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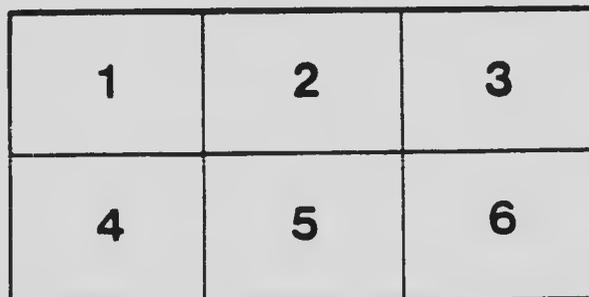
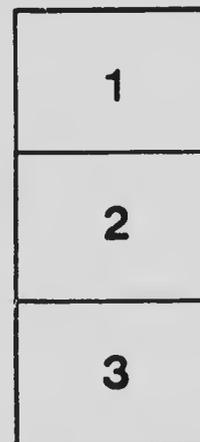
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Reverend Mother Sacred Heart



HISTORY  
OF  
The Reverend Mother Sacred  
Heart of Jesus

(NÉE TEZENAS OF MONTCEL)

*Second Superior-General of the Congregation of the Sisters  
of St. Joseph of Lyons*

PRECEDED BY SKETCHES OF THE ORIGIN OF THE  
CONGREGATION, AND OF MOTHER ST. JOHN  
NÉE PONTBONNE, FIRST SUPERIOR-  
GENERAL

BY THE  
ABBÉ RIVAUX

TRANSLATED BY  
THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH, LINDSAY, ONT., CANADA

*She is beautiful among the  
daughters of Jerusalem.*

—Office B.V.M.

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## Preface to the English Translation

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History is a delightful study. It brings before our minds the past, with all that has made it memorable. We behold, passing and repassing, men struggling one with another. We see life as it actually existed. When history takes the form of biography, it becomes still more interesting and one of the best aids to education. Men naturally seek the good and noble. In reading the lives of those who have made themselves leaders, we are incited to imitate them. Lives of such men serve to elevate and strengthen our character. The difficulties they encountered, and the means they employed to overcome them, are vividly placed before us, and we realize the endurance and strong will which enabled them to persevere until the desired object was attained. The nearer to our own times a man has lived, the greater is our interest in him. His world and his surroundings have been much the same as ours. We recognize the same men and women, and readily discover the qualities that gave them honour and success in life. Publishers acknow-

ledge this. Hence the great number of biographies that are issued yearly by the press. We have the lives of men who excelled in every walk of life, statesmen, philanthropists, scientists, inventors, and those skilled in the mechanical arts.

There are honours greater than this life can give. The things here below are given us as a means to ascend to the higher life with God. If the lives of the great ones of earth are incentives to honour and fame, why should not the lives of noble men and women, whose aim is not earthly glory, but everlasting glory with God, be incentives, in urging us to practise the same virtues and to walk unfalteringly in their footsteps? Reading the lives of the saints will awaken religious sentiments in our souls, and will teach us that they possessed peace and happiness, even when they endured the hardest trials and suffered most. These are the heroes and heroines of God most worthy of honour and imitation. They excel in the virtues of humility and courage. They allow no obstacle to stand in the way of that service.

For these reasons the translator has sought to bring before the public, and more especially the religious women of America, the life of a heroine of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, who lived in dangerous and strenuous times. When the French Revolution overwhelmed France, Religion was banished, churches and monasteries were destroyed, and

Religious had to fly the country. After the Church was restored to some of her rights, religious convents and schools were to be re-established. Who would be found to undertake this work? A Religious of the Sisters of St. Joseph, who had passed through these days of terror, had suffered in prison, and expected death from the guillotine, was preserved to found anew the Institute of St. Joseph. With her was soon associated Mother Sacred Heart, of whose life this book treats, and who, like her companion, Mother St. John, went through the carnage of another revolution, and saw the work of the community given to pillage and fire by the rabble. Hers was the duty of raising these homes once more from the ashes, and, as it were, of re-establishing the Congregation.

To this gentle Mother the United States and Canada owe the foundation of the Congregation in these countries, where they have increased so amazingly. The beautiful life of this humble and zealous woman will give courage to those who read it. For these reasons, the translator, a devout Sister of St. Joseph, has sought to place before the public, and more especially the religious women of America, the lives and works of heroines of her beloved Congregation of St. Joseph, the Reverend Mothers St. John and Sacred Heart of Jesus, who re-established the Institute in these latter days. It is only a short time since they departed this world to receive their heavenly reward.

France, the eldest daughter of the Church, so renowned for her saints and missionaries, a little over a hundred years ago passed through the turmoil of a terrible revolution. Her churches and altars were desecrated; Reason was proclaimed God, and Faith hid herself in the mountain fastnesses. Monasteries and convents were destroyed, and the holy Religious were compelled to fly for safety. During these dark days of terror, many holy souls, in the prisons and in secret hiding-places, prayed and longed for the dawn of light to restore them to their unhappy country. They were ready at the first call to come forth and devote themselves in the religious life to the service of God, and build up anew the asylums of charity, hospitals and schools, where the poor of Jesus Christ might be sheltered and instructed in the faith and practice of virtue.

Among those who came forth from the prisons, as soon as the Church was restored to some of her rights, was a Religious of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Mother St. John Fontbonne, to find the community scattered and disbanded. In prison she had suffered untold misery, and for a time awaited the summons to the guillotine. Hers was the task of re-establishing the Institute of St. Joseph. With her was soon associated Mother Sacred Heart of Jesus, of whose life and good deeds this modest book more especially treats, and who, like her Superior, passed through the trials of another revolution. A second time was a king of France driven

from his country, followed by the sacking and burning of convents and churches. Mother Sacred Heart saw the same scenes enacted as in the days of Mother St. John. It was her life work, as second Superior-General, to restore these academics, schools, hospitals, and asylums, and refound, as it were, the Congregation of St. Joseph of Lyons. She blessed God that she was enabled to do this.

One cannot help noticing, in reading the life of this noble woman, the great importance she attached to the instruction of Sisters destined to become teachers. As a result of this care on her part, and as an indication of the proficiency they attained, Lyons and many other cities in France called upon them to establish normal schools, for the training of young girls, to assist them in the work of education.

What must give further interest to this book is the present state of France. Once more it has, as a nation, rejected the faith, persecuted the Church, driven the Religious from their homes, closed to them the schools and hospitals, and the homes which sheltered the poor and maimed of Jesus Christ. We might ask: "How long is this to last?" The French people, now persecuted by an infidel Government, are Catholics at heart, and the prayers offered for France will, in God's own time, be answered, and other worthy successors of Mother St. John and Mother Sacred Heart be inspired to undertake the work of restoring to that unhappy

land those homes of charity which ever mark the presence of the unfettered Catholic Church.

The work of the community needs no praise. This volume simply and clearly tells what these noble women, the first Superiors-General of the Congregation of St. Joseph, have done. They have established homes throughout Europe and America. In the United States and Canada their number has increased amazingly, and they are to be found where there is any work of charity to be done. They are angels of mercy, teaching the ignorant, visiting those in prison, caring for the sick, consoling the afflicted, offering homes to the poor and the orphan. Ever faithful to the spirit of their foundresses, nothing can separate them from the love of Jesus Christ.

