



Raisa Oumansoff, Russian-Jewish, wife of Jacques Maritain, converted to Catholicism

### **Raisa Maritain: theology, philosophy, and literature**

Eager to find the truth and the absolute against materialistic skepticism of the surrounding environment, they found in their new religion the source of satiating their desires to serve Humanity.

Raisa Oumansoff, Russian-Jewish, was born in 1883, she arrived in Paris when he was 10 years old, studied together with Jacques Maritain in the Sorbonne, they were married in 1904, they became together to Catholicism and lived united all his life.

JACQUES MARITAIN'S work is not complete without her. Together they wrote several books, she was an inspiration for all his work.

She says that when she came to the world, JACQUES MARITAIN was 10 months old; Henri Bergson (his first great master of philosophy) was 23 years old and wrote "Essays on the Immediate Data of the conscience"; León Bloy, the godfather of his conversion, was 37 years old and was working on a book about Christopher Columbus.

From the first contact of Jacques and Raisa Maritain with León Bloy, on June 11, 1905, relations with the spiritual life were growing. The Maritain, friends of Charles Péguy and disciples of Bergson did not come to a philosopher to seek their conversion but were worthy of the presence of the author of "THE UNGRATEFUL BEGGAR", "THE POOR WOMAN" and other works: LEON BLOY.

It was Raissa who incited Jacques on the study of the thought of Saint Thomas, she established the rules for the circles of Tomist Studies, of which arose many of the ideas that Maritain exhibited.

These two young intellectuals had common anguish, eager to find the truth and the absolute in the face of materialistic skepticism of the surrounding environment, found in their new religion the source of satiate their desires to serve humanity.

Jacques Maritain and his wife Raisa converted to Catholicism being adults, married, after carrying out great studies in France.

Jacques Maritain had his first training in liberal Protestantism. In his need to seek the truth he launched into the experimental sciences where he achieved solid knowledge, which allowed him to clarify judgments on the content of modern science. The person of greatest influence in the Maritain was undoubtedly LEON BLOY.

Bloy was a rebel writer, who faced the situation that prevailed in France. He was facing the bourgeois society, he contributed the testimony of a militant Catholicism, he did not share with the "thinking" groups, he was independent, authentic, free of any commitment, with the disposition to implant a new style in Christian literature.

The conversion of the Maritain to Catholicism must be mainly to the encounter with Leon Bloy. They read his book "THE POOR WOMAN", and were deeply impacted by that novel, which is the background of an autobiography.

We immediately attempted and read this strange novel, which did not resemble any other novel. For the first time, we find ourselves before the reality of Christianity.

They wrote to him on June 5, 1905, they sent him some money, so they had the first contact. The Maritain decided to look for him, not a philosopher or a professor, who would lead them on the path of the eternal truth of Christianity.

The young couple was looking for something they had not found in their studies, they lacked the spiritual parts which held their lives. They, being scrutinized scholars, were looking for the motive of their lives.

What drives this power over the physical universe, yes the very reason for life, yes the whole universe has to remain in an indecipherable enigma.

Jacques and Raisa had walked by the scientist philosophy and they knew the various modern expressions that were taught in the Sorbonne, they found an integral certainty... but they looked for more.

Raissa wrote together with her husband "Of the Life of Prayer", "The Situation of Poetry" and "Liturgy and Contemplation".

One of her best works is the book "GREAT FRIENDSHIPS ", where she tells the meeting of them with Charles Péguy, Henry Bergson, Leon Bloy, Pierre, and Cristina Van der Meer, as them being godsons of Leon Bloy, and with other young intellectuals of the time when they converted to Catholicism.

Otras obras de Raissa Maritain son: El Angel de la Escuela. La Conciencia Moral (El Estado de la Naturaleza). La Historia de Abraham (Las Primeras Edades de la Conciencia Moral).El Padre Nuestro. El Diario de Raissa (Publicado por JACQUES

MARITAIN). El Príncipe de éste Mundo. CHAGALL (La Tempestad Encantada). Las Aventuras de la Gracia. En el Hundimiento de la Roca. Además escribió varias obras junto con JACQUES MARITAIN.

Other works by Raisa Maritain are: the Angel of the School, The Moral Conscience (The State of Nature), The History of Abraham (The First Ages of the Moral Conscience), Our Father, The Journal of Raissa (Published by JACQUES MARITAIN), The Prince of this World, CHAGALL (The Enchanted Tempest), The Adventures of Grace, In the Sinking of the Rock. She also wrote several works together with JACQUES MARITAIN.

