

Jean Gailhac: A Man of Relationships

Jean Gailhac was born on November 13, 1802, just 13 years after the French Revolution of 1789. At the time of his birth the aftershocks of the revolution were still being felt. It was a time of great upheaval; the old order had changed dramatically. The Cult of reason had tried to replace the Catholic Church – a period of de-Christianization had taken place.

1790 –February all religious Orders were dissolved.

1790 –July Civil Constitution of the Clergy- Clergy became employees of the State

1801 Concordat between the Pope and Napoleon ended the violent persecution of the Church

The new rules for working with the Church imposed many limitations on it. ex -All Bishops had to resign and the Emperor had the right to nominate new ones. Later on it assumed even more control over the clergy: placement, stipends etc. Communications from the Pope were also restricted. This lasted until 1908-Separation of Church and State.

The Concordat of 1801 further entrenched Gallicanism which had dominated the Church in France for several hundred years. Gallicanism was a French movement whose intention was to diminish papal authority and increase the power of the state over the church in France.

Articles of Gallicanism:

- Popes had no control over matters temporal
- kings were not subject to any ecclesiastical authority in civil affairs;
- kings could not legitimately be deposed by the church, and their subjects could not be released from their political allegiance by any papal decree.
- The papacy was subject to the authority of General Councils of the Church, as decreed by the Council of Constance (1414-18).
- The Pope's decisions were final only when they had been confirmed by the whole Church.
- Papal authority had to be exercised with due respect for local and national church usages and customs.

The majority of the French bishops adhered to these articles which had been approved by the Parliament and the clergy. Clergy who did not agree with Gallicanism were forced to leave the country.

1802-April Napoleon granted permission to open seminaries.

1803 Jean Gailhac was born

Relationships in Jean Gailhac's Early formation: - Bonds created

Definition of relationship: association, affinity, bond, communication, connection, kinship, rapport

The seeds of Jean Gailhac's relationships were sown in his home. He was the second eldest of a family of seven children. His parents were devout Catholics; prayer was a very vital part of their daily lives; they said morning and evening prayers together as a family.

His Mother

He had a particularly warm and supportive relationship with his mother; a relationship which lasted until the end of her life. Following her example he learned to be attentive to the suffering of others and to be always ready to help those in need. (example: stories of giving away his shoes, his new velvet pants).

In his writings he refers to her as:

My mother according to the flesh but much more so according to the spirit. At my mother's knee I began to believe, to love God and my neighbor and to have pity for all who suffer.

It was his mother who taught him to believe in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and papal infallibility. She often stated "**As God wills; what He wills and as often as He wills it**" In times of his great suffering she often said "**Courage, Gailhac! God is stronger than any human creature**"

Relationship with God

From an early age Jean Gailhac had a very strong, personal relationship with God

From my youth God has filled me with His Sacred fire. My heart has never desired anything but His love....I have always felt in me the duty and the desire to work in order to make Him loved.From childhood God has given me a great love for souls. This is the source of the works which He urges me to undertake. (Letters 28/8/1878)

His relationship with God grew and strengthened as he matured. He believed that God had chosen him for a very specific mission to make God known and loved. His formula was simple: Be totally turned towards God in order to discern what God is calling you to do. Listen attentively to how he wishes you to carry it out and then do it.

Relationship with Peers

From his school days in Lycée Henri 1V two things stand out. The first was his friendship with Eugene Cure who lived in Autignac but because of the distance from his home he boarded with a local family. This friendship was a deep and enduring one. The second event which had a major impact on his life was his meeting with Pope Pius V11 when on Feb 3 1814 he stopped in Béziers while returning from exile in Fontainebleau. People who knew P Gailhac well attributed his great loyalty and attachment to the Pope and his opposition to Gallicanism to this encounter.

At the time of his Procès the jury of 5 ecclesiastics who conducted the Procès suggested that the words **“for the deep attachment he felt for the Holy See”** be added to the prayer for his beatification.