A PRIEST OF THE DIOCESE OF PETERBOROUGH,  
LINDSAY, CANADA.

FEAST OF ST. CATHARINE  
Nov. 25th, 1909.

## APPROBATION

*Of His Eminence Cardinal Caverot, Archbishop of Lyons  
and Vienna, Primate of Gaul.*

MY DEAR DAUGHTERS,

I willingly accept the book which you have dedicated to me. Many religious Congregations in these later days have raised pious monuments of filial gratitude to the memory of the Superiors who have been their founders. You also have had the desire to fulfil this duty towards two of your Superiors-General; the first was a confessor of the Faith in the evil days of our history, the restorer of your Institute, and its real foundress in the Diocese of Lyons; the other afterwards ruled it in the same city, with rare wisdom and consummate prudence.

We congratulate the author who, in these pages, has revealed his knowledge of the science of heavenly things, as well as shown his merit as a writer. He has written a book full of interest and edification for you. The study of these beautiful examples of humility and devotedness will urge you to renew the original spirit of your holy vocation, and constrain you to be ever faithful to your high calling.

Your Community of St. Joseph was founded more than two centuries ago, through the apostolic zeal of a bishop according to God's own heart, and of a holy Religious of the Society of Jesus. Both were inspired with what had been the primal idea of St. Francis de Sales, and felt impelled to realize it. Guard with care the memory of your origin, and the heritage of your first fervour. Whilst consecrating yourselves to the works of charity, which you are accomplishing with such great zeal, let your first thought be the sanctification of your own soul, and your religious perfection.

Many branches from the tree of your foundation have spread outwards, and are bearing much fruit for the salvation of souls. Happy in this holy fruitfulness, cherish always the original sap that made it fruitful, the love of prayer, the habits of self-denial and lowly humility, which characterize these Superiors and their Sisters, the memory of whom is now most assuredly perpetuated in your Institute by the present work. The remembrance of these holy Sisters will fortify you in the combat against the allurements and dangers of the present time so opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ. Their example will help you to become day by day more worthy of the twofold title of Spouses of our Lord and Daughters of St. Joseph.

We pray God to console and sustain you in the fulfilment of all the duties of your holy vocation, to render more productive the many works of charity and

education in which you are engaged in the various dioceses, and to pour out on you the full abundance of his graces and blessings.

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### APPROBATION

*Of Mgr. Paulinier, Archbishop of Besançon.*

MY DEAR AND VENERABLE CANON,

I have read with the liveliest interest the pages you have consecrated to the memory of the Rev. Mother Sacred Heart, second Superior-General of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph at Lyons, which have been communicated to me at your request, and I hasten to offer you my very sincere congratulations. I am not surprised at the impression that this book has left upon me. I have found in your work, as in your *Course of Ecclesiastical History*, conscientious research, facts grouped with art, and skilfully arranged, luminous order, a style simple yet elegant; in a word, those eminent qualities which have given you an honourable rank among modern historians, and have entitled you to the flattering approbation of the episcopate and the clergy. This biographical study of yours offers an attraction which that of your first work did not admit. We breathe here a perfume of asceticism and sweet

piety, which communicates itself to the soul, embalming us with its odour.

You speak of the Reverend Mother Sacred Heart as did St. Jerome of St. Paul, or St. Francis de Sales of St. Chantal. In relating the history of her works you write the history of her soul, you paint, with love, a beautiful picture, but we feel that above the richness and warmth of your colouring your principal intention is to make us imitate and love the holy woman, whose simple virtues and sublime faith delight us and at the same time evoke our admiration.

You have merited the gratitude not only of the Sisters of St. Joseph, but of all truly Christian souls. If this Congregation, which realizes in our midst one of the first ideas of St. Francis de Sales, finds in your work an interesting and complete account of the foundation, its first development, and the perfect knowledge which should animate it, Christian souls owe to you a book capable of stimulating supernatural love and multiplying the number of saints. You have indicated in the introduction the twofold motive for the publication of this history: First, the need of fostering devotion to St. Joseph, one of the great remedies ordained by Providence to heal the wounds of the present time; Second, the necessity of raising up strong souls from the midst of the general abasement of character which reveals itself, alas, too often about us. This twofold object will be attained. Has

St. Joseph, the glorious patron given to the Universal Church by our beloved Pope, Pius IX., a more devout servant, or one who imitated him more perfectly than Rev. Mother Sacred Heart? Had not this noble woman, in the midst of difficulties and trials, the energy of the illustrious reformer of Carmel? The new work which you have so ably accomplished will receive the only recompense that your modesty ever desired, that which comes to every holy priest, viz., the thought that he has done a little good. I concur, without reserve, in the approbation of his Eminence, the Cardinal of Lyons. I will recommend your book to the clergy, to the religious communities, and the faithful in my diocese, desirous of their sanctification.

Receive, my very dear and reverend Ca. . . with my benediction, the assurance of my devoted and affectionate sentiments, in our Lord Jesus Christ,



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## Introduction

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“When we offer to human frailty”, says St. Augustine, “the direct imitation of the Divinity, according to the words of the Gospel, ‘Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect’, it cries out and opposes us with pretexts drawn from its own weakness. ‘How,’ it exclaims, ‘imitate Him with whom I cannot be compared under any aspect? He is infinite, I am an atom; He is the Creator, I am the least of His creatures; He is spirit, I am flesh.’ We reply that the All-powerful has shortened His arm, that the Immense, the Infinite has emptied Himself, that the Spirit has taken a body, that the Creator has been made a creature, in so far as the Royal Prophet says that a little child has been born and given to us. He whose voice commands the waves makes Himself heard through the wailings of a child; He who walks upon the wings of the wind has feet unable to support Him; He was born in a manger, poorer than the least among us”. “He has come”, says Bossuet, “with the imprint of our wretchedness, that He may enter into companionship with us; He descends in order to raise us up; He has willed to be equal to us that we

might be equal to Him". "Christ has suffered for us", says Saint Peter, "leaving us an example of human clemency that we should follow." Therefore, at the end of His life He could say to us, "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you so you do also." "I know", responds human frailty, "that the Word became Flesh, that It might dwell amongst us, and that the Son of God became man; but in taking flesh and becoming man He lost nothing of that which He possessed from all eternity. He remained true God, equal in all things to His Father. What am I in comparison with Christ? And how may I become like unto Him? If, instead of the God-Man, we propose the life and example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is a pure creature, human frailty answers: "That is true, but having been conceived without stain, and being truly Mother of God, she is incomparable, and, according to the words of St. Bernard, has no model or copy." The Holy Spirit has said, "One is my dove." If we speak of the apostles, the simple fishermen who became the pillars of the Church; of martyrs of every age, of both sexes of all conditions, who in order to reach the land of promise, that is to say, Heaven, crossed the red sea of their own blood; of solitaries of every clime who made the desert blossom as a lily, it seems to human frailty that these giants of holiness were not only of another age, but of another nature and consequently beyond our reach.

