of refuse cluttering a public space?

Julie had to leave behind everything she knew as she left France and entered Belgium, trusting the good God along the way. We face an uncertain future. When will this covid-19 pandemic be over? When can our residents return to some sense of normalcy? In the midst of such uncertainty, how do we place our faith and trust in God, that someday we too can be safe once again.



REVIEW OF SESSION

What has touched you about this time of prayer?