Abbé Martin: 1740-1824

Abbé Martin was pastor of the Church of St Aphrodise which is adjacent to the Gailhac home. He was opposed to the decree of the civil Constitution of the Clergy, July 12, 1790, which declared that all clergy were employees of the State. He saw this as an attack on spiritual rights. He was prosecuted by the police in Paris and Béziers and went into exile in Rome (1792- 1800) On his return he refused to sign the promise to obey the laws as demanded by the Consular and so was forbidden to exercise his ministry in public.

After the Concordat of March 1801 he became once more parish priest of St Aphrodise. According to tradition Jean Gailhac was the first Baptism he performed after being reinstated.

He was a frequent visitor to the Gailhac home and by his words and actions he had a profound influence on young Jean Gailhac, who admired his loyalty to the church and his outreach to the poor. Prior to his exile in addition to founding schools for poor children in Béziers Abbe Martin also founded a Refuge for prostitutes. We see this influence reflected in a conversation with Cardinal Hohenlohe in 1881 where P Gailhac said:

While I was still young, even before I was priest God inspired me with the idea of doing work to save young women who are in such danger in society and I sent them to Montpellier paying the necessary fees from my own funds. (March 7, 1881, Cardinal Hohenlohe protector of the Institute)

In the course of his youth in Béziers, in addition to Abbé Martin, Jean Gailhac encountered many other priests who during the Revolution years had run great risks and faced great personal danger for the love of God and the Church. They became his models for the priesthood. He was greatly troubled when he felt that God was calling him to the priesthood. Since childhood he had had a deep spiritual relationship with Abbé Martin so it was to him that he turned when he was so troubled in discerning what God was calling him to do.

When I was young He called me to the priesthood. The holiness for such a vocation frightened me. I resisted His call. I only consented to be a priest on condition that I live to love him alone and make Him loved.

(Letters 28/8/1878)

In a letter written to Abbe Mart from the seminary he states:

My very dear father in Jesus Christ, allow me to give you the name which alone can express alin I the holy affection a heart can feel for the one from he has received temporal favors and far more precious graces for eternal life

Seminary Years

Jean Gailhac took life very seriously, especially when it came to discerning and responding to God's will. We see examples of it so many times in his life. He reflected seriously and prayed in order to hear the call and then his response was total. He practiced what he so often repeated in his letters.

Zeal must not be impetuous or unreflective but has to be expressed with order and measure; without this things well begun will collapse .

(G to M Alfonse G5/23/8/187

Once God's will was clear to him he became totally focused and responded with his entire being. As quoted earlier he had a burning desire to make God known and loved. He felt that he had to be totally turned towards God so that he would be able to discern God's will in every situation. When it became obvious that God was calling him to be a priest he responded without reservation.

I will become a priest-a good and holy one....My whole life will be consecrated to God. All my time will be divided between prayer, fulfillment of duty and study. Any time not devoted to these occupations will be devoted to good works.

In 1818, he entered the seminary in Montpellier which had an excellent reputation.

The senior seminary was, because of the vigor and soundness of the education, the reputation and authority of its professors, one of the best seminaries in the south.....

Mgr Bastet - Rector of the seminary

The rector Mgr Bastet was a simple, extremely virtuous and talented man who had openly professed his faith during the Revolution. Jean Gailhac had great respect for him and kept in touch with him after he left the seminary. He in turn had a "fatherly affection" for P Gailhac.

While in the seminary Jean continued to deepen his spiritual life by prayer, penance and study of theology and Sacred Scripture. He became the perfect seminarian. His classmates referred to him as "the living rule"; "the little saint" and many of them said then and throughout his life that he looked as if he was always lost in contemplation. When interviewed in later years many of his former classmates remembered him as having "**lively intelligence and sound judgement**" "**His retiring manner , his humility and gentleness attracted the affection of both professors and students**"

(St Maurice p 7).

In addition to his regular studies he spent many hours reading and reflecting on Sacred Scripture and the writings of the Church fathers. This was all done in order to fulfill his desire to make God known and loved. As he said many times in his letters and in particular to Appollonie during her formation "**You cannot love what you do not know**".