It is therefore useful to present to poor humanity models less distant and less great, which, being of our time, render its excuses invalid. "It is a salutary instruction", said the eminent prelate, Mgr. Paulinier, Archbishop of Besançon, to show that, in the midst of the materialism and sensualism which is destroying us, the sap of true Christianity is not exhausted, and that our age, so misled, has not lost the inheritance of all its glories, that of producing saints. It is for this that we present to you, with some hope of usefulness, the life of a contemporary to whom we can apply what a sister of St. Francis Borgia, a Religious of Madrid, said of St. Teresa: "God be praised to have made known to us a saint that we can all imitate. Her conduct was nothing extraordinary; she ate, she slept, she spoke she laughed like all the others, without affectation, without ceremony, without style, and we see, nevertheless, how much she was filled with the spirit of God. She has traced a way that we can follow. If we pretend that we are not able to imitate God, Our Saviour, His Mother, and His Disciples, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, would you not have the strength to do that which has been done by a simple woman of our own day?" This woman, it is true, like St. Teresa, belonged to the religious life, but religious life is not a stranger to the world. One is not born a Religious, but becomes a Religious, and, in becoming such, does not cease to love friends and country, no matter what opinion the world may hold

to the contrary. A learned master of the spiritual life has said: "In religion hearts become chastened, and ideas more elevated. It is also the nature of the religious life, well understood and practised, to develop to a high degree the power of affection. On the contrary", he adds, "one of the principal traits remarkable in men who follow Satan and do his works is that they are without affection (*sine affectione*). The Religious comes from the world, but in leaving it she does not abandon it. She comes, it is true, from the ordinary ranks of society, but she labours and immolates herself for its preservation." The great Origen, in speaking of the first solitaries or religious, says that they were charged to battle for the weak, by prayer, fasting, piety, chastity, and the practice of all virtues, so that the world might profit by their sacrifices. They are like victims, serving as holocausts for the iniquities of the world. "It is quite necessary", Victor Hugo has well said, "that these pray always for those who never pray." Expiators are saviours. "What would become of the world, if I did not consider Religious", said our Lord to St. Teresa. "The saints sustain the world, and by the strength of their prayers arrest its imminent ruin", writes St. Jerome. Remember Sodom and other guilty cities. To save them, our Lord demanded not soldiers, but holy men. To save the Roman Empire, when attacked on all sides by barbarians, Pope Gregory the Great, estimating his chances of safety, reckoned the

souls consecrated to God in the city of Rome. The prayers of the just are, therefore, more powerful than armies. "Wars and revolutions happen", says Origen, "when those who sow the seeds of war are not prevented by the prayers of the just". "What more is needed", concludes St. Jerome, "to show how we should hold the friends of God, and how they serve society, by living the lives of saints?"

By what right, therefore, should the world, which is encumbered by the useless, vicious and scandalous, condemn souls devoted to prayer? If there be sometimes defects in the religious life, they are rare, and usually introduced by contact with the world and imitation of its ways. The ex-Religious becomes an ordinary worldling. Why, then, does the world make such a noise at what she has done, since she only follows its example? Moreover, the fall of one would not be remarked, if the immense majority of Religious were not faithful to their vocation. The least stain shows vividly on a white garment. "The world", cries out St. Jerome, "cannot persuade us to prefer the skin of the Et'hio'pian or a leopard, because there is a little spot on our own."

The Religious of St. Joseph is not content with prayer and edification; she is bound to relieve all human miseries. We find her in the schools, in the midst of poor children, whom she cares for and instructs; in the hospitals of the towns and cities; in the prisons,

orphanages, asylums, refuges and providences; around the sick, incurables and insane. She seems to have espoused misfortune under all its forms; suffering and tears have for her a loving attraction, and we can apply to her these words of the poet:

Without ceasing, she goes from sorrow to sorrow,  
As the bee of the field goes from flower to flower.<sup>1</sup>

St. Vincent de Paul and St. Francis de Sales, profoundly touched by the miseries which overwhelm humanity, and which the progress of modern civilization seemed far from diminishing, were raised up by God in order to prepare mothers, whose pure hearts and virginal hands would smooth the bed of suffering with a love which nothing could weary. They opened the cloister in order to give hospitals to the sick, servants to the poor, and mothers to the orphans.

The first, St. Vincent de Paul, founded the Sisters of Charity; the second, St. Francis de Sales, the Sisters of Visitation, who, being afterwards cloistered, were replaced by the Sisters of St. Joseph. These two great saints seemed to foresee our times, when truth would be made acceptable only by charity. According to the thought of St. Bernard, "Man without faith is like an animal, sensible only to that which flatters the body", charity becomes an apostolate, and virginity, which

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<sup>1</sup>"*Sans relâche, elle va de douleur en douleurs,  
Comme l'abeille aux champs vole de fleur en fleurs*"

exercises it, a priesthood. Practised under the eyes and in the midst of the world, virginity, united with charity, exercises a salutary influence. The world, becoming again materialistic, must be spiritualised. It is necessary to destroy the empire of the body by the mortification of the senses, to restore the value of souls by despising the material.

At the sight of these angels who visit and console, who lead a life so detached and pure, the world understands that it is not impossible to triumph over wicked and gross instincts in the strife that they exercise within themselves. When the most absolute continence is practised on one side in such an admirable manner, would it not be cowardly to outrage ordinary chastity? And would not the complaints against the indissolubility of Christian marriage be more degrading when there is heard each day the ravishing canticle of those who follow so faithfully the Lamb without spot? From these angelic hearts a perfume of thanksgiving, holiness and sanctity exhales without ceasing upon the world.

Such is the bright reflection thrown upon modern society by the Institute of St. Joseph, dwelling in its midst, yet devoting itself to prayer, education, and all the exterior works of charity. St. Joseph is the Patron of the Church which the world persecutes; of the labourer, whom it misleads; of the domestic hearth, where it seeks to diminish purity and sanctity; the

patron and model of the Christian life and Christian death, which it tries to lower to the level of the beast, through doctrines which make a kennel of the cradle and a sewer of the tomb.

“Raise the eyes of the soul, and behold the nations”, wrote St. Bernard; “do they not seem more like brushwood, ready for the fire, than the whitening harvest ready for the reaper? Many of them boast of their fruits, which, looked at closely, are seen to be only wild bushes or very old, decrepit trees, bearing at the most acorns, the food of swine.” If St. Bernard spoke thus of his times, what could we say of ours?

In the midst of this moral distress, God and the Church seem to say to us what Pharaoh long ago said to his famished people, “Go to Joseph, and he will give you the wheat of the elect, the bread of life which you need. He has gathered the corn in his granaries and faithfully kept it for you.”

Devotion to St. Joseph is one of the great remedies pointed out by Divine Providence for the healing of our grievous maladies. This merciful and medicinal intention of Divine Providence is found clearly expressed in the decree *Urbi et orbi*, of the Congregation of Rites, dated December 8th, 1870, where we read the following: “The Church, which has always held the blessed Joseph in the highest honour after the Blessed Virgin Mary, his spouse, has heaped praises upon him, and has had recourse to him in her greatest trials. The

Church, assailed on all sides by her enemies, is under such oppression and persecution that the impious persuade themselves the hour has already come when the gates of hell will prevail against her. The venerable bishops of the entire Catholic world have humbly besought the Sovereign Pontiff in their own name, and in the name of the faithful confided to their care, to declare St. Joseph patron of the Universal Church." This prayer having been renewed with more earnestness at the Eucumenical Council of the Vatican, our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, profoundly moved by the deplorable events of our day, and wishing to place himself and all the faithful under the patronage of this holy Patriarch, St. Joseph, was pleased to grant the petition of the venerable bishops, and solemnly declared St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. In consequence of a declaration so grave and solemn, an opportunity was given to publish all that could increase devotion to St. Joseph and confidence in his protection.

