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Mother Clara: An Authority at the Service of God and Life



An authority at the service of God, the Church, life, each hospitaller Sister and the poor, was the rhythm of Mother Clara's heart. An authority marked by obedience to the last consequences. After the sudden death of Father Beirão, Mother Clara was faced with orders from the Patriarch of Lisbon, Bishop José Sebastiao Neto. As soon as he took over the Government of the Patriarchate of Lisbon, he began to get involved in the guidance of the Mother House and the Hospitallers, demanding a strict account of everything from the Foundress. He appointed directors, chaplains and confessors for the Hospitallers and they were expected to take note of what was going on and report it to him, which naturally led to frictions and conflicts of authority. The Patriarch also appointed the Guardian of the Convent of Varatojo as Visitor, ordering him to visit all the houses and take any measures he deemed necessary. All this on the grounds of Mother Clara's poor health and his interest in the Congregation.

(Cf. MENDES DE MOURA, Rosa Helena. *POSITIO Super vita, virtutibus et famasancitatis Mariae Clarae a Iesu Infante*, Vol. I Informatio, Romae, 2002, pgs. 22-23; 28).

Since the early days of Confhic's foundation, Mother Clara sought to govern under the direction and advice of the Founder, from whom she received decisions with confidence, a spirit of faith, humility and service. The spirit of service of our beloved Foundress extended in different directions, mainly, visiting the Sisters wherever they were on mission. As Superior General this was her duty, however she did it with precision and did not think about avoiding any effort. In the pouring rain, gusty wind, crossing streams, that were often rocky or sandy, she had to endure wet feet in the middle of winter and which were often bruised, but always on the way. The means of transport were not always the best. Although she was born in a "golden cradle", accustomed to the comforts and delicacies of life, Mother Clara edified everyone with her way of doing things naturally and joyfully. Seeking to fulfil her desire to imitate the Master, she sought to say yes to wherever Her Spouse would send her, with light feet and the eyes of her soul, following him with love and piety.

(Cf. MENDES DE MOURA, Rosa Helena. *Maria Clara do Menino Jesus sua gente e sua obra*, Coimbra, 2013, pgs.232-233).

With a generous heart, despite the opposition of Freemasonry, she offered her Sisters to serve at the Military Hospital of Lisbon, to treat the soldiers who showed extreme delicacy towards the most humble and defenseless, in the campaigns in Africa. The spirit of service to the Church and the poor led Mother Clara to the willingness to serve everyone, showing herself to be selfless and generous, renouncing even what she was entitled to and needed. Attentive to the most unprotected, she would go to great lengths to help them, putting at their service Sisters, works and material resources, obtained with her own labour and with the alms and donations made to the Congregation.

Desiring to make God known and loved in all times and places, Mother Clara did not hesitate to send her Sisters to serve in other climates and continents. Thus, she wrote a beautiful page of love and faith in the life of the Congregation and in Portuguese history, even taking the risks and sacrifices that cost the Congregation, constituting a true sacrifice that she faithfully and persistently maintained until the end. This fact can only be explained by the overwhelming desire for service, which devoured her, in order to win souls for Christ and cooperate in their salvation.

Bold in the service of charity with greatness of soul, she often dared more than seemed humanly possible. The root of Mother Clara's life was the awareness of having received a mission that she had to carry out with courage and fidelity, always placing herself in the breach when it came to the service of God, the Sisters and the Congregation.

(Cf. MENDES DE MOURA, Rosa Helena. *POSITIO Super vita, virtutibus et fama sanctitatis Mariae Clarae a Iesu Infante*, Vol. I Informatio, Romae, 2002, pgs. 28, 71, 73-74,104,106).