Relationship with Church Authorities: Bishop Fournier: 1806-1834

Mgr Fournier because of his character, piety and great learning was one of the most eminent churchmen in France (M St Maurice)

In 1800 he refused to take the oath and was forced into hiding after preaching a sermon touching on political issues. He was eventually found and arrested. Declared insane he was committed to an insane asylum. He was eventually released and Napoleon appointed him to be his own chaplain and then to be bishop of Montpellier.

The Inquisitio (p261) says of him **We know that Bishop Fournier, severe and uncompromising in matters of doctrine, was man of unlimited goodness**

Bishop Fournier asked Jean Gailhac, while he was still a seminarian, to teach Dogmatic theology and Philosophy. It was at this time that we see proof of his tremendous strength of character and unwavering determination when faced with a matter of conscience. According to law, professors in seminaries were required to sign an oath declaring that they would teach the principles of Gallicanism in their classes. Bishop Fournier was a staunch supporter of Gallicanism and had publicly spoken in its favor. Imagine his consternation when Jean Gailhac, a mere seminarian refused to sign the oath.

I will never put my signature to something that my conscience condemns. These four articles are too much at variance with the rights of the Pontiff and the Church". (M St Maurice: p 7/8)

There is no record that the bishop rebuked him for his refusal. Perhaps the bishop was impressed by the strong, courageous and honest stance of the young seminarian when faced with a matter of conscience. He recognized Gailhac as a man of integrity.

In addition to his teaching in the seminary Jean Gailhac had the bishop's permission to help out in parishes, visiting the poor and the sick. He was also a regular and welcome visitor at the jail. He brought candy, grapes and tobacco the prisoners who affectionately referred to him as "the little Curé. He was loved by all.

In spite of the fact that he, Jean Gailhac never hid the his great desire to work with and for the poor Bishop Fournier must again have felt great consternation when at the age of 26 and at the beginning of a very promising career as an academic P Gailhac asked to be assigned full time to the Hôtel Dieu, a hospital for the poor and destitute in Beziers. At a time when there was a great shortage of well educated professors in the seminary here was a young man who was well qualified in Scripture, Theology and Philosophy asking to be assigned to a lowly position in the Hôtel Dieu.

The Vicar General expressed his surprise and exasperation when he asked **Why are you so anxious to go to the Hospital. It's the road to nowhere! It's my road to heaven** was P Gailhac's reply. Having asked the same question and received the same reply Bishop Fournier gave him permission.

P Gailhac and many of his brother priests were very attracted by the vision of Abbé Lamennais 1782-1852 who was staunchly opposed to Gallicanism. He also advocated: Freedom of Conscience; Freedom of Press and Separation of Church and State. He declared that people have a right to rebel against injustice. His thinking got him into trouble with Rome. He was condemned –left the church and died an embittered man. Despite being attracted to his teaching P Gailhac the bishop's warning regarding the dangers of Lamennais' beliefs

The Refuge: A dream come true: November 29, 1834

Research indicates that. Bishop Fournier enthusiastically greeted P Gailhac's proposal to open the Refuge but insisted that it be under the jurisdiction of the diocese. He also advised him to exercise prudence because the task he was undertaking was bound to provoke reactions from various groups, his brother priests among them. The fact that he was only 32 years old made him even more vulnerable to criticism. Initially the Refuge was staffed by five lay women volunteers with whom P Gailhac enjoyed collaborating.

Bishop Fournier died on December 29, 1834 and was replaced, after several months by

Bishop Thibault 1835-1861

An imposing figure, regal in bearing and conscious of the dignity of his office.

P Thibault is impetuous and this tendency often impedes him from acting with deliberation and prudence which today are necessary to guide men. I have noticed that due to his temperament he is carried away by his concerns and makes rapid decisions without searching for the truth.