The publication of the Life of Mother Sacred Heart, second Superior-General, or as the Bishop of Nioces, Mgr. Plantier, says, second foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, is most likely to obtain such results. She was the devoted servant, the daughter *par excellence* of the glorious St. Joseph. As soon as she was named Superior, she hastened to place the keys of the house at the feet of his statue, and make him at once Superior and Procurator of his com-

munity. She put a little statue of the great saint in the money chest of the monastery, telling him that he was charged with the care of his new family. We shall see her in her difficulties, embarrassments and needs, having recourse to St. Joseph with the confidence and simplicity of a loving child who goes to her beloved father. She attests, as did St. Teresa, that St. Joseph never failed her. In this devotion there lived again in her the illustrious saint of Carmel. Example is the most powerful means of exciting the faithful to confidence in St. Joseph, and so the Church employs it. If, by her trust in St. Joseph, the Rev. Mother Sacred Heart recal's St. Teresa, by her devotion towards the Sacred Heart she was the worthy imitator of the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. At her baptism she received the name of Margaret Mary, and at her entrance into religion she added that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Faithful to this double predestination, she was, after the example of her patron, the devoted lover of the Sacred Heart, whose name she took at her solemn spiritual espousals. Her whole life was a model of this devotion, which is, says an illustrious prelate, "the very quintessence of Christianity and the safeguard of our times".

As, in her distress, Catholic France vowed herself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we cannot give too many examples calculated to inspire souls with this salutary devotion. That which increases still more

the opportuneness of the book now published is that the Reverend Mother, besides her remarkable devotion to St. Joseph and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, possessed, in an eminent degree, elevation and strength of character, which, says a grave author, were wanting in that age, and the absence of which is, perhaps, the greatest defect of the present generation. No trials, difficulties or obstacles could ever cause her dejection, discouragement, irritation or sadness. Her spirit remained always sweet, calm and joyful, without the least murmur or recrimination. By means of these high qualities, the Superior-General of the Sisters of St. Joseph was elevated above the most of her contemporaries, her strength of character resembling, trait for trait, that of St. Jane Frances de Chantal. She was so richly endowed with fortitude, a disposition of the soul most favourable to virtue, that one of her daughters, who lived long after her, and who is today at the head of a fervent community, writes of her: "On reading the lives of saintly foundresses of other religious orders, I exclaimed, 'all that does not astonish me'. I myself have seen instances in Mother Sacred Heart of the same virtue and the same heroism. The record of her noble life would add greatly to the glory of God, and preserve for her children a beautiful memory."

To France, suffering—perishing, perhaps—for want of faith, want of discipline, and want of devotion, we

gladly offer the history of a life full of faith, of holy obedience, and of heroic devotedness.

Glory and thanks to the noble and holy Christian family which received her precious life; glory and thanks to the pious congregation, in the bosom of which this holy child passed her youth, as a limpid stream flowing through a flower-decked meadow; glory and thanks, above all, to the Author of every perfect gift, Who, in the life of this admirable daughter of St. Joseph, gives to us a new proof that in our times can be produced sanctity capable of saving the world, and a new motive to employ with confidence the protection of the glorious St. Joseph in favour of our two well-beloved mothers, the Church and France, who are today passing through grave trials!

# HISTORY

OF

## The Reverend Mother Sacred Heart of Jesus

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### CHAPTER I

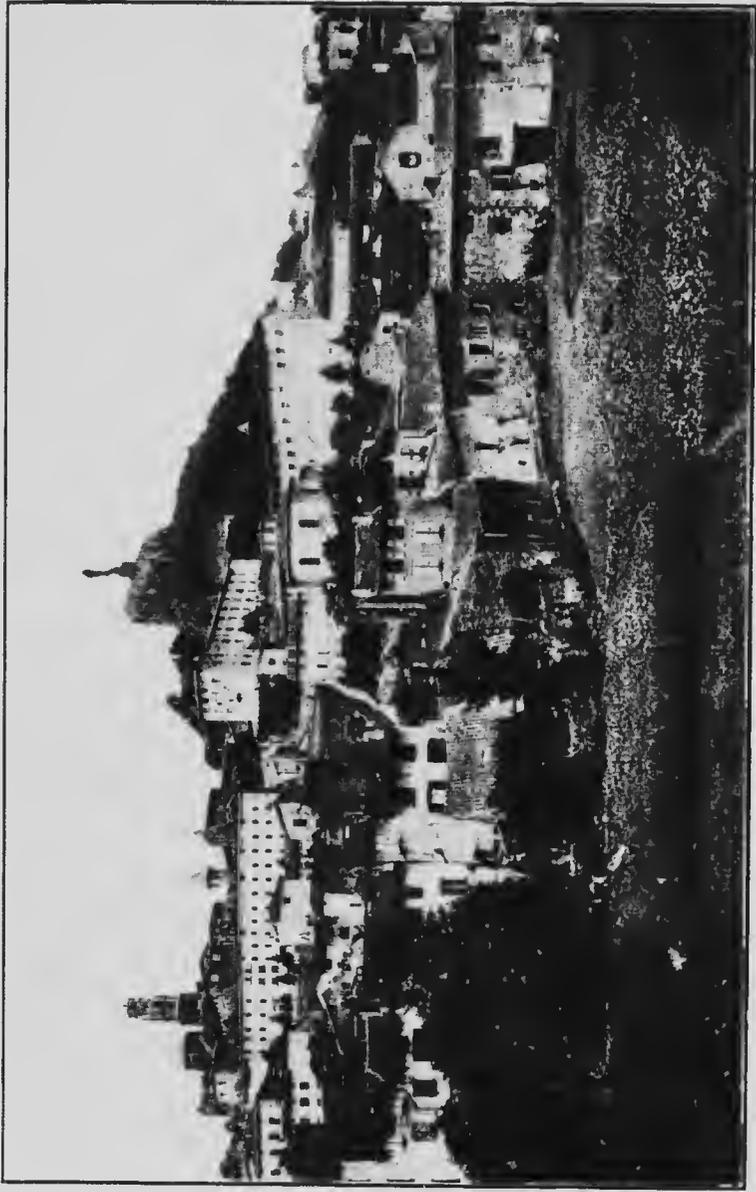
#### FIRST YEARS OF THE CONGREGATION

THE pious Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, today so flourishing and so useful to the Church throughout the world, had a double origin, the one before, the other after the famous Revolution of 1789. At this epoch, the revolutionary hurricane dispersed its members and destroyed its institutions, as well as a number of others, begotten in the spirit of faith and charity. There remained only the ruins, hidden in the mountains of Forez and Velay. The first origin of the Institute predestined to bear the blessed name of St. Joseph, a name so dear to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, dates back to the seventeenth century. Its regular canonical erection was confirmed on March 10th, 1651.

