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A FEW STROKES ON THE SPIRITUAL AND HUMAN FIGURE OF MOTHER TRINIDAD DE LA SANTA MADRE IGLESIA

As it has been reported in different languages and in many news outlets, last July 28th, Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia departed from this world to go with God to Eternity. That Eternity she so much longed for, and which she so urgently cried out for with nostalgic yearnings; longings which sometimes became so difficult for her to hold back. That Eternity is where we hope God may have welcomed her forever.

In her book "FRUITS OF PRAYER" she wrote:
"My thirst for God is as torturous as jealousies, terrible as death, blazing as fire... Therefore, Love, when will You come for me?" (2,170)

With the death of Mother Trinidad, a voice has fallen silent in the Church. A living and vibrant song of the Church has been stilled, and its sound cannot be heard any longer on earth; even if we men, on account of our dullness, most of the time do not listen to the voices of the Spirit.

The Reason for a Question

Currently, around one thousand Catholic bishops receive and read her works with admiration and gratitude. These writings by Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia are sent to them on a regular basis.

Among these works "LIGHT IN THE NIGHT - THE MYSTERY OF FAITH GIVEN WITH LOVING WISDOM," is a title with more than one million copies sold or distributed. The Collection

is made up of small, neatly edited, pocket-sized and easy-to-read booklets which readers enjoy at prayer, in the church or at other moments of stillness and calm.

Hundreds of thousands have already visited the website of The Work of the Church (www.laobradelaiglesia.org) where one can read, watch, listen to, and download writings, videos, talks, etc., of Mother Trinidad, and access extensive and informative references about her life and activity.

Thousands of priests from all over the world, as well as lay men and women from every walk of life, receive the writings of Mother Trinidad through different means. Many have participated in one of the different retreats organized by Mother Trinidad herself following her desire to present the true face of the Church to all: "*The Plan of God in the Church*," "*Days of retreat on the Mystery of God in the Church*," "*Church Experiences*," etc.

Hundreds of Communities of Consecrated life of contemplative and active life, as well as many other Orders and Religious Institutes are also discovering the infinite richness of the Church through the profound insights - full of wisdom and love - of Mother Trinidad. They are enlivened by the rushing stream of divine and ecclesial life which God has poured forth in the Church for the profound and authentic renewal of the same. A renewal willed and requested by God since the time of the Second Vatican Council.

Pope John Paul II, –now “Saint John Paul II, Pope”– entrusted a parish in Rome to The Work of the Church. The name of the parish, chosen by the Holy Father himself, “Our Lady of Valme,” is especially venerated in *Dos Hermanas*, the birthplace of Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia.

On February 3, 1996, the Holy Father welcomed Mother in a prolonged private audience.

On December 15, 1996, he paid a personal visit to her at her residence, at a time when she was gravely ill and confined to bed.

On December 20, 1997, Pope St. John Paul II acknowledged the uniqueness of The Work of the Church by approving it as an “Ecclesial Institution of Pontifical Right.”

By this time, Saint John Paul II had a deep knowledge of Mother Trinidad through the fifty-nine letters she had sent to him. Over the course of this extensive correspondence, she shared openly and simply with the Supreme Pontiff God’s communications to her soul! Transcendental communications aimed at the re-emerging, blossoming and the renewal of the Church!!

She also shared with the Pope the urgent and pressing requests which she had spiritually received involving God’s designs to make Himself known in the depths of His mystery as well as His loving plans for all His children – sheltered by Christ, through Mary in the spacious and loving heart of Holy Mother Church.

By virtue of the strength of these requests, and in light of deeper, richer and ineffable experiences, this imperative was embedded in the soul of Mother Trinidad:

*“Go and tell it...!” “This is for everyone...!”
“The richness of the Church is for all!”*

As if crushed under the weight of that compelling and urgent imperative, she kept on repeating:

“I don’t know anything...! I just sing the wonders that I have seen in God’s Bosom.”

That same song of the Church “*full of beauty and replete with Divinity,*” “*an unshakeable tower of strength,*” “*strong as an army in battle array,*” “*a fruitful Mother full of children,*” turned into a lament, an unprecedented mournful elegy, when she saw “*the Church torn apart by the children who had left Her Mother’s bosom,*” “*covering Her jewels with a cloak of mourning;*” when she saw the Church “*thrust on the ground and tearful, breathless and bent over;*” appearing to be stained “*by the sins of Her children who have thus left Her,*” or “*engulfed by a dark, dense cloud of confusion that does not allow one to see the face of God that through Her is shown to us.*” Or... Or... or at the many times and in the many different ways by which the Lord has presented the Church to her!

