

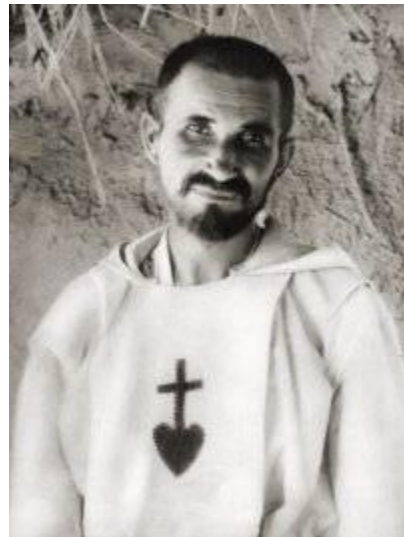
Reckless for God

One of our joys is that we have a large library with thousands of books, carefully catalogued. It is easy to find a particular title and author. Two biographies, from books recently given to us for our library, were outstanding. One was the story of Nate Saint who was born and reared in a devout Christian family in a small town, near Philadelphia, USA. He was steeped in conservative evangelical theology to which he remained faithful all his life. The other biography was the story of Charles de Foucauld. From an aristocratic French family, Charles lost his way as a young man, as badly as St. Augustine many centuries before. Eventually under the direction of a famous spiritual director, the Abbé Huvelin, Charles came back to faith in Christ. His theology was deepest dye Roman Catholicism. Yet both these men from very different backgrounds, different denominations and poles apart theologically, out of love for Jesus, travelled the same road of sanctity.

Beneath the outward externals those who love the Lord Jesus extravagantly bear the marks of that love in their lives. One of the characteristics is that they are reckless in faith. It is there in the New Testament. A woman bursts into a select supper party and pours precious oil over Jesus, washing his feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. The disciples are indignant and the comment comes, "Why this waste?" (Mt 26:10). The comment still comes to those who love the Lord Jesus with all their hearts.

Nate Saint became a MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship) pilot working in Ecuador. His work was dangerous, flying a small plane and landing on small hazardous strips hacked out of the jungle. In addition to this, he was haunted by all that he had heard about the Aucas, an Indian tribe to whom killing was a way of life. He eventually found (from the air) several almost hidden clearings in the dense forest where huts were scattered around. From his plane, Nate dropped gifts in a bucket and eventually, photos of himself and other missionaries. Gifts from the Aucas came back in return. The next step was a meeting, face to face, on the ground. Nate test-landed his MAF plane on a nearby sandbank. After weeks of planning, he ferried four other young men to the spot. They euphemistically named the place, Palm Beach. Within days all five, including the young MAF pilot, were murdered by the Aucas. "What a waste," we might say.

Charles de Foucauld was drawn by the Sahara. He found God in the vast wilderness but he also found fierce, proud tribes who were ruthless. Human life was of little account. He longed for them to find Jesus Christ, the one, true God. Living frugally and sacrificially, he made his home with the Touaregs and their slaves. Tamanrasset, deep in the desert, was a long way from civilization or any other European. Despite this, the long tentacles of the First World War reached into the Sahara. The Touaregs had been deliberately influenced and began to oppose the French and her allies. Not all of them turned against their friend, Brother Charles, but a small group did. On Dec. 1st 1916 Charles de Foucauld was murdered along with those trying to protect him. His life



seemed “a sublime failure” having made very few converts and the desire of his heart to have a Brotherhood working alongside him never happened. “What a waste,” we might say.

God does not judge as we do. Less than two years after Nate Saint’s death, his sister Rachel, accompanied by the widow and young daughter of one of the other murdered missionaries, walked into an Auca village and stayed there. Seven years later, his daughter and son were baptized at “Palm Beach” by two of the Indians who had killed their father. Charles de Foucauld after his death became the inspiration for the Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus, an Order that live amongst those forsaken by the world.

Space does not permit to write about the many Christians living recklessly for God in quiet, hidden ways but pray that the Lord will include us all in that number. Behind reckless faith there is always extravagant love for the Lord.

“My Beloved ----- how sweet it is to say to You that I love, that I adore You, that I can only live for You alone: You alone, my Beloved, You alone ----”

Evening Prayer, Charles de Foucauld