History, describing the new religious family which was about to rejoice and enrich the Church, shows as

authors of its existence an eminent and holy prelate, Mgr. Henri de Maupas, Bishop of Puy, in Velay, and a pious missionary, Rev. Father Jean Pierre Medaille, of the illustrious Society of Jesus. Henri Cauchon de Maupas of Tours was a son of Charles Cauchon de Maupas Baron of Tours, Councillor of State in the reign of Henry IV, and Anne de Gondi, of the illustrious family of Gondi, which devoted itself to St. Vincent de Paul. He was born in 1606, in the Castle of Cosson, which still stands two leagues from Rheims, between Sermiers and Chomery. The noble child was held at the sacred baptismal font by Henry IV himself, who gave him his own name. The great king's godson received a most brilliant education, directed at the same time by his mother, a model of all the virtues of her sex and rank, and by his father, a man as remarkable for his literary talents as he was renowned for his religious principles and his signal service to his country and his king.

Endowed with the most happy disposition, the young Henry de Maupas responded in an admirable manner to the enlightened solicitude of his illustrious parents, and showed from his earliest years a very pronounced inclination for the ecclesiastical state. He was faithful to the holy inspirations of grace, and generously renouncing all the advantages which his birth and the patronage of the king could make him hope for in the world and at court, he gave himself early and entirely to God and His Church. While still young, he was appointed to the Abbey of St. Denis of Rheims. In the midst of ecclesiastical dignities and the favours of fortune, his life resembled that of the



LE PUY, FRANCE



wise and saintly Charles Borromeo. In spite of his youth, he administered his rich benefices with zeal, prudence, charity, and the spirit of a truly apostolic man. Queen Anne of Austria, wife of King Louis XIII, and mother of Louis XIV, having remarked the merit of the Abbé de Maupas, desired his presence at court, and made him her grand almoner. The choice of so august a princess was for him a veritable title of glory, for she knew how to appreciate merit. She had for Bossuet an esteem and admiration worthy of that powerful genius. "Daughter, sister, wife and mother of kings, she knew better than anyone", says one of her biographers, "how to sustain with *éclat* the greatness of so many titles."

It was his good fortune to meet frequently St. Vincent de Paul, that great servant of God, and he soon became bound to him by the closest ties of friendship. With such a master and friend, his sojourn at court, or as Tertullian would say, "the poison of the court", made him lose nothing of his modesty and fervour; his virtues, on the contrary, shone with a greater brilliancy, and the example of an ecclesiastic so distinguished by birth and merit produced around him the most salutary effects. But a vaster field was reserved for his zeal, and the bishopric of Puy becoming vacant, in 1641, King Louis XIII named for this seat the pious almoner of his august spouse.

The new prelate, through humility, resisted for some time, and took possession only on January 20th, 1644. Thenceforward, he devoted himself entirely to the works of the apostolate. Our Lord Jesus Christ has said: "I am the Good Shepherd; I know My sheep and

Mine know Me". In order to follow this Divine Model, Mgr. Maupas visited frequently, with the greatest solicitude, the flock confided to his pectoral care. For twenty-seven years, until 1661, he was—to borrow the language of St. John—the angel of the happy Church of Puy. A great admirer and faithful imitator of St. Francis de Sales, whose life he had written, he distinguished himself among all the prelates of his time by his eminent piety, great erudition, and apostolic zeal. Each year of his administration was marked by some important act or event, tending either to the reform and sanctification of the clergy, the religious instruction of his people, or the solace of human miseries.

Of the works born of the zeal of this holy prelate, the most remarkable and the most fruitful was, without doubt, the foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, whose work blended the active with the contemplative life. The mission of the new Institute associated the members in the work of the divine apostolate. The Church, which is the mystical body of Jesus Christ, entrusted to it the united offices of Martha and Mary. Thus it embraced works of charity and evangelical perfection in all their plenitude. The Bishop of Puy surrounded himself with men capable of seconding him in a work so difficult. He was intimately united by friendship to a holy Religious of the Society of Jesus, the Rev. Father John Peter Medaille, the apostle of Velay, as St. Francis Regis had been of Vivarais. It was he who suggested to Mgr. de Maupas the happy idea of establishing the Sisters of St. Joseph. This apostolic man spent his life in evangelizing not only the dioecese of Puy but that also those of

Clairmont, St. Flour, Rhodéz and Vienne. In the course of his evangelical labours he had found several widows and pious young girls who desired to retire from the world, that they might be able to give themselves in a special manner entirely to prayer, to the practice of virtue, and their own spiritual advancement, by devoting themselves wholly to the service of their neighbour. This was the first and favourite plan of St. Francis de Sales, who, in founding his dear Visitandines, whom he called his joy and his crown, had the intention of forming a congregation of women who, to the ordinary exercises of a religious life, would add the visitation of the sick and the poor, and, in general, all works which might assist or comfort the "dear neighbour", as this admirable and good saint expressed it. This plan, followed from the first year of the new Institute, in 1612, was modified five years after, on the suggestion of Mgr. de Marquemont, Archbishop of Lyons, who regarded enclosure as essentially necessary for the stability of religious life among women. St. Francis de Sales, on the contrary, wished to unite the life of Martha to that of Mary, the exterior works of charity to the repose of contemplation.

"My design", said he, "had always been to unite these two objects in such a way that they would aid and sustain each other, and the Sisters, working for their own sanctification would at the same time help and comfort their neighbour. To prescribe enclosure for them today would destroy the essential part of the Institute, deprive the world of their influence and good example, and also rob the Sisters of the merit derived from the performance of works of charity so highly re-

commended by the Gospel and authorized by the example of our Lord." Despite the force of these reasons, St. Francis de Sales had to abandon his project. Enclosure was established in the Constitutions of the Visitation, and approved by Pope Paul V in 1618. This made the holy bishop of Geneva say, with his amiable keenness of wit and admirable humility: "They call me the founder of the Visitation! Is there anything more unreasonable? I have done that which I wished not to do; I have left undone that which I wished to do." But this project of a mind so elevated and of a saint so perfect as St. Francis de Sales could come only from Heaven, and it was destined not to die with him. Hence, a few years after his death, we behold, arising on all sides, communities of women devoted to the solace of human miseries, uniting prayer and contemplation to exterior works of charity, thus adding a new gem to that beautiful crown of the religious life, which is at once the ornament, the glory and the strength of the Catholic Church. To form the strong and delicate spirit of these sublime virgins, brave as soldiers, tender as mothers, pure as angels, Catholicism alone has the secret communicated from Heaven, for she only can produce them.

Up to this time many good souls, like Mgr. de Marquetmont, could not conceive how the delicate flower of virginity could be preserved inviolate and without peril, away from solitude and out of the precincts of the cloister. In their eyes the cloister, with its holy fervour, was the vase needed for this beautiful plant, a stranger to this cold earth, and fresh from the seraphic regions. The founders of the Sisters of St. Joseph

thought, on the contrary, with St. Vincent de Paul and St. Francis de Sales, that the fear and love of God were infallible antidotes against the temptations and seductions of the world, and that without this fear and love of God, the most austere cloister would be weak and unavailing. They said with St. Augustine: "Love God, and do what you will". "Nothing is so strong as love", writes the pious author of *The Imitation*, and according to the Holy Ghost, "Love is stronger than death". Hence, instead of devoting the new congregation of virgins to a life wholly cloistered, they boldly sent them to the hospitals, civil and military, to the garrets of the poor, to the lonely hovels of the wretched, to distant missions among savages, even to the camps of soldiers, "having for cloister the city streets and the highways, for enclosure obedience, for grating the fear of God, for veil, holy modesty". Such were the simple precautions laid down, and the new discipline inaugurated by St. Vincent de Paul for his heroic Daughters of Charity.

