



THE SONG AT
THE SCAFFOLD
BY GERTRUD
VON LE FORT
A 10-WEEK BOOK
STUDY



SESSION SIX: CHAPTER 6, PAGES 38-46

People to know:

Louis XVI – King of France at the dawn of the Revolution [1789], executed in 1793, the year the Reign of Terror began. His queen: Marie Antoinette.

Robespierre – the leader of the Reign of Terror and its victim in 1794

Jean-Jacques Rousseau – “noble savage” – his political theory was to throw off all law, Church and State, and revert to the natural state.

Voltaire – Frenchman living in and writing essays on England – made Reason his god, Enlightenment thinking – freedom from Church dogma and the tyranny of the King.

Pope Pius VI – decried the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, an attempt to subordinate the Roman Catholic Church to the secular French government. Many Catholics turned against the Revolution when this decree came out in 1790.

Madame Acarie – see the note at the bottom of page 16

Madame Louise of France – see the note at the bottom of page 17

CHAPTER SIX: _____

(HOW WOULD YOU TITLE THIS CHAPTER?)

The Infant Jesus is in shadow and the flames of the candles are tinged with darkness. How is this image emblematic of what will unfold in this chapter?

What is to become of Blanche?

- ✿ When the Prioress called her in to send her home, their exchange did not go as expected.
 - ✿ Blanche's silence calls to mind Jesus' silence in His Passion.
 - ✿ When the Prioress commands Blanche to speak, she speaks more eloquently with her eyes than with her voice.
 - ✿ The Prioress is astonished at what she sees in the eyes of this timid novice.
 - ✿ Blanche's charism is to shoulder all the fear in the world.
 - ✿ She shares Christ's Passion in the Garden of Gethsemane, His mortal anguish, and His acceptance of the chalice which will not pass, but must be drained of its bitter contents.
 - ✿ 1 Cor 1:27: "God chose the weak in the world to shame the strong." Who in the convent is weak? Who is strong?
- ✿ God allows Blanche's "flaw," that of intense fear, to become her vocation.
 - ✿ Did she accept this vocation?
 - ✿ Did she unite it to the Cross of Christ?
 - ✿ Is she filling up in her body what was lacking in the suffering of Christ? (Col 1:24)
- ✿ The Carmelites, spending their time in silent, prayerful meditation on God's Word and His Presence, are mystics. They are open to listening attentively to His Word.
- ✿ We each live out Jesus' Paschal Mystery as our part of Salvation History, God's love story.
 - ✿ Prayerfully ponder which part of the Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven you are living out in your life at this time.
 - ✿ Do you see a pattern, a part of the Paschal Mystery which is your privilege to manifest in your life? Or do you live out different parts at various times?
- ✿ The Civil Constitution of the Clergy mandated that priests and bishops be appointed by the State, not by the Church. This is part of the deal Pope Francis made and renewed with China. How has that worked out for the Chinese Catholics? How did it work out for faithful priests in Revolutionary France?
- ✿ The Prioress advises Blanche to embrace her cross as Christ embraced His, devoting herself to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament: "the defenseless God." Can you follow Mother Teresa's advice to find "consolation" in your cross; "shelter" in your cross; "resign yourself" to your cross; and "be loyal to" your cross?
- ✿ The King of France, Louis XVI, hoped to restore order and right worship to France. He withstood the Assembly, condemning their punishments on priests who refused to take the oath of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.
- ✿ What is the difference between being open to God's Will, accepting whatever may come and actively consecrating yourself to martyrdom? Which path did Mother Teresa choose? Which path did Sister Marie of the Incarnation choose? Which path would you choose?