The most overwhelming experience for Mother Trinidad was that always! always! the Church “*turned to her, and asked her for help.*”

For many years Mother Trinidad pleaded, she cried out, but her cry was lost in silence. Like a beggar, she kept knocking on every door seeking assistance from those she thought could help. Those who did listen to her, sensed the Spirit of God at work in everything; but they bade her farewell with many nice words of encouragement, and that attitude, at times, sounded like that old saying: “*May God assist her*” which was common to say to beggars who wandered about asking for alms and to whom nothing was given.

Thus the life, mission and tragedy of Christ, Mary and the Church, turned to be the life, mission and tragedy of Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia.

A Pedagogical Response

Those who have not heard about Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia, or only possess a vague knowledge of her,

will doubtlessly ask themselves with astonishment: But... who is Mother Trinidad?! How and where did she come from?!

A true, extensive and complete response is likely to be for them, no doubt, even more surprising than the strangeness embodied by their own questions.

Still, it will be a joyful surprise for which we thank God since "*His mercies have no end*" (Lam 2:22) and since "*He grants mercy to whom He wills, and shows His favour to whom He wills*" (Ex 33:19).

For "*as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's plans higher than our plans and His ways higher than our ways*" (cf. Is 55:9), thus, He has willed and has deemed fit to choose Mother Trinidad, and to entrust to her lowliness and human simplicity a transcendental mission for His Church. This transcendent mission will only be known in its universality and singularity once her numerous unpublished writings have been printed and people will come closer to her talks and videos. These works have been grouped by her in approximately ten diverse Collections with various volumes in each. They cover many different topics and represent different literary genres, and include her six hundred tape-recorded talks and her more than six hundred and fifty videos.

One March 18th - the beginning of all that I enshrine!

I will attempt to trace out a profile, necessarily very limited given the context, with some broad strokes associated with the spiritual and human figure of Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia.

Considering the landscape of Mother Trinidad's life, the date March 18, 1959 stands out like a summit towards which all her life ascends as a preparation, and from which flows the torrent of light, of life, and of the knowledge full of wisdom and

love of the mysteries of God in Himself. These profound mysteries consider what God *is Himself*, and the reason why He *is Himself*, how He *is Himself*, and how He *is being Himself* while having everything fulfilled within Himself; as well as His outward manifestation, giving Himself to us through Christ and by means of Mary in the bosom of the Church.

That blessed day God introduced her into His bosom... and presented to her "*what the eye cannot see nor the ear hear*" (1 Cor 2:9), "*nor any man can see and still live*" (Ex 33:20).

"*Whether in the body or out of the body I do not know: God knows*" (2 Cor 12:2), she could have repeated with the Apostle.

Having introduced Mother Trinidad right there, and always from there, God made her see somehow "*with unveiled face*" (2 Cor 3:18) the richness of the mystery of the Incarnation, the intimate living of Christ during His thirty-three years as the Son of God made Man; the mystery of His Priesthood, the mystery of the grafting of all people onto Him, the awe-inspiring and glorious reality of Redemption; the greatness of Mary's virginal Motherhood, the unique prerogatives that this unimaginable reality meant from the time of Her Immaculate Conception until Her Assumption in body and soul to Heaven; and our own participation, through Christ, with Him and in Him, in God's intimate life; and all the mysteries dwelling in the bosom of the Church. This continued, with greater clarity, throughout the course of an entire month, and thereafter, at other times in her life, whenever and however the Lord willed.

She continued to witness...! and contemplate...! and to immerse herself into those depths of light and of love...! Over and over again, she lived, was transformed into, and partook of the realities she was contemplating...! seeing them always and contemplating them dwelling in the bos-

om of the Church, *"replete and saturated with Divinity and being capable of satisfying with divine life all peoples of all times."*

As I have already pointed out, her soul remained marked forever, as though engraved with a mission:

"Go and tell it...!" "This is for everybody...!" "Sing your song of Church with all that I have shown to you, while introduced into my Holy of Holies!"

"Proclaim that God wants the Church to be known with all the beauty that He Himself has placed in Her"; "and She has to be presented thus to all mankind."

And they will see *"how then, and only then, enthralled by the beauty of Her face, the separated brethren will again come to Her bosom all-full of motherhood for all of Her children."*

"And that will also be the way that will make Africans, Asians and all the races in the world come to her Mother's bosom."