(Bishop of Bayonne 1834) Inq 260)

Imagine him when he was faced with P Gailhac who was inflexible once he had, with prayer and reflection, discerned what God was calling him to do and who frequently stated his belief that : **Zeal must not be impetuous or unreflective but has to expressed with order and measure;without this things well begun will collapse.**

(G to M Alfonse G5/23/v111/79A)

Bishop Thibault assured P Gailhac of his support and showed great enthusiasm for the Refuge. Unfortunately, vicious gossip began immediately. As a compromise and in an effort to stem the gossip the bishop insisted that the Refuge be administered by a Religious community; Bishop Thibault gave P Gailhac only one month to find the community. In the annals there is reference to the fact that he asked P Gailhac at this time to close the Refuge/Orphanage and hand over the property to the diocese.

Your Excellency wants me to make a serious decision without having had time to reflect. You ask me to give up my property which is like asking me to give up my very soul. You must know that I would rather die than abandon my children. I need my house and the work there needs me; we cannot be separated. (Inquisitio p39)

The Dames de St Maur, who staffed a local school, Fenelon, came to his rescue and enjoyed a good working relationship with him until once again gossip reared its ugly head. Apparently parents of the boarders at Fenelon objected to having their children associated with a community whose members took care of the Refuge and Orphanage. Regretfully the community withdrew. P Gailhac once again went in frantic search of a community to take over.

The Sisters of St Joseph came, but from the outset it was not a satisfactory relationship. At one point the Vicar General said to him in exasperation:**You expect too great a perfection from those who direct your establishment. I am not the only one to think this way. There are others well informed, worthy of respect and very devoted to you who think as I do.** (June 29, 1840) quoted by M Milligan)

This was followed by the statement **If you can't find a suitable religious community ...found your own.**

We are all aware of the gossip and even persecutions which surrounded the opening of the refuge. P Gailhac suffered greatly at the lack of Episcopal support during his times of terrible persecution. The source of the gossip and persecutions were many but the most difficult for P Gailhac to bear were those begun by his fellow priests. The silence of Bishop Thibault was almost unbearable for him. One day the bishop arrived unannounced at the Refuge with the intention of closing it. Much to his amazement, after visiting every nook and corner he discovered that it was impeccably run.

He took the opportunity at the final vow ceremony on May 4, 1851 to publicly apologize to P Gailhac and M St Jean:

Père, I persecuted you unjustly over a long period of time. I was wrong. I am not disturbed by this fact however, because those in authority must be sure that works they are asked to authorize are truly God's works; only the latter can endure. I had to try you...Persons in authority can be wrong...but as soon as they perceive their mistake, they must admit it and correct the evil they involuntarily remitted. (Inquisitio p129,130)

He also warned him that he had many enemies. (p 41 Inquisito)

To M St Jean he said:

You, Mère, give a remarkable example of renunciation and devotion in dedicating yourself and your possessions to the service of the poor. God will reward you, I can assure you of that. (Inquisitio p129,130)

P Gailhac's enemies had now multiplied with the addition of both the Pellissier and Cure family members who were enraged at the loss of their inheritance. His most vicious persecution began in September 1855 and lasted for a period of six months. Again, no support came from his religious superiors. He wrote to Bishop Thibault several times but did not receive an answer. He asked himself the question: **Does his silence mean that he believes what is being said.** In one letter he declared:**Your Excellency, the priest is resigned but the man is exhausted. Do you really believe that I am capable of the crimes of which I am accused? You will find no one in Béziers who will raise a finger against me.** (Inquisito P 114)

Bishop Thibault had actually believed P Gailhac guilty and was about to lay him under interdict when one of his staff warned him that by condemning P Gailhac he was going to punish the most popular priest in Béziers and thus turn the whole city against him. He decided to delay making his decision. Shortly afterwards he received the District Attorney's formal ruling. In the report he, the District Attorney praised P Gailhac; declared him innocent and declared him worthy of the bishop's esteem.

It had been a long six months for P Gailhac, the RSHM and his family and friends.

The Inquisitio states that the only differences of opinion between Bishop Thibault and P Gailhac seemed to have been with regard to the administration of the refuge.