While JACQUES MARITAIN philosophized with Gabriel Marcel, Francois Mauriac, Jean Cocteau, Etienne Gilson, Julien Green, and other contemporaries, Raissa maintained a community of contemplation, prayer, and meditation, complementary in the intellectual work that both developed.

The residence of the Maritain was a house of prayer, where the soul was Raissa, always accompanied by her sister Vera, who always lived with them. Raissa helped many intellectuals to convert them to Catholicism; she was the godmother of many baptisms of adult people who sought in the Maritain the spiritual orientation of Christianity.

On April 9, 1934, Jean Cocteau invited the Maritain to the presentation of his work: "The Infernal Machine", then Raissa wrote: «I am upset with the piece of Jean Cocteau. It's admirable! It's the best thing he's ever written, the purest, the most human, the simplest. The authentic tragedy and the comparison with the Corylan of the French Comedy are curious, in this respect. »

On March 26, 1936, Raissa met with her first great teacher, Henri Bergson; two months later she went to Argentina, accompanying her husband, where they stayed for more than three months.

Being Raissa a Jewish woman, they had to remain in exile, in addition to the commitment of Jacques with the cause of the French resistance.

Her artistic vein led her to dabble in poetry, where she managed to write important poems, all with a spiritual sense.

Raissa Maritain wrote about THE POETIC SENSE AND NON-SENSE for an exhibition that she presented to the International Congress of Aesthetics and Art Science, held in Paris. Her document served as an initial part of the book SITUATION OF POETRY, written by her along with her husband.

The poetic sense is not always logical; some poems arise from the darkness.

Rimbaud explains that: The poet is a fire thief... If what you bring from below is shaped, it gives shape; if it's unshaped, he gives an unshaped.

The poetic sense is confused with the poetry itself if I use here the poetic expression preferring it to the word poetry; I do it to signify that the poetry gives existence to the poem, like the body to the soul.

The real and fruitful gathering is the first gift that the poet receives, and it is also in him a natural disposition that must be cultivated.

The poet desires that entrance to him and tries to persevere in it. Just as God attracts those who aspire to Him.

Poetry awaits those who seek it and let it be found by those who love it. (RAISSA MARITAIN).

Raissa was a friend of Gabriela Mistral, the Chilean poetess, who in time of anguish sought the orientation and friendship of the Maritain, and then she introduced them to Eduardo Frei Montalvo, who was one of the creators of humanist thinking in Latin America and became President of Chile.

Love!

It's the love we're destined for since the origin of the world.

Love. Which are delights of communication and joy?

Love is reciprocal and total,

light, cheerful, turning eternally to the sources of eternal life. »

Raissa Maritain

When Maritain wrote "ART AND POETRY (Intuition Creative of Art and Poetry), he said:" Raissa has helped me in all my work. I do not believe that any philosopher can dare to speak of poetry without telling the poet's direct experience. »

At the end of 1957, her sister Vera was attacked by cancer, she had to be operated, then there was metastasis in the hip, after a year of suffering Vera died on December 31, 1959.

More than 50 people, celebrities, artists, and writers became their home. They met once a week at home with these friends and talked about all the issues. They had great intellectual fertility.

The com penetration that lived in their marriage was also reflected in their philosophical reasoning. Raissa Maritain completed the annotations made by her husband Jacques. The search for profound theological and philosophical reasons for the truths of faith is the main feature of this couple candidate for the altars.

The Maritain returned to France in the middle of the year 1960... Raissa died on November 4 of that same year.

When Raissa died, it was a hard knock to JACQUES MARITAIN; he lost the companion of his whole life, who had been at his side during the studies, the conversion and all his philosophical, religious and literary work.

"Now all is left in my broken and disconnected, since the sudden blow that began with the last illness of Raissa (exactly at the time when, when arriving from America, crossed the threshold of the hotel room, in Paris, July 7, 1960).

On November 4, after four months of pain, God took her with Him and from then on I find myself only down here, at least according to the appearances of this visible

world.

Broken the old tree, which still maintains some roots on earth, though some others were delivered to the winds of heaven. »

The remains of Raissa were buried in Kolsheim, France, where they rest today together with those of her husband JACQUES MARITAIN