"Plus que l'exemple de ses saintes vertus": Catholic Women and the Communication of Relics in Seventeenth-Century France

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"There remains to us nothing but the example of her holy virtues," lamented a Discalced Carmelite nun of Beaune a few days after the death of Sister Marguerite (Parigot) du Saint-Sacrement (1619-1648), who notwithstanding the strict enclosure of the Carmelite order had developed a widespread reputation as a visionary with divine gifts of prophecy and healing. Though heartfelt, the lament was not strictly accurate, for the same letter relates that for two days before the funeral, crowds of mourners had pressed a team of Oratorian priests to touch some 20,000 rosaries to Marguerite's corpse so that each might be a tangible reminder of her spiritual gifts. Over the following months and years, the Carmel of Beaune would fulfill hundreds of similar requests: for Marguerite's portrait; for a scrap of her clothing, for a lock of her hair, for a drop of her blood; for objects she had used, for paintings or wax sculptures of the objects of her devotions.

The circulation of objects linked with Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement may have been exceptional in both its

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volume and the completeness of its documentary record, manifested in the recent publication by the Carmel of Beaune of more than a thousand letters written to or about Marguerite from 1631 to the 1660s. Yet her friends, admirers, and spiritual children all over seventeenth-century France were not alone in seeking to maintain a material connection with a holy woman—even beyond her death. The pious demands that reportedly left the Oratorians in Beaune no time to eat or even to breathe could be compared to the complaints heard by the General Assembly of the Clergy that in the same year (1648) Minim friars in Valence had persuaded the "credulous" to touch rosaries and medals to the visionary Marie Teyssonnier's body, to take pieces of her dress as relics—in short, to venerate her "as religious[ly] as if the Church by an act of canonization had publicly attested her sanctity." We could even cite Racine's description of crowds similarly flocking to touch medals, rosaries, and handkerchiefs to the body of the Jansenist Angélique Arnauld in 1661, though reportedly over the initial reluctance of Port Royal. In each case, nuns and lay women, priests and laymen negotiated the sometimes conflicting imperatives of religious devotion, personal loyalty, and newly-tightened Counter-Reformation strictures prescribing the proper handling of saintly relics and proscribing public veneration of reputedly holy people.

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3 Jean Racine, Abrégé de l'histoire de Port-Royal. Suivi d'un abrégé chronologique (1665-1710) d'après un opuscule anonyme imprimé en 1760 (reprint, Paris: Le Signe, 1979), 123.
not yet canonized as saints. Authenticated relics of canonized saints might be donated to a church or monastery or exchanged as gifts among highly-placed devout friends. The remembrances of the so-recently "living saints," however, seem to have carried an additional charge, proclaiming not only personal devotion but also a vital and growing spiritual affiliation. Requests for mementos and reports of conversations about them, stories of disasters averted or graces obtained, reveal networks of communication and devout sociability structured by the objects and the holy women or men they represented. Examining these networks will enrich our understanding of the lived experience of Catholic women and men in the "Century of Saints." 

A child of elite bourgeois of Beaune, the eleven-year-old Marguerite Parigot was only a year younger than the town's Carmelite monastery when she entered it in 1630. There Marguerite's patient resignation to her chronic ill health matured into a spirituality marked by humility, servitude, and Christ-like suffering for other's sins, punctuated by visions of Christ's mysteries. The young

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7 The discussion below is most heavily indebted to Jacques Roland-Gosselin, Le Carmel de Beaune 1619-1660 (Rabat: Imprimeries françaises et marocaines, 1968), 59, 73-116. See also Hélène de la Croix, "Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement," Dictionnaire de la spiritualité ascétique et mystique: doctrine et histoire, vol. 10 (Paris:
Carmelite originated a devotion to Christ's childhood, deepening the Christocentric theology of Pierre de Bérulle by requiring the annihilation of the (adult) self and the embrace of a childlike simplicity and humility toward God. Already a subject of discussion among the Carmelites and the Order's clerical superiors, Marguerite's mystical spirituality attracted more attention as she came to envision a close connection between the new devotion and the fortunes of the French monarchy; the Carmel of Beaune preserves the memory of a rapture in 1632 when Marguerite simultaneously received the grace of participating in the holy childhood and heard Christ calling on her to aid Louis XIII by praying for a Dauphin. A revelation on Christmas Eve 1635 promised that a royal heir would be born in Marguerite's lifetime. One month later, the child Jesus appeared to warn Marguerite of the impending Habsburg invasions, and as the Spanish invaded Picardy, Marguerite heard Jesus promise, "through my childhood . . . you will surmount all the difficulties."