"For it is necessary to put theology within the reach of all God's children;" "and it must be warmly presented and fired up with love."

"The Council comes for this." "With all to John XXIII...!" "With all to the Pope...!"

After a long list of "hows, whys and wherefores..." an amazing and urgent proclamation comes forth in the heart of this mission:

"It is necessary to carry out a Christian revolution in the bosom of the Church for this Holy Mother to be well-known and so that people may live from Her."

And later on: *"Make me The Work of the Church...!"* And before the unspeakable amazement and the surprise of Mother Trinidad, who frightfully told Him: *"But... Lord, if You have already done that...!"* She heard back as the only response:

"With all that I have given you, you already know what you have to do...!"

The wondrous and sublime living of Mother Trinidad ever since March 18, 1959,

until the last breath of her life – her heroic life, the unknown drama that deeply pierced her soul, the reason for the attack of the enemies of the Church aiming at silencing her and destroying The Work of the Church, her unexplainable and suspicious illnesses along with their terrible physical sufferings – all this has a full explanation. It will all be fully understood in its right measure only in the light of what God accomplished in her, in light of the requests that He has indelibly engraved on her soul, and in light of the response of unconditional surrender – as complete and firm as prudent – to the fulfilment of the mission that God Himself entrusted to her for the accomplishing of His loving plan for the Church at the present moment, and from now onwards.

A Retrospective Look

Looking back before March 18, 1959, one can see the meaning, and better understand the whole life of Mother Trinidad – from her childhood until that date – as an election and preparation by God for the mission He would entrust to her.

It is not possible to write a complete biography here; I will just point out some very interesting or significant milestones of her childhood and her youth.

There was a marvellous interchange between Pope Saint John Paul II and Mother Trinidad that occurred during a long personal encounter: With the loving care of a father, the Pope asked her, *"And why is your name Trinidad?"* In all simplicity she responded: *"Because my grandmother was so named!"* It is now little wonder that he would comment, highlighting his words with the rhythmic movement of the index finger of his right hand: *"Not without a divine design were you called Trinidad, because it was of the Trinity that you had to speak."*

With the name "Trinidad of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" she appears in the Baptis-

mal Register Book in the *Villa de Dos Hermanas* - *"the girl baptised on February 19, 1929, daughter of Mr. Emilio Sánchez and Mrs. Josefa Moreno."*

One might also see as a providential sign the fact, known by all, that Mother Trinidad, even if she was born and educated in one of the established and renowned families in *Dos Hermanas*, due to an accident affecting her sight, remained almost blind during her childhood, and was hardly able to complete her primary education. At the age of fifteen she was already working at her family's shoe shop.

Perhaps the Lord allowed this mishap so that the glory of His future plan would shine forth, and so that no one could doubt that such a profound, luminous and vast knowledge of dogma and of the truths of the Church could only proceed from Him. These truths are presented with a simplicity that opens the door of understanding to all God's children, filling them with the life and loving knowledge of the riches of the Church. Still, they are presented with such penetrating wisdom and dogmatic exactitude that even the experts stand in awe.

The same applies to the requests and the commands of God in her soul.

At the same time, the lack of human knowledge in Mother Trinidad, and her experience of feeling herself poor and helpless before the wise and important ones of this world, would surprise even her and overwhelm her in an attitude of adoration in the face of so many gifts received from the Lord in her soul.

—*"Why to me, Lord...?! Why to me...?!"*
—*she asked Him—*. And in the depths of her soul she heard as response:
—*"Because I have not found on earth any poorer or more helpless creature than you."*

This awareness of her nothingness before the manifestations of the Almighty, always accompanied her throughout her life.

When the communications and gifts of the Lord to her, given solely for the fulfilment of His plans in the Church, reached their highest peaks, the Lord Himself took care to keep her in that awareness of her nothingness before the All. She is the creature before the Creator. She is the one who can do, know or be nothing, before Him who is all and can do all:

"This is what I want to do with you; but do not look at yourself, because, if you look at yourself, as Lucifer fell, you would fall."

God imprinted this on her soul after having shown to her the exaltation of that Angel of Light above all the Angels in Heaven, and his fall like lightning to the very depths of the darkest Abyss, for having looked at himself, having become proud and having said to the thrice Holy God who had created him out of nothing, *"I will not serve you!!"* (Jer 2:20b)!!