Bishop Le Courtier 1861 – 1873

(1870 Vatican 1 - Papal Infallibility)

During Vatican 1 Bishop Le Courtier voiced strong opposition to the doctrine of Papal infallibility. He also caused great uneasiness among the priests. However he was amicable in his dealings with P Gailhac and the priests of the Good Shepherd.

1873 the Pope asked for his resignation.

Bishop François-Marie Anatole de Roverie de Cabrières 1874 – 1921

He was described as an aristocratic bishop. He was a little disconcerted when faced with P Gailhac's unassuming honesty of attitude and approach. He wished to take complete control over all aspects of the diocese. According to our Sources the presence of P Gailhac, and his Institutions in the diocese of Montpellier, was a constant source of annoyance to the Cardinal; there was a personality conflict between the two men. The Cardinal was particularly enraged when he discovered that the RSHM had a Cardinal Protector in Rome and that P Gailhac had arranged for the Jesuits to take charge of the spiritual care of the community. He also had a great distrust of religious houses because of the privileges they enjoyed; especially when they eluded his authority by referring directly to Rome. **You have had a Cardinal Protector appointed to P Gailhac, that is why he prides himself on being outside my jurisdiction.**

Again sources say that the bishop was jealous of the authority P Gailhac had over the RSHM. This really surfaced 30 years later when he was asked for the imprimatur on P Couderc's biography of P Gailhac.

Pere Gailhac never trusted me and showed me only external respect; he never manifested any zeal and filial open heartedness. I wonder how he could explain that before his death, contrary to any custom, he placed his Congregation, wholly and unconditionally under the authority of the Jesuits. Surely such a precaution is offensive to the diocesan bishop, and it diminishes the lawful authority he should hold over a religious group in his diocese. (Inquisito p160)

Once again I cite the Inquisitio regarding P Gailhac's attitude towards his bishops:

He was always submissive to his bishops

Relationship with his fellow priests:

As previously mentioned P Gailhac was not universally popular with his fellow priests. He was so focused on discerning what God's will was for him that he paid little attention to the world around him. He was a man of few words; he did not become involved in the politics of his day. As a result many found it difficult to hold a conversation with him and were maybe even a little bit jealous. In addition, even though he was without ambition he seemed to be moving ahead of them: teaching in the seminary, even as a seminarian; his popularity as a confessor and preacher. Reports tell us of complaints received by the bishop that P Gailhac was taking people away from their parishes to follow him. The bishop investigated and found it to be true that many people followed him drawn by his piety and devotion and not by his invitation. When the Dames de St Maur asked for him, at the age of 32, not alone to be confessor to the community and students but also to give their retreat, the older priests to whom an invitation to fill that position was a great privilege expressed annoyance/ jealousy.

In Abbé Leray's biography (considered to be the least historical of all the histories!) we find references to the fact that some of his fellow clergy considered him to be: a **visionary, a maniac, a fool, rash, imprudent, proud, ambitious and presumptuous**. Interesting that the Thesaurus cites many of the same definitions as synonyms for Zeal! His love of solitude and silence was commented on with raised eyebrows.

The Inquisitio concludes that

He was a good man, but also a very strong willed one. His intellectual ability, his maturity and his stability made him tenacious maybe even pig headed.....He was a taciturn man, proud, stubborn, fiercely originaloriginality could have been a sign,an expression of a true sanctity.....you know that all saints are misunderstood during their lives.

His Relationship with the Cures

What a relief it must have been for the physically and emotionally exhausted Jean Gailhac to have his own "refuge" in the Cure home. There he found true soul friends with whom he shared his burning desire to continue the work to which God was calling him "to continue the work of Redemption..." his dreams, hopes. It was also where he felt comfortable enough to share his frustrations and his discouragement.

The friendship continued and deepened over the years. He had such great confidence that Eugene fully understood his call, his mission, that in 1847 he made his will leaving the Bon Pasteur to him. A few days after Eugene's sudden death P Gailhac changed his will and made Appollonie his beneficiary. He must have been devastated by Eugene's death. His friend, his confidant, his supporter had been taken from him. The grief shared by P Gailhac and Appollonie forged an even stronger bond between the two of them.