Under the threat of war, the Carmelites of Beaune took the unusual step of promptly adopting Marguerite's devotion, and Carmelites in endangered Burgundy, Franche-Comté, and Champagne quickly followed suit to enroll as "domestics" and "associates" of the Holy Family, pledged to serve and honor the child Jesus. The new

8 Roland-Gosselin, 151-60. On Bérulle's theology, see Bremond, 3:43-110.
9 Roland-Gosselin, 141-47. On other French visionaries' prayers and revelations centered on the birth of a Dauphin and on the military campaigns of 1636, see my "Âmes d'Élite: Visionaries and Politics in France from the Wars of Religion to Louis XIV" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1999), chaps. 4 and 5.

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devotion soon spread beyond the convent walls, along with word of Marguerite's assurances that "the Holy Child Jesus would . . . assist all those associated with the Holy Family." Reportedly hundreds, even thousands, of rosaries that Marguerite had offered in her prayers and touched to her picture of the child Jesus were distributed to civilians and soldiers who promised to honor and serve the Holy Child.\textsuperscript{10}

Marguerite's devotion to the child Jesus gained a wider following through Anne of Austria's pregnancy and the birth of Louis, "the God-given," in September 1638. The Carmel of Beaune also benefited noticeably from Anne of Austria's patronage. The queen endowed devotions to be said at the Carmel of Beaune on the twenty-fifth of every month, just as associates of the Holy Family were required to honor the twenty-fifth in memory of Jesus' birth. Shortly after Louis's birth, the Queen sent the Carmelites a statue in his likeness. Following the Queen's recognition, the list of associates of the "family of the Holy Child Jesus" swelled with prominent names from all over France, while distant donors sent contributions for a chapel that Marguerite was inspired to build in honor of the royalty of the Child Jesus.\textsuperscript{11}

Already in her lifetime, then, and notwithstanding the

\textsuperscript{10} Roland-Gosselin, 143-50. Marguerite's confessor, the Oratorian Jacques Parisot, reported that Marguerite and her "very prudent" prioress Marie de la Trinité had properly kept the knowledge of Marguerite's revelations to their private prayers. The Carmelites of Beaune recorded that so many rosaries were distributed that they could not record all the recipients but that the rosaries were distributed only to those who asked for them and desired to serve the Holy Child Jesus. Roland-Gosselin cites seventeenth-century estimates that 6,000 rosaries were distributed, including an attestation by a Carmelite priest and regimental almoner that none of the 600 soldiers to whom he gave rosaries were killed in the fighting.

\textsuperscript{11} Roland-Gosselin, 160-63.
insistence of the prioress of Beaune and the Order's superiors that her revelations be kept secret, Marguerite's devotion to the child Jesus experienced different forms of transmission. Anne of Austria's gifts for Marguerite's devotions fit within traditional, usually bilateral, patterns of patronage. Simultaneously, Marguerite's devotion had become the focus of a more dispersive distribution that we might compare to broadcasting in its "making widely known" and "scattering in all directions" the tangible signs of her revelations.  

While both patterns persist after Marguerite's death in the distribution of objects associated with her, the circulation and subdivision of such relics cast her memory widely and seemingly in all directions.

There were constraints on that broadcasting, of course. Responding to the desecrations of relics during the Wars of Religion as well as the reforming impulses expressed by the Council of Trent and Borromeo's ordinances for Milan, French clerics meeting in provincial councils had increasingly restricted access to the relics of recognized saints: relics could not be carried by lay people in processions; they should not be held by women; they should not be carried to the sick; they could not be removed from their reliquaries; and they should be preserved in churches rather than private buildings. No new relics could be displayed for veneration without official recognition by the