Ascent to the Summit of March 18, 1959

It would be too long to list, even briefly, all of the different spiritual stages through which God has been guiding Mother Trinidad since December 7, 1946. This significant event occurred as the bells of the town of Dos Hermanas announced the vigil of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. The young Trinidad was seated with her brother Antonio at the table of the family shoe-shop. Suddenly and unexpectedly, this seventeen-year-old youth felt the Lord rush upon her soul with the overpowering force of the most impressive hurricane ever existed, calling her for Himself, completely, exclusively and absolutely for Himself!

She surrendered herself to Him completely, unconditionally and without hesitation! It was as if she could do nothing else at the overwhelming passage of the Almighty. He seized her will. She could only repeat, collapsed and in tears in the back room of the shop where she escaped to hide herself: *"I will be yours! completely yours! and forever...!"*

The following day, during the principal Mass, on her knees at the front stairs of the altar, but behind a pillar to hide herself from the sight of the people, and with her eyes raised and fixed upon the image of the Immaculate, she ratified *"her perpetual Vows"* to the Lord.

Owing to the drastic change for that youth – as modern as she was kind – in everything that followed that morning, it spread throughout the town of *Dos Hermanas* that *"the girl from 'The Favourite' "* –the name of the family's shoe shop–, had seen the Virgin.

That invasion of God on the eve of the Immaculate came and went, however, it returned and continued thus for almost a month.

Afterwards, there was silence. A formidable storm was unleashed upon her: interior darkness, incomprehension in her own home – her relatives not understanding anything that was going on in the soul of young Trinidad due to its suddenness and strangeness. She even experienced a very strange abandonment from the Priests of her town.

Around five months went by in that condition and she remained immovable, like a rock in the midst of that storm.

Finally, one day she heard the response that the woman in charge of the Secular Institute *"The Alliance in Jesus through Mary"* in *Dos Hermanas*, had given to a fellow woman who was asking her: – *"And what do I have to do?"* – *"Go to the Tabernacle and ask Jesus."*

Mother Trinidad, alone and inexperienced at that time, told herself: *"Well then, I will do the same."*

She went to the Tabernacle, she asked Jesus what it was that she had to do, and it happened that the Lord began to answer her...!

That is how, the 'Jesus of her Tabernacle' began constituting Himself as her only Teacher. She asked Him everything, and the Lord, with immense affection, proceeded to reply and teach her. He poured upon her the secrets of His loving heart, sorrowful due to the abandonment of his own. He was gradually making her *"know all things"* and she melted in love, penetrating each time more and more deeply into the secrets of her Bridegroom.

When she perceived in prayer that Jesus was so deeply suffering, it was then that she invented her *"follies of love"* to comfort Him, until she finally was victorious in that loving struggle, and Jesus smiled at her. Only then would she go away happy after such long and prolonged moments of prayer before the Tabernacle.

No one found out about the paths through which the Lord had begun to guide her. First, because she, in her naivety, believed that this was the ordinary and normal way for Jesus to communicate Himself to souls. And second, because the Priest who arrived at her town and to whom she began to go to Confession, did not help her to see that the paths through which the Lord was guiding her were not the ordinary ones.

It is impossible to list here all that the Lord went on accomplishing in the soul of Mother Trinidad until He led her, He alone, to that point where He wanted to bring her, preparing her thus for March 18, 1959.

I will just share one anecdote. A few years after her first encounter with Jesus at the Tabernacle, a friend of hers, very much learned and affected, told her one day: – *"I am going to read out to you this*

passage of Saint John of the Cross. You are not going to understand it, of course, because it is the summit of spiritual life. She began to read to her “THE LIVING FLAME OF LOVE,” and to her great surprise, she saw the shining face of Mother Trinidad.

So much so, that she asked her — “*But... do you understand this?!*” — “Yes, it’s very clear: the lamps of fire are the divine attributes...” And she continued explaining to her, in her own words, almost the same as Saint John of the Cross commented about this poem in his writings.

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I have presented some brief notes on the heroic life of Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia before and after March 18th, but I have not been able at all to say anything of her human personality, so rich and with so many different nuances. She shows insightful talent as a fruitful and, in so many respects, revolutionary writer but also exhibits the simplicity of a most helpless child. She speaks boldly as a “prophet” of God for His Church, a kindled word, sometimes as sharp as a two-edged sword, while at the same time feeling herself the smallest daughter of all the members of the Church. Her simplicity and her passing-by unnoticed were one of the most salient features of her outward life.

She is a foundress valiant in the face of continuous struggles, forged in suffering, enterprising, indomitable, firm as a rock, yet she experienced herself the poorest creature on earth, who comes to pour out her sorrows crying like a child before her Jesus of the Tabernacle, the One alone who understood her completely.

