

# THE SONG AT THE SCAFFOLD

BY GERTRUD VON LE FORT



A 10-WEEK  
BOOK  
STUDY



SESSION SEVEN: CHAPTER 7, PAGES 47-54

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 SEVEN: \_\_\_\_\_

(HOW WOULD YOU TITLE THIS CHAPTER?)

The monastery door is seen in the midst of a storm and struck by lightning. What do you expect to occur in this chapter?

## Consecration to martyrdom: a Carmelite charism to follow Christ, and Him Crucified

- ✿ The French Revolution seized the assets of convents and monasteries, and the professed religious were to be driven from their communities.
  - ✿ Priests and nuns were to wear secular clothing, so as to no longer be a sign of contradiction in the world. After Vatican II, many religious laid aside their habits as well.
  - ✿ Apply this to our culture: “Chaotic impulses lead to chaotic conditions.”
  - ✿ Apply this to our times: “Wrong thinking unleashes passions and crimes.”
  - ✿ Apply this to the world at large: “Liberty and fraternity become caricatures and are transformed into the direct offsite of themselves.”
  - ✿ Applied to King Louis XVI, but could be applied to Blanche: “the strength of a tree resides not in its branches but in its roots.”
- ✿ The philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau - civil religion and popular sovereignty – jettisoned the monarchy in favor of anarchy and trumpeted private conscience over the Magisterium of the Church.
  - ✿ His belief in the utter freedom of man meant licentiousness and acting upon any impulse so as to be “truly free.”
  - ✿ The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that true freedom is the freedom to choose the good. When we choose evil, we are enslaved to our sins and to our base passions.
  - ✿ Choosing the good is the freedom we are called to experience by the grace of God.
- ✿ Madame de Chalais brings the news of Revolutionary France to the sheltered convent. What effect did her news have upon the nuns? What effect did the nuns have upon Madame de Chalais?
- ✿ Blanche converses with Madame de Chalais and with Sister Marie of the Incarnation.
  - ✿ She “unnerved” Madame de Chalais.
  - ✿ Her desire “not to be disloyal” caused Sister Marie of the Incarnation to sense a shadow of Christ’s mortal fear.
  - ✿ Blanche is depicted as fragile and frightened, one who fled at the end of the chapter. What does the last comment: “she fled into the very heart of fear” tell us about Blanche?
- ✿ At the consecration, Blanche is described as “wet with perspiration” whose heart was torn by “terror of Eternal Love.” This calls to mind Our Savior in the Garden, whose sweat flowed as drops of Blood in His agony (Lk 22:44) and who tells His Apostles He is “sorrowful unto death.” (Mt 26:36, Mk 14:34)
- ✿ Jesus “went out” to the Garden of Gethsemane; Judas His betrayer also knew the place.

The monastery door is ajar at the end of this chapter. What does this betoken?