



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330.

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## Fr Barre's Writings

### His Spiritual letters

Blessed Nicolas Barre was a French Jesuit priest who lived in the 17th century and is known for his spiritual writings. His letters, which were written to various individuals seeking spiritual guidance, offer profound insights into the spiritual life. Here are some excerpts from his [spiritual letters](#):

On the importance of prayer:

"[Prayer](#) is the key that unlocks the treasures of God's grace. It is the ladder by which we climb to heaven, the anchor that keeps us steadfast in the midst of life's storms. Without prayer, we are like ships without sails, at the mercy of every wind and wave. Let us therefore make prayer the foundation of our lives, the source of our strength and the centre of our being."

On the virtues of humility and obedience:

"[Humility and obedience](#) are the two wings that enable the soul to soar to the heights of holiness. [Humility](#) teaches us to know our own weakness and to rely on God's strength. [Obedience](#) teaches us to submit our will to God's will and to trust in his providence. Let us embrace these virtues with all our hearts and strive to live them out in our daily lives."

On the importance of detachment:

"[Detachment](#) is the key to spiritual freedom. It is the art of letting go of all that holds us back from God. We must detach ourselves from our possessions, our desires, and our own will, and entrust ourselves entirely to God. Only then can we experience the true joy and peace that comes from knowing and loving Him."

On the love of God:

"[The love of God](#) is the source and summit of the spiritual life. It is the fountain from which all grace flows and the goal towards which all our efforts must be directed. Let us love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and let us seek to love our neighbour as ourselves. In this way, we will fulfil the two greatest commandments and find true happiness in God."

Blessed Nicolas Barre's spiritual letters continue to inspire and guide many people on their spiritual journey.



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## Another of his writings - Maxims for all Peoples

### MAXIMS FOR ALL PEOPLE (MAP)

#### INTRODUCTION

The 'MAXIMS FOR ALL PEOPLE' are to be found within the context of a dossier entitled: 'Spiritual Maxims'. This dossier consists of seven chapters - the first of which is 'Maxims for all people'. The others include the Fundamental Maxims, the Particular Maxims etc. This dossier was put together by Servien de Montigny and published in 1694.

In the contents listed in the 1694 edition, the first chapter has a longer title: '[Maxims for a Christian way of life for all people who wish to reach perfection](#)'. It is intended for those who are about to begin to deepen their spiritual life as well as for those who are already on the way'. These maxims reflect N. Barré's thought and were either written by himself or by those who listened to his conferences or those to whom he gave direction or advice.

There are 235 maxims in the document which we refer to as 'Maxims for all people', MAP. Montigny has divided these into seven sections - maybe the number was chosen to symbolise perfection.

There is a certain evident progression e.g.

Section 1 (Max. 1-40)	gives advice for beginners
Section 2 (Max. 41-90)	refers to development in the life of faith and delusions to be avoided
Section 3 (Max. 91-130)	deals with the stages in the spiritual life
Section 4 (Max. 131-171)	the purification needed in the spiritual life and the way followed by Jesus
Section 5 (Max. 172-204)	personal prayer
Section 6 (Max. 205-224)	love for God and others
Section 7 (Max. 225-235)	adoration

There appears to be a pattern in each section, but not necessarily in the same order:

- \* Maxims which describe the particular stage a person is at in the spiritual life
- \* The obstacles encountered during this stage
- \* The means which will enable the person to draw closer to God.



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We also find that these maxims reflect to some extent N. Barré's personal experience as a spiritual director. Very soon after his ordination; it became evident that he had a particular gift for spiritual direction.

Fr. Raffron records in a short life of N. Barré which we wrote: 'It became very clear to everyone that his gift lay in guiding people along the way that was appropriate for each one. Hence his superiors decided to exempt him from all other work so that he could devote his energies to spiritual direction.'

- His personal experience of the ways of God, the aspects of the mystery of God that attracted him most, areas of conversion, contemplative prayer. Biographers recount long periods of spiritual darkness which N. Barré experienced. Letter 54 also gives us some indications of this. Those who have touched a deep mystical life will understand better what these experiences must have been for N. Barré.