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12 Superior Gibieuf to prioress of Beaune, 30 Sept. 1635: "... Je bénis de tout mon coeur le saint enfant Jésus de la continuation de ses miséricordes sur la petite Soeur Marguerite et vous remercie de ce que vous m'en mandez continuant à vous supplier que tout ce qui se passe en elle soit toujours tenu très secret et cela pour de nouvelles raisons que je ne vous puis écrire." (Beaune letter 8); similar exchanges appear in letters 12-14 of 1637 and 37 of 1639. Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed., s.v. "broadcast." The two patterns described here might also be compared to Davis's discussion of "Catholic' reciprocity" versus "Reformed' gratuitousness" in The Gift, chap. 7.
In 1625 and again in 1634, Pope Urban VIII prohibited "abuses" in the veneration of reputedly holy persons who had not yet been beatified or canonized yet whose images were displayed in churches with laurel crowns or haloes; whose miracles, revelations, and divine favors were published in books; and whose tombs were adorned with tablets, images, *ex votos*, and lamps. Henceforth only the bishop could initiate canonization proceedings and then only in the absence of a public cult. Images, lamps, and hagiography would all require the bishop's approval.14

As we might expect, such restrictions seem to have been honored as much in the breach as in practice in seventeenth-century France. It is important to note, however, that even as this thicket of rules circumscribed the public veneration of saints and their relics—in churches, in

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processions, at tombs—it left some space for the creative elaboration of piety and sociability in the shifting but not entirely private terrain deemed not public, mapped by networks of correspondence, friendship, family, and devotion. We might expect that this elaboration would be, if not exclusively, then largely the work of women: the Carmelites themselves and their devout patronesses and female friends. Yet while the Carmelites of Beaune ultimately controlled the supply of Marguerite's relics, the relics' distribution depended on a complex interplay of gendered roles. I have sliced three samples from the correspondence for analysis here: ninety-six letters written between 1631 and 1645, during Marguerite's lifetime; sixty letters written between 1648, the year of Marguerite's death, and 1651; and sixty-eight letters written in 1654 and 1655, around the publication of the first two editions of Denis Amelote's biography of Marguerite.

The letters written during Marguerite's lifetime provide a useful tool for exploring attitudes toward relics and spiritual affiliations in and around the Discalced Carmelite Order. Letters exchanged with the lay reformer Baron Gaston de Renty in 1644 show both the circulation of relics of canonized saints and the affective charge that it carried. Renty accepted Marguerite's gift of relics on condition that her prayers and those of the prioress would "make us become other so that we may honor them and that the holy child Jesus may be honored."15 Apparently returning the favor, Renty sent Marguerite a small reliquary containing pieces of the True Cross and relics of Saint Agnes that had been given to him by a "demoiselle and good Sister" who had just become a Carmelite.16 From Renty's worried letter

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15 Gaston de Renty to Mère Elisabeth de la Trinité, ca. 22 Jan. 1644, no. 146.
16 Renty, 1644, no. 149.
about a missing package, we learn that the Carmelites had promised to send him relics of Beaune's third-century Saint Flocel for the use of one of his many spiritual protegées, the ailing Madame de la Châtre. (We might note in passing that this practice seems inconsistent with the prohibition on sending relics to the sick.) In the space of three letters, relics circulated from female religious to a layman through him as patron to lay women—and vice versa. The letters show relics as the seal on a layman's spiritual mentoring of a laywoman but also the same layman adopting the female donor's central devotion, assisted by the prayers believed to accompany the gift.

Within the Carmelite Order itself, the relationships framed by the exchange of relics could be even more nuanced. Writing in 1645 to thank the Carmel of Pontoise for a copy of the recently published biography of the Carmelite Madeleine de Saint Joseph, the prioress of Beaune called to her counterpart's attention the mention of a gift of a relic that Madeleine had received from a revered Carmelite of Beaune: "I believe that that will give you devotion for the True Cross that our late Mother gave her and will make you see the dignity and love in which our Mother held our blessed Mother Madeleine, sending her a treasure that must have been so precious and so dear to her."  

The overwhelming majority of the ninety-six letters, however, sought not relics but the spiritual benefit of Marguerite's prayers (seventy-six requests) and devotions (four communions and novenas) on their behalf. Twenty-five requested the tangible emblems of her devotion to the child Jesus, in the form of wax statuettes, images, and the

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17 Renty to Mère Elisabeth de la Trinité, 2 July 1644, no. 182.