This great Saint, and those who thought with him, saw from afar the needs and exigencies of our times, without God, without faith, without affection, when charity, which busied itself in corporal works, would alone be capable of attracting souls and drawing them back to religion. For, as our Lord Jesus Christ, in His ineffable goodness and bounty, wishing to be represented on earth by the afflicted, the prisoner, the hungry and the fallen, said with His divine lips: "As long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me", it follows that in caring for the suffering members of humanity we are caring for our Lord; the poor have become another Jesus Christ.

How fitting then that St. Joseph, who guarded and protected, nourished and clothed the humanity of our Saviour, should become the model and patron of those souls who devote themselves to the service of the poor, raised by the Gospel to the place of Jesus Christ! They should serve the poor with the same zeal and eagerness, the same charity and love which St. Joseph held for Jesus and Mary. Their hidden life and the work of their hands have been equally sanctified by the Spouse of Mary and the Foster-Father of Jesus. We are not astonished that this new form of religious life should seek to model itself after the holy Patriarch, to place itself under his protection, and take his name. At the head of this providential movement were the Sisters of St. Joseph of Puy, for Mgr. de Maupas, who earnestly sought to walk in the footsteps of St. Francis de Sales, adopted, with the greatest eagerness, the project of Rev. Father Medaille of establishing a Congregation destined to occupy the place that the Sisters of the Visitation had left vacant when they established the cloister. The zealous prelate begged the holy missionary to call together those pious persons who were destined to form the new Institute. Rev. Father Medaille first gathered all his spiritual daughters at the house of a holy widow, Madame de Joux, whose maiden name was Lucretia de la Planche, and whose hospitable home became a veritable cenacle, and the cradle of the Institute of the Sisters of St. Joseph. This venerable Christian woman became their adopted mother, and continued until her death to work with all her strength and means to establish and develop the rising Congregation.

During the earlier days of their spiritual infancy, Father Medaille wrote to one of his dear daughters the following letter, in which he speaks of the spirit which ought to animate the new Institute, which he humbly called his "little plan", giving them for their model the poverty, purity, obedience, humility and charity of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar:

"MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTERS,

"Almighty God has vouchsafed to make manifest to me a perfect model of our little design in the holy Eucharist. Jesus is there in a state of abasement. We, also, my dear Daughters, should labour for the establishment of a lowly Institute. How happy, O God, our Institute will be if it maintains this spirit of lowliness, humility and abasement, of a life hidden from the world! What comparison is there between our nothingness and the abasement of our Lord in His divine Sacrament? There we have a perfect model of poverty, chastity and obedience. To the world nothing is poorer than this great Saviour, Who veils Himself, not under the reality, but under the mere appearance of a little bread. How great is His detachment, even in the things offered for His use; howsoever rich they may be or howsoever poor; whether we give them or take them away, He receives them or leaves them without movement. Deprived of all, he is equally content. In our poverty we likewise shall be so stripped and despoiled of all that we have consecrated to God, and to the foundation of the little design, that we should be always equally content to have much or

to have little or to have nothing, because our little design requires this detachment.

"In regard to chastity and purity, we have an admirable model in our Divine Saviour. The Virgin-Spouse of virgins has eyes and heart only for souls. In this mystery there is no use of the senses: all here is for purity and the purification of hearts. Shall we not be happy if such be our condition; if we have neither eyes, ears, tongue nor heart but for this Divine Lover of souls; and if the use of our senses tends only to purity and to the purification of hearts? This, with the aid of God, will constitute chastity in our little Institute.

"Is not the holy obedience of this Divine Saviour wonderful? Has He ever had a thought or uttered a word to resist the will of the priest—a weak man and often a sinner—who consecrates, touches Him, and carries Him where he wills? Has He ever refused, at the will of the priest, to enter hearts so full of misery and so ill-prepared? This thought would melt my heart, if it were not as hard as marble. Let us never lose sight, my dear Daughters, of the marvellous perfection of the Divine obedience. May it please the Divine goodness that ours may resemble it, since we profess to annihilate our will in this little Institute. Let us never have a thought, a sentiment or a word in the slightest degree opposed to obedience. Let us obey like children, in imitation of this dear Saviour, without reasoning and without disquieting ourselves about anything, allowing Divine Providence to guide us, as a nurse who knows what is necessary for us, since He watches and rules absolutely over His creatures, who, having abased themselves for His sake, hide themselves

in His bosom. O cherished and most humble obedience, which art the sure mark of solid virtue, mayst thou ever be truly perfect in all the members of our new religious body, if I may be allowed to call it such, since, truly speaking, it seems to me that there is only the shadow and not the reality of a body.

"If we look for a model for our love of God and charity towards our neighbour, where shall we find a better one than in the Holy Sacrament? This mystery is called "Love of Loves": it reveals the extent, the perfection, the duration, the immutability and grandeur of holy love. Here, my dear Sisters, we shall find sufficient to imitate. Let each one endeavour to have the plenitude of this love in her heart, for the members of our Congregation make profession of the most perfect love. Moreover, this Sacrament is a mystery of perfect union. It unites the creature with God, and by the title of Communion which it bears, it unites the faithful together by one common union, of which our Lord speaks in such ravishing terms, when He asks the Father that all the faithful may be one, as He and the Father are one. Behold, my dear Sisters, the aim of our lowly Congregation. It tends to procure this twofold, complete union of ourselves with God and our neighbour, but all in Jesus and in God, His Father! May it please the Divine goodness to make us understand the excellence of this aim, and to assist us to become fit instruments to attain it. I call this union complete because this word expresses the whole perfection which is found in the nature and exercise of the love of God and our neighbour. God grant that we may contribute, even as

feeble instruments, to re-establish in the Church this complete union of souls, in God and with God.

"In fine, our dear Institute ought to be truly humble, and in everything to choose and cherish that which is most humble. The members thereof ought to be so lowly as to be the last in humility. They ought to possess all modesty, all meekness, all candour and simplicity, be wholly interior, in a word, empty of self and of all things, and wholly imbued with Jesus, with a fullness which I cannot explain, but which the Divine goodness will make known to you.

"Are not all these things found in a wonderful manner in the Holy Eucharist? What more humble than our Divine Saviour in this mystery? What more modest, more benign and sweet, more simple and sincere, more full of God and empty of all besides? Behold, my dear Sisters, the model of our Institute! It seems to me that we shall also find its nature and its employments in this adorable mystery. The living and the dress in our little establishment will be extremely frugal and modest, suitable, however, to its various needs. This we remark in the species of the Blessed Sacrament, which, although very ordinary, presents a difference in taste and colour, according to the diversity of quality in the bread and wine

"The houses of our community will resemble the Tabernacle, which is always closed with a key. Our Sisters, like Jesus, will leave the house only through obedience and charity, to return immediately to the life in Jesus.

"As the dear Saviour in the adorable Eucharist lives not for Himself, but for His Father's glory and the souls

which He redeemed with His precious Blood, so likewise, my dear Daughters, our little design, and the persons who compose it, ought not to live for themselves, but be entirely immolated for God and for the neighbour, and at the same time lead the hidden life of Jesus.

"That God may operate these wonders in your souls, according to His good pleasure, is the ardent desire of

"Your devoted father in Christ,

"J. P. MEDAILLE, S. J."