N. Barré's teaching is rooted in the Gospels and St. Paul's Letters. The appropriate references are given in the footnotes for the maxims. He also refers to St. Augustin, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa of Avila and St. Francis de Sales. He appears to be quite immersed in the mysticism of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. Nevertheless his own personal touch also comes through: no excesses, balance, the necessity of a spirit of faith, abandonment, disinterestedness and mission

Some themes to be found in these maxims:

**Sanctification** i.e. the deepening of one's spiritual life through:

- \* everyday life, events and situations experienced, being faithful to one's duty, family, work.
- \* following in the footsteps of Jesus in poverty, lowliness, humility...

**God's greatness and our nothingness**

A Christian who desires to grow in the love of God and neighbour should try to enter into the depths of God's greatness and become more aware of his/her nothingness without God - (CF MAP 211, 216). The development of one's real identity as a human being depends on the depth of one's relationship with the Lord. This gift, freely given, puts a lot more value on the human person.

**Human reason and the wisdom of God**

Human reason must include reflection, foresight and prudence regarding the choices to be made. It also needs the enlightenment of God's wisdom - the gift of the Spirit. Thus decisions made will be more in the realm of faith than of reason. These decisions often involve a certain element of risk for the sake of others and for God.



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## The mystical life

Two quotations from 'Ways of attaining the highest state of perfection' illustrate N. Barré's experience of the mystical life:

\* 'The kingdom of God is God within us, Jesus within us - God alone and Jesus alone, through self-emptying and dying to self;'

\* 'We must therefore die to all and to self so as to belong only to God and already experience this happiness here on earth, which is to draw close to Jesus.'

The mystical life is therefore not fantasy (e.g. MAP 131). N. Barré says that a desire for virtue is not virtue and a desire for God is not God. It is true that certain abuses existed in the 17th century where the mystical life was sometimes confused with extraordinary 'spiritual' phenomena (CF MAP 149).

But when something which is good in itself is criticised, this does not either make it wrong or condemn it (MAP 149). In the experience of the mystical life, one does not get lost in God to the exclusion of one's neighbour. In the interaction of compassion and service we will discover the Spirit who is leading us.

## The Incarnation

N. Barré invites us to live the Mystery of the Incarnation (MAP 69). The way to holiness lies in following in the footsteps of Jesus. We go to God through Jesus Christ (MAP 154). This way of lowliness and humility is the surest way. Jesus is the beginning and the end of everything. All power in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (MAP 167-170). There is a very close link between Jesus and humanity. To love Jesus is to love others - the least of whom is made in His image (MAP 209 + 223). This is the source of our mission. The ultimate aim of the Incarnation is the transformation of humanity - the spread of the Kingdom. 'We have to struggle for the establishment of His kingdom here on earth.' (MAP 59)

*(May these Maxims help you in your journey towards sanctity)*

**A full list of Fr Barre's writings is found on the right hand side of this HOME page.**

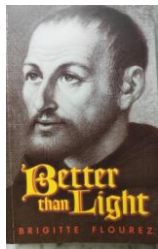


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## Resources inspired by Fr Barre's life and writings

### Books on Fr Nicolas Barre

There are three books on Blessed Nicolas Barre



- [Better than Light](#) by Sr Brigitte Flourez IJ
- [Director in the Darkness](#) by Dr William Makin
- [Comic book](#) on Blessed Nicolas Barre

### Reflections on different topics

Apostolic Spirituality [... read more](#)

Freedom [... read more](#)

Hope [...read more](#)

Humility [... read more](#)

Prayer-Contemplation [....read more](#)

The Spirit of the Vows [... read more](#)

Thoughts on Education [... read more](#)

Trust in Divine Providence [...read more](#)



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## Songs

Prayer of Abandonment ([lyrics](#)) [Listen to the song.](#)

(courtesy of Trevor Nerva & Julie Sim,

inspired by Fr Barre's prayer of Abandonment Sp Letter 12)

What must I do to find you? <https://youtu.be/uP0HsJyp3bU>

(written by Julie Sim and sung by Jonathan Wong,

inspired by [Sp Letter 4](#))