His Relationship with Other Religious Communities

In founding the Institute of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary P Gailhac drew upon his experiences working with other religious congregations. He was confessor to the Sisters of the Poor Clare, the Carmelites and the Dames de Saint Maur.

At the Hôtel Dieu he had his first experience of working directly with a religious community. It was not a very positive experience for either side. He had great difficulty with the Sisters of St Augustine who worked there. He wrote that there was nothing in particular to complain about in their conduct. Individually they observed the rules but the community was lacking a sense of unity, a family feeling, the spirit you would expect a religious community to have.

To quote his words:

There existed an individualism: a rainbow of talents aesthetically pleasing but religious life is not about being aesthetically pleasing.

Individual perfections placed side by side do not produce common (community) perfection (Le Père Gailhac p32)

Try to put a hare, a partridge and a woodcock into the same pot and cook them together. Eaten separately each is excellent but put together they become an unpalatable dish. It is the same with these religious. As individuals they are perfect; united in a community they leave much to be desired.
(Maynard: P Gailhac p23)

He attributed the problem to too many confessors, each giving his interpretation of the rule which led to individualism. L'unité du directeur pourrait assurer la régularité dans la maison. He kept this very much in mind later when seeking to ensure unity in spiritual direction for the RSCM.

He also noted that the Rule needed to be very precise in its details and that side by side with the rule is the spirit of the Institute.

In order for the Institute to prosper it is exceedingly important that all of its members be animated by the same Spirit. It is by its Spirit that an Institute lives, grows and perpetuates itself

As a result of this experience P Gailhac insisted on unity of spirit for the RSHM. His final words were **Unity –Unity- Unity**

Sisters of St Joseph:

He had great difficulty working with the sisters of St Joseph. Again we find his words in Maynard. **They paralyzed his efforts.....not having received from God the mission of caring for young girls and women leading bad lives they failed in the formation of the refuge.**

P Gailhac realized the importance of training but more importantly in having a common mission

Remember the statement of the vicar General If you can't find a suitable religious community Then found your own.By this time P Gailhac was seriously considering the matter. In the course of his work he had met some young women who felt that God was calling them to collaborate with him in his mission. Two of them Rose Jeantet and Cecile Cambon had been working devotedly in the Refuge and orphanage from the beginning. Eulalie Vidal and Rosalie Gibal were well known in Béziers. Also there was Marie Roc who was the housemaid in the Cure home in Autignac. He was confessor/spiritual director for each one of these women. Yet he felt that the time was not ripe. In addition, he felt that he was lacking someone who would be the cornerstone, the person who would draw the group together-an inspirational leader, the foundress.

External Expectations of the person who would become a Foundress

In the political and ecclesiastical context of 19 century France it was important that a Foundress/Superior have a certain social status and specific natural gifts:

Good social relationships

A certain degree of wealth

Family independence

The ability to read and write

Above all this leadership was never to detach itself from ecclesiastical supervision.

Things came to a head when the superior of the Sisters of St Joseph announced the withdrawal of the sisters for financial reasons. P Gailhac must have felt desperate.

Eugene Cure's death November 4, 1848

Eugene's sudden death from a brain haemorrhage on November 4, 1848 was a terrible shock to all. Shortly afterwards Appollonie approached P Gailhac and announced that she felt that God was calling her to join him in his mission. She stated **God sent me Eugene as my consolation when my parents died. Now he is allowing me to give myself totally to his work. Up til now I have given o fmy material goods. Now I give myself.**

Imagine P Gailhac's reaction! On the one hand it was so soon after Eugene's death but on the other it was an answer to prayer. Here was the "cornerstone", the "nucleus" who was admirably suited to become the Foundress, the superior, to lead the group of women who had been waiting for so long for the day when they could devote themselves entirely to the mission to which God was calling them. Despite all of this he advised caution.

Nothing daunted Appollonie went to Bishop Thibault and discussed the matter with him. He contacted P Gailhac and assured him that she was making the decision quite rationally and advising him to accept her.

The date for beginning was set for February 24, 1849

