

The context of healing that surprises and challenges

Let us revisit, in a few lines, the context of this accident of which Josette Poulain was the victim on January 23, 1955, in her own home.

The Poulain family was established in Combours, a town known by its castle, in this region of Brittany, located 40 km north of Rennes. The mother, Denise Collin by her maiden name, raised her three children alone, the father being mobilized in Indochina from where he could send money, the family's only income, but barely enough to support the small family, hence the privations that the children would suffer.

The Poulain family rented the first floor of a house, while Marie-Ange Guitton, daughter of Mrs. Lambert, the one who would be called the "neighbour", occupied the ground floor. The place called La Barrière where these families lived was a good half hour walk from Combours.

The events took place in a context of poverty from several points of view: material poverty - due to lack of financial means, cultural poverty, affective poverty - due to the absence of the father, a poverty that would certainly mark the children.

Religious poverty, finally. It should be noted that the Poulain attended two schools: Josette attended the girls' school held by the Daughters of Providence of Saint-Brieuc, whereas the boys attended the school held by the Brothers of Christian Instruction. Both Congregations were founded by Jean-Marie de la Mennais through whom they would intercede for the healing of Josette. It was therefore by frequenting these two schools that the Poulain established a relationship with the Parish.

Josette was in the class of Sister Madeleine. She took the initiative to have her community and her class pray for the healing of Josette. According to her mistress, little Josette proved to be in good health for she had never missed school. If she seemed a bit miserable, it was due to deprivations as a result of material poverty of the family. In short, a child without any particular characteristic, apart from her shyness.

Saint-Joseph clinic where Josette was hospitalized was itself run by the Daughters of Providence of Saint-Brieuc. The communities founded by Jean-Marie de la Mennais were therefore very present in Combours, two communities of Sisters (a Clinic and a Primary school Sainte-Anne) and a community of Brothers present until 1996 (Saint-Joseph school). The Sisters' clinic would later be transferred to Rennes, where it later merged with another clinic. The transfer and eventual merger of the Clinic in the context of this case, would make it difficult, and even impossible, to find documents from the period attesting to the healing of the young Josette.

One can see the connection of the situation of poverty, "on the periphery" in the words of Pope Francis, with the presence of the two Congregations of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, and the devotion maintained by the Sisters, especially on this occasion. Without forgetting that Marie de la Mennais, Jean-Marie's sister lived there. How can we not dream of seeing this cause succeed in the "Mennaisian land"?

During the investigation of the second phase of the process, which ended in 2019, most of the protagonists of the time of the accident had died. But we nonetheless succeeded in reconstructing credible testimony which confirmed the evidence of the 1957 process, the accuracy of the events and especially on the person of Dr. Galaine, a key element, for whom, in the second process, we sought to ascertain that he was competent and that his diagnosis was reliable, despite the absence of medical documents deemed necessary today as indisputable evidence.