Such were the first instructions received by the Sisters of St. Joseph. They express the character and breathe the sweet spirit of their Patron. These are, indeed, the virtues which shone in his first home at Nazareth,—humility, simplicity, poverty, obedience, and exquisite charity. The source and model of these virtues was found in the mystery of the Incarnation, which was there accomplished. That of the Holy Eucharist, which is its continuation, should produce the same virtues in the new family of St. Joseph. It was necessary that the children, after the example of their father, should have Jesus constantly before their eyes, and the abasement of the Saviour in the Eucharist to teach and inspire them, as the Incarnation taught and inspired St. Joseph. In both mysteries it is the same model, our Lord, hidden and abased. What an honour, and also what a lesson does this similitude hold for the Sisters of St. Joseph!

On October 15th, 1650, the feast of St. Teresa, the Bishop assembled the new Religious in the Orphanage at Puy, which he placed under their care. He ad-

dressed to them a touching exhortation, full of the spirit of God, determined the form of their habit, and solemnly imposed it upon them, and at the same time gave them rules for the direction of their life and conduct. He closed the pious ceremony by placing the modest Institute under the protection of the glorious St. Joseph. Approving of the blessed name by which they were generally known, he ordered that they should be called the Congregation of the Sisters or Daughters of St. Joseph. A short time after, at his request, they took charge of the hospital at Montferrand, and of the education of the orphans who were gathered there. Edified and moved by the zeal with which the Sisters accomplished the works of charity which had been confided to them, this holy Prelate the following year gave authority to the Congregation of St. Joseph in a solemn manner by an episcopal ordinance, dated March 10th, 1651. Such was the origin of the Institute of St. Joseph of which the city of Puy was the cradle. Not satisfied with approving them for his own diocese, Mgr. de Mau-pas recommended his dear daughters to the kindness of his confrères in the episcopacy. "Our lord Bishops are very humbly supplicated", said he, "to have a fatherly love and a particular care to maintain and advance this little Congregation, for the sake of St. Francis de Sales, since it has been established in order to revive the spirit of the first institution founded by this venerable Prelate, and known as the Sisters of the Visitation"

The holy Prelate whom Divine Providence had given as the father of the Sisters of St. Joseph having been transferred to the Episcopal See of Evreux, in 1661, his successor, Mgr. Armand de Bethune, continued the good

work, and bestowed the most paternal care on the new Institute, which he confirmed by an ordinance of Sept. 23rd, 1665. A year later the civil power desired to unite with the religious authority, so as to favour the growth of a society so useful, and letters patent of the great King Louis XIV were issued in 1666, authorizing and confirming the first establishments in the cities of Puy, St. Didier, and several other places of Velay. Thus, loved and blessed by God and man, the humble Congregation of St. Joseph increased rapidly, as the grain of mustard seed. It had been scarcely fifteen years in existence when its beneficent branches extended over the dioceses of Puy, Clermont, Grenoble, d'Embrun, Gap, Sisteron, Vivarais, Usés and several others. The following extract is from the Universal Directory: "The Sisters of St. Joseph have been successful in their schools; they also devote themselves to the care of the sick and needy, attending to their spiritual and temporal wants". In 1668 the Archbishop of Vienne, Henry de Villars, established them in the great Hotel Dieu of his archiepiscopal city, and by a pastoral letter of September 2nd of the same year, recommended them to all throughout his archdiocese. Lyons, the City of Mary, welcomed the Daughters of St. Joseph, and confided to them the greater part of its works of charity for the alleviation of the numberless miseries which existed in that great city. They instructed young girls and deaf-mutes, provided for the poor, cared for incurables and the infirm, visited prisoners, and took charge of a house of correction at Perrache, and also a large hospice in the parish of St. Nizier.

Such was, until the Revolution of 1789, the mission

of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the City of Lyons, a mission humble yet great, patiently, generously and heroically accomplished. It rivalled in sublime devotedness that of the Daughters of Charity, founded by St. Vincent de Paul, the friend and director of their founder. We have just traced the history of the origin and the first years of the Institute of St. Joseph. It responded worthily to the holy name it bore. When the Patriarch Jacob became old, before going to rejoin his fathers, he successively blessed his children; and embracing his well-beloved son Joseph, he said to him: "Joseph, thou hast always grown and increased in virtue and in glory, thy face is beautiful and pleasing; my son, the God of your father shall be always your Protector, and the All-Powerful shall heap upon you benedictions from the highest heaven". Joseph merited that prophetic benediction of his father by his purity and his innocence, which rendered him acceptable to God, and by his generous devotion, which made him the instrument of saving his brethren. It was to similar holiness and devotion that the Institute of St. Joseph owed its rapid growth.

This first title of glory was accompanied by two others equally precious: first, the special honour of having for father and founder Bishop Maupas, a disciple and intimate friend of St. Vincent de Paul; second, the inestimable advantage of having realized the favourite idea and accomplished the ardent desire of St. Francis de Sales. For the Institute of St. Joseph was, so to speak, the first flower of the genius of this great and amiable Saint, the spontaneous gift of his heart.

The Bishop of Puy presented his dear Congregation of St. Joseph to the other Bishops of France, as having been established in order to revive the original design of the holy Bishop of Geneva in founding the Visitation. Consequently, the first article of the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph bore the following recommendation: "In their daily lives, the Sisters of St. Joseph shall seek to imitate and follow the customs and spirit of the holy Daughters of the Visitation. They shall have a particular respect for their holy founder, and shall do all in their power to acquire the primitive spirit with which St. Francis inspired them." These Constitutions, taken as a whole, tended to lead the new Institute to a triple end, viz., the sanctification of its members by prayer and union with God, the apostolate of teaching, and charity towards the neighbour. It was the tender and ardent spirit of St. Teresa, joined to the apostolic spirit of St. Ignatius, and to the charity of St. Vincent de Paul, who said to his Daughters: "My intention is that you treat the infirm as a tender mother cares for her only son."

Hence the Institute embraced labour and the practice of evangelical perfection in all its fullness. The Constitutions, at first only manuscripts, were printed in 1693, by order of Mgr. de Villars, Archbishop of Vienne. In 1729 a new edition was printed at Lyons and approved by Mgr. de Neuville, of Villeroy, Archbishop of that city. At this period, the costume of the Sisters of St. Joseph consisted of a black serge robe, in the form of a long wrapper, plaited in the front, and confined at the waist with a cincture, the ends of which were brought to the back, forming a kind of basque. The

head-dress was that of the widows of that period. Within their own grounds they wore a kind of hood, which folded back on itself, and protected them from the heat of the sun; when they went out, they added a scarf, nearly two yards long, which they threw over the head, letting it fall on the shoulders and knotting the ends upon the breast. They wore upon the neck a white handkerchief, replaced today by a guimpe. Their distinctive sign was a small, brass-bound crucifix, which was worn upon the breast. Such was the modest and simple uniform of the new army, which was instituted, says a grave author, "to combat popular ignorance by Christian teaching, to plant in the hearts of children truth instead of falsehood, good instead of evil, beauty instead of deformity, and to fight with heroic devotedness against the train of innumerable miseries which assail poor humanity from the cradle to the grave. The beauty of these new Daughters of the King, royal spouses of His Son, was all within; it was the beauty of soul and heart, the beauty of virtue. "Perhaps there is nothing greater on earth", says Voltaire, "than the sacrifice, which is made by the tender sex of beauty and youth, oftentimes of fortune and high birth in order to nurse in hospitals, where is found every human misery, the sight of which is so humiliating to our pride and revolting to our sensitiveness. More erring and more degraded than their master, the disciples of Voltaire today pursue with blind hatred as enemies of the people, those whom Voltaire, the father of the age, could not help admitting were admirable. These are the tender mothers of the orphans and the

## CHAPTER II

### A TASTE OF PERSECUTION

FROM their origin to the Revolution of 1789, the Communities of St. Joseph, whose name symbolized progress, continued to increase and develop in a remarkable manner. Each house had its own government, distinct and independent, as had the monasteries of the Visitation. The bishops were the Superiors, each in his diocese and governed them through a spiritual father whom they appointed for one or more houses. They filled the place of the novitiate, and could change Sisters from one house to another. Their houses were, according to the words of Francis de Sales, "many, separate houses, each with its own queen, and yet all preserving the same spirit and the same uniformity in performing the same works and observing the same rules. One of the most flourishing of these houses was the Community of Monistrol, the chief of the department of the Upper Loire. In the providence of Providence, this house was destined to be the cistern which was to destroy the Church in France, like the cistern where the Sacred Fire was deposited when Jerusalem was destroyed and her Temple razed to the ground. But more secure than the cistern of that Holy City, it preserved it pure and unquenched.

At the head of that fervent Community was an admirable woman, who was the Nehemiah of the Institute of St. Joseph, and who raised it from its ruins after

the Revolution, as Nehemiah had rebuilt the Temple after the Captivity. This was the venerable Mother St. John, a strong woman in the fullest sense that the Holy Spirit attaches to this title. She was born on March 3rd, in the year 1759, in the Town of Bassen-Basset (Upper Loire). Her family, notable for its rare probity, respected and esteemed by the whole neighborhood, bore the name of Fontbonne. The name of Jeanne, which the child received in Baptism, was perpetuated in that of Mother St. John, which was given to her in religion. Her birth, like that of the holy Precursor whose name she bore, filled the family with inexpressible joy. This joy was prophetic, and presaged the glory and the blessing that this child, like St. John, was to bring upon her patriarchal family, and upon the Institute of St. Joseph. It is true that for a time the Lord seemed to demand of her the sacrifice of a glorious martyrdom, but she was given back, as was Isaac, to her aged father, to be his consolation, and to her community, to be its restorer and model.

From earliest youth, this young girl was distinguished by her angelic purity. She was brought up by one of her aunts, Sister St. Francis, who had taken the holy habit in the house of the Sisters of St. Joseph at Puy, and who had been sent as Superior to Monistrol, a town near the birthplace of her young niece. At ten years of age this amiable and holy child had offered to God, by a vow, the flower of her virginity. From that time she aspired only to consecrate herself entirely to her Lord in the religious life. Her first attraction was to the Religious of St. Clare, but, by the advice and counsel of Mgr. de Gallard, Bishop of Puy, she decided

to become a member of St. Joseph's Community. Her parents, whose delight she was, could not resign themselves to this separation, and at first opposed her entrance into religion. But Providence removed all obstacles, and the young girl entered the Novitiate at Monistrol, December 17th, 1777, at the age of eighteen. She was the angel of the Novitiate, and under the direction of her venerable aunt, prepared herself to receive the habit, which was given to her the following year, 1778. Two years after, in 1780, she made her religious profession, consummated her sacrifice, fulfilled her desires, and completed her happiness. With pleasure she put aside the crown of roses which adorned her radiant brow, and loosening her long and beautiful hair, said to her aunt: "Cut off this vain ornament, and cover me with a thick veil, which will separate me forever from the world and its pomps." Her younger sister imitated her example, and took the name of Sister Teresa.

To the merit of this holy joy, which accompanied the sacrifice of the young Religious, and which God loves to see burning in the hearts of those who give themselves to Him, was joined that of courage, for this sacrifice was far from being without peril. Deep rumblings were already heard in the distance, and it was felt that a terrible storm was about to burst upon religion and its divine work. The young professed Religious was to be tried by the fury of the tempest, so much the more because God destined her to be a pilot to face the storm, and endure its most dreaded outbursts. To prepare her great soul, He ordained that at an early hour she should be formed to generosity and the spirit of heroism.

During her postulanship and her novitiate, her aunt, who tenderly loved her, tried her very severely. Her direction was constantly stern; for this holy soul the manner of loving her niece was to make her perfect. She chiselled this pure white marble in order to engrave deeply upon it the image of Jesus Christ. Besides, the prudent Superior, with her two nieces about her, feared to listen too readily to the voice of flesh and blood, and thereby excite in the Community susceptibilities always hurtful to discipline and the religious spirit.

Treated with coldness by her whom she loved with all her heart, the gentle novice suffered much. She involuntarily trembled, she said, when asking permissions, and when, during recreation, she gave herself up to innocent gaiety, if her timid glance encountered that of her aunt, she would not dare again to open her lips. She preserved, nevertheless, a most sincere affection and profound veneration for this holy Superior, and when her aunt was seized with her last illness, her niece experienced the most lively sorrow, and cared for her with the most filial devotedness until the end. With all her care, her ardent and continual prayer, she could not obtain the restoration of her dear invalid. God asked of her this new sacrifice in order to prepare her for a greater. It is thus that He tries and perfects His saints. Her aunt, the guardian angel of her infancy, was taken from her, and the wound that this loss made in her heart was all the more sensible as the burden of the office of Superior was now imposed upon her. This was in 1784.

The new Superior was scarcely twenty-five years of age, and the Revolution was advancing with rapid

strides. In this situation she showed great prudence, tact, and administrative ability, not only above her age, but seldom found in persons otherwise capable, who have had the experience of years. To an amiable simplicity she added a sense of justice, sound judgment, a rare affability, an evenness of disposition, an unequalled kindness, a great broadness of mind, and an angelic piety. She understood and practised religious life in its perfection. "Never", said one of her old Religious, "have we heard anyone speak of the vows of religion as did Mother St. John". Her virtues attracted a number of young persons, who desired to consecrate themselves to the service of God under her direction. Mother St. John was elected Superior when Mgr. Gallard was erecting a hospital at Monistrol, which he placed under the direction of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The zeal, devotedness and wisdom of the young Superior inspired him with such confidence that she became, according to the annals of the time, a mother to the whole city.

In order to extend the work of God, she conceived the project of uniting some pious persons of Monistrol, employing them to work under her own supervision, in order to withdraw them from the dangers of the world, and confirm them in solid piety. Mgr. de Gallard recommended the work to a noble lady, whose charity was even greater than the nobility of her birth, Madame de Chantemule. After one interview with Mother St. John, these two great souls understood each other so well that they ever after remained united in ties of the closest friendship. This noble and pious benefactress consecrated a part of her fortune to found the new establishment. The Bishop of Puy, when blessing the

corner-stone of the new hospital, desired Mother St. John to bless it after him. Her humility suffered on seeing herself, as she said, "so little and unworthy, by the side of His Lordship, associated with him in an act so holy". The Superior of Monistrol thus enjoyed the esteem and affection of all who approached her, particularly