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roary of the Holy Family (which had groups of nine beads honoring the months of the Virgin Mary's pregnancy and twelve honoring the twelve years of Jesus' childhood). Eleven sought advice from Marguerite's presumably divine inspirations; these individuals were mainly insiders: Carmelites, their clerical Superiors, and their Oratorian confessors.

Indeed, the correspondence during Marguerite's lifetime seems rather restricted. Twenty-five of the letters were sent to Beaune from Paris and Pontoise, home to the Order's Superiors and its founding monasteries. Lay people accounted for nearly a third of the correspondence and were the largest category among the correspondents, but their number (thirty) was nearly matched by the Carmelites and Oratorians (twenty-seven combined) and less than half of the total of all clergy and religious. Reflecting this clerical slant, men outnumbered women among the correspondents by fifty-five to thirty-six.

But if we look past the addresses, the letters tell a somewhat different story: while nearly half (forty-five) sought assistance with their personal concerns, there were also sixty-one requests for assistance to a recipient other than the correspondent; twenty-four of these recipients were women. Those who benefited from Marguerite's assistance were overwhelmingly lay people (seventy), followed by Carmelites (twenty-eight), members of other religious orders (fifteen) and the Carmelites' superiors (six) and secular clergy (six).

The gender balance shifts with Marguerite's death in 1648: as Carmelite convents throughout France sought a tangible connection to their deceased sister, female correspondents outnumbered males by three to one. Carmelites were the single largest category of correspondents in the period 1648-1651, while lay
correspondents accounted for only eleven letters, compared to forty-eight letters from Carmelites and members of other orders and secular clergy. Nevertheless, that laypeople were the single largest category among the intended recipients of relics and devotion (thirty-three versus twenty-eight Carmelites and nine members of other religious orders) shows the significant role of Carmelites and members of other religious orders as intermediaries between clerical and lay piety, between public and "not public" devotion.

The Carmelites of Beaune had clearly anticipated and prepared for the demand for tangible remembrances of Marguerite, although it is impossible to say whether the Carmelites had thought quite as far ahead as Renty, who had written in 1644 to urge the prioress of Beaune "to keep about a dozen [of the rosaries of the Holy Family] for me because the time will come when they will have a price higher than it now seems."19 As Soeur Etiennette du Saint Esprit at Beaune wrote to Mère Jeanne de Jésus at Pontoise, in a letter accompanying a painting of Marguerite and a vial of her blood, "We had to keep an eye on this, because the good fathers who assisted her took everything they could give away that she had used." The Carmelites had collected vials of blood from the last medical bleeding of Marguerite, several days before her death, and carefully preserved her clothing and sheets.20

In addition to watching over the Oratorians who presided over Marguerite's last days and her funeral, the Carmelites of Beaune had to manage the directives emanating from the Order's Superiors in Paris. Here again

19 Renty to Mère Elisabeth de la Trinité, 29 April 1644, Paris, no. 159.
20 Soeur Etiennette du Saint Esprit to Mère Jeanne de Jésus, 3 July 1648, Beaune, no. 394.
we see an oscillation of gendered and clerical roles of authority and power.\footnote{An example of gendered as well as clerical circumspection can be seen in the letter of 31 July 1648 from A. Voysins, Jesuit at Lyon, to the prioress of Carmelites at Beaune, no. 418: after assuring the prioress that "I have never seen on earth any person but her who has held my mind in suspense, nor raised it higher, nor in whom it seems to me that God wanted more to enclose secrets and mysteries," Voysins concludes on an almost bellicose note that "everyone knows if I am an idolater of singularities or even of miracles."} A letter of June 1648 from Father Coqueret shows him both as supplicant and Superior: "send me something from my sister Marguerite. Please do not give anything to lay people unless we have given you notice."\footnote{Coqueret to Carmelite prioress at Beaune, 5 June 1648, no. 380.} Writing a few weeks later, however, Coqueret's resolve yielded to the influence of a powerful lay man and woman:

Please send me a box of things that served for [Marguerite]'s use, like a rosary and other things. Monseigneur the Chancellor [Séguier] is pressing me to have some and Madame Séguier visited me yesterday to press me in her name and in the name of Monseigneur. I think that you can give something to your friends and those of the deceased, but very soberly, I beg you. My reason is that if God manifests the sanctity of this soul, there should be no difficulties in giving them. But if nothing extraordinary happens, we should be very circumspect.\footnote{Coqueret to prioress of Beaune, 26 June 1648, no. 398.}