Her spirit can be described as joyful, charming and gracious —an Andalusian and Sevillian of pure stock— playing her “castanets,” singing the typical-folk songs called “*sevillanas*”, or the deep-flamenco Christmas carols of “*cante jondo*,” enlivening the family gatherings as nobody else, with her children of The Work of the

Church. With her spiritual daughters, she even danced *sevillanas*.

Who could imagine such a profound life with so many responsibilities, and so much drama hidden behind those so human and so normal appearances?

Nonetheless, all of her life radiated the light of the mystery that was hidden in her soul.

No one who has spoken with her, will ever be able to forget that special something contained in the blue of her eyes that transparently displayed what is transcendent, leaving the soul enveloped in an atmosphere of peace and indescribable elevation. Many of her videos give a precious and graphic witness to all this. Through them one can see facets so human and so endearing as no one could imagine by simply reading her writings. Writings and videos alike overflow with all that God has imprinted on her soul so that she might communicate it to the world.

Always open to understanding everyone, and to filling everyone with God, and after having experienced what only God and she may know, she did not reveal the secrets of her soul to anyone except to her “*Bridegroom’s Friend*,” as she called her Confessor, or to others when God Himself impelled her to do so. She was so frightened of being able to be unfaithful to Him, that she trembled from head to toe at the very thought of it. Nonetheless she lived in trust and calm in the affectionate and protecting love of our Father God, resting on His lap, “*like a child in his mother’s arms*” (Ps. 130:2).

A Witness

Perhaps some readers would think that I am a fervent admirer of Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia, and, while not thinking that I am exaggerating, may believe that I am presenting things through the prism of an admirer.

To this supposition I can honestly answer, No! I am not an admirer of Mother Trinidad. I have been her personal secretary for 56 years, her scribe, her chaplain, and one of the priests who has been receiving the most intimate confidences of Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia.

More appropriately, I am a witness of how, when and to what extent God's action has taken root in her soul for the fulfillment of God's plans for her — all this being solely for the renewal that He wanted and asked for in the Church.

I am a witness of the toils, sufferings of the soul, rejections, indifferences, persecutions, etc., etc., etc... that Mother Trinidad had to face and endure. I am also a witness of the misfortunes that have befallen the Bride of Christ, because that which God had asked and continues to ask of the members of the Church through Mother Trinidad herself, has not been given to Him.

I can also ascertain that I have learned far more theology being next to Mother Trinidad than in the University where I did my ecclesiastical studies, and during the five years that I taught Ecclesiology and other theological subjects in the Seminary.

It is from my condition of witness where I can tell you: Come and you will see, listen and you will hear, approach with an open spirit, and you will experience and fill yourselves with life. You will taste what God is, you will know His mysteries more deeply, and you will contemplate *"the Church in all Her beauty," "bedecked with all Her jewels, like a bride adorned for Her bridegroom."* You will also understand Her immense tragedy upon seeing Herself *"thrust on the ground and tearful, breathless and bent over," "as a widow without children,"* and *"being led to be crucified"* by the evil deeds of Her children.

Furthermore, you will discover what God wants, asks and urgently calls for to the Shepherds and faithful of His Church, for Her to rise up from Her prostration.

I cannot tell you more. This is something of what I have seen and heard and touched, and of which I give witness.

And I want to close with the canticle of Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia, which has been the motto of her life, her strength in battle and her song of triumph, and which she used to intone in her old age, feeling herself far more deeply in love, madly in love with the God of her heart! — with even more freshness, youthfulness, hope and romance, much more! than in the early years of her youth:

"Glory for God...! Glory for God...! Glory for God...! That alone...! The rest does not matter... it does not count... it is non-transcendent!"

"Glory for God and life to souls...! that He may be known, loved and glorified."

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Last July 28, 2021, a voice has died in the Church. A captivating song of a living and vibrant Church cannot be heard any longer. Our "farewell," remembering her fondly, engulfs the hearts of all who have known her and been alongside Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia.

It is also true, according to the unfathomable plans of the Lord, who burns with zeal for the glory of His beloved — the Church — that the echo of that song will continue to resound even more powerfully in the whole Church through the numerous writings, videos, talks, and through the witness of the life of Mother Trinidad herself; and also through the spiritual offspring for whom the Lord asked her in these words: *"give me offspring who may do the same, so I can have you always before me."*

Bartolomé Valbuena García

NB: The texts put into italics whose provenience is not given in the article, are expressions or quotations from Mother Trinidad de la Santa Madre Iglesia.