By July, when Coqueret and his fellow superior Gibieuf hammered out a tactful compromise between the spirit of Counter-Reformation strictures on relics and saints, the need to safeguard the Order's reputation, and the growing demand for "something from" Marguerite, the Carmelites of Beaune had already been sending out packages for
Correspondents most frequently sought pictures of Marguerite and contact relics, such as pieces of her clothing and objects she had used, generally preferring to leave to the Carmelite prioress the choice of "something from" Marguerite. This arrangement did not prevent occasional complaints like that of one Carmelite that, considering her close emotional ties to Marguerite, her portion "should have been five times larger than that of the others." The laywoman Marie Massol, wife of President Denis Brûlart of the Parlement of Dijon, took matters into her own hands: "I received de bon coeur and with respect the scapular of her robe that you sent me. I saw how you had given Mme. De Bisseuil a much better and bigger share than mine, and of more worthy things, since it is the hair of that blessed soul. You will permit me, please, to take my share of it and send her only half." We should pause for a moment to note that Marie Massol's hands—that is, those of a layperson and a woman at that—were precisely the hands least fit, according to the post-Tridentine councils, to hold an authenticated relic of a canonized saint.

Marie Massol's letter also reveals that mementos of Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement passed through many hands—and not only in transit. The letters frequently mention the recipients' intended or actual sharing of the relics, whether within a Carmel, from Carmelites to lay people, or from Carmelites to other religious, each of

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24 Coqueret wrote that the Carmelites of Beaune could give something from Soeur Marguerite to "a few particular friends who ask insistently" and also to the Carmelite convents: Coqueret to Carmelite prioress of Beaune, 17 July 1648, no. 407.
25 Marguerite de Saint Bernard to Carmelite prioress of Beaune, 14 June 1648, no. 391.
26 Marie Massol (wife of Président Denis Brûlart) to Mère Elisabeth de la Trinité, 18 July 1648, Dijon, no. 409.
whom could share with additional recipients. "We are keeping the holy veil of our good sister with the respect we owe to it," wrote a Carmelite of Saint-Denis. "We have shared out her relics to everyone in our community. As for the rosary, it will be inseparable from [me] as long as it is in my power to keep it, and I will only leave it to lend it sometimes to my sisters." 27 The Carmelite prioress in Riom requested pictures of Marguerite for "a few lay people (quelques personnes séculières) who have a very particular devotion to her and who ask for them continually." 28 Madame A. de Villere la Fay in Chevigny wrote that "the rumor of Marguerite's marvels has gone all the way to Nancy in Lorraine, from where I've received a letter from one of my relatives, an Annonciade, who asks to have relics and one of the images made for Marguerite. Do me the charity to send me two of them, one for her and one for me." 29

In the letters of 1648-1651, women account for two-thirds (twenty-one out of thirty) of the family members and other specified intended recipients of the request. Those who intended to share the benefits of relics or devotions with particular recipients or family members were more often women than men (5:3 and 8:1).

The publication of Denis Amelote's biography of Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement in 1654 and its immediate second edition in 1655 widened access to Marguerite's relics and her devotions. In 1648-1651, eighteen of the correspondents (one-third of the total) mentioned their prior connection to Marguerite, whether through a face-to-face

27 Carmelite of Saint-Denis, Aug. 1649, no. 475.
28 Marie de la Trinité to Carmelite prioress of Beaune, 13 Nov. 1650, Riom, no. 491.
29 A. de Villers la Faye Chevigny to Carmelite prioress of Beaune, 1651, no. 504.
meeting, correspondence, or her prayers. Fewer than half that number (eight) mentioned other sources of their knowledge of Marguerite. In 1654-1655, the relationship was reversed: of the sixty-eight letters, only thirteen came from correspondents claiming prior connections to Marguerite, and five of those came from Marguerite's former confessor, the Oratorian Parisot. Twenty-one cited others as sources for their knowledge: other laypeople, particular clerics and religious, the local Carmel, or Marguerite's growing reputation. Ten linked their requests to the effects of reading the biography.

With print and publicity came increased representation of women and lay correspondents. For the first time, the writers are evenly divided between male and female. The eight Carmelite and ten Oratorian correspondents are outnumbered both by the twenty-eight members of other religious orders and by the twenty lay correspondents, who make up just under one-third of the total correspondents. Again, the proportions are higher among the intended recipients of relics of and devotions to Marguerite: the eighty-one lay people are nearly double the forty-one beneficiaries in other religious orders and outnumber the total of sixty-five for all religious and secular clergy combined. Women accounted for fifty-seven of the eighty-nine specified as intended recipients (sixty-four percent) of relics and devotions.

Demand for relics of Marguerite was also stimulated by the practice of lending out relics to those in need and recording their effects. The most indefatigable lenders, both religious and dévot laymen, clustered in Aix around Marguerite's former confessor, the Oratorian Parisot. "My sister Marguerite continues to work great marvels here," wrote Parisot to the prioress of Beaune in March 1654; "everyone generally has recourse to [her] and not without
good effects. . . . We can hardly say all the novenas that are requested, and, at the hour I am writing you, the relics that you gave me from our holy sister are with the sick.\textsuperscript{30} Three months later, the Oratorians of Aix were obliged to request more: "it is very true that Reverend Father Parisot has already given us a rather good quantity, but the great quantity of the sick has entirely depleted it. . . . Your gift will be the measure of ours. For if you send us a lot, we will share it with many, and if a little, with few."\textsuperscript{31} The next month they announced that they had given "a good part" of the renewed supply of "this precious treasure" to "Monsieur Michaelis, a very worthy and prudent dispenser of relics." "Word about this gift has spread so far throughout the city that I have come to learn that our share is quite small, except for this holy cloth which I will never relinquish while I am alive."\textsuperscript{32} Parisot, meanwhile, was on the road. "If I had here all [Marguerite's] clothing and linens (toutes ses hardes et nippes)," he wrote from the Ursuline monastery at Aulps, "I would not have enough for everyone who asks for them. I hardly have any more, and I assure myself that you would have even less if you were in my place. . . . It is very difficult, not to say impossible, to refuse in these encounters."\textsuperscript{33} The Ursuline Superior of Pont-Saint-Esprit had also benefited from Parisot's generosity, as she acknowledged when she wrote to Beaune seeking more relics: "it is very true that the very Reverend Father Parisot gave us some, and others, too, but all that

\textsuperscript{30} Parisot to Carmelite prioress of Beaune, 31 March 1654, Aix, no. 538.
\textsuperscript{31} Berardy and Michaelis to Elisabeth de la Trinité, 3 July 1654, Aix, no. 544.
\textsuperscript{32} Berardy to Françoise de Saint Joseph, 31 Aug. 1654, Beaune, no. 554.
\textsuperscript{33} Parisot to Elisabeth de la Trinité, 24 June 1654, Aulps, no. 546.
does not suffice for the quantity of people who ask us for them.\textsuperscript{34}

What can we conclude about this communication of relics of an uncanonized holy woman? First, although it stretched the spirit of Counter Reformation reforms, it avoided challenging them directly. Only the Ursulines of Aulps experienced episcopal opposition during the period studied here; they were told to get an authentication in due form for their pieces of Marguerite's clothing or risk the relics' confiscation and their own condemnation as superstitious.\textsuperscript{35} Second, it sustained a range of communicative roles and authoritative positions for women and men, religious and lay, and we could say the same for the register of emotional response to the objects. Third, by "broadcasting" Marguerite's holiness in ways that were nevertheless not public, it allowed laymen and women, especially, closer access to the holy than would be permitted in the public veneration of a canonized saint. Finally, the Carmel of Beaune and the networks of recipients throughout France indeed had more than the remembered example of her holy virtues.

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\item[34] Marie du Saint Esprit de Bécherand to Carmelite prioress of Beaune, Sept. 1654, Pont-Saint-Esprit, no. 558.
\item[35] Soeur H. de Saint Charles Carrelasse to Carmelite prieure of Beaune, 22 Jan. 1655, Aulps, no. 585. With some urgency, the Ursuline explained that the Carmelite's earlier attestation that the pieces of fabric indeed came from Marguerite's clothing was insufficient because it lacked the authorization and seal of the Carmel of Beaune or the Order's Superiors, "formalities so necessary" that without them the bishop would "deprive us of these relics and condemn us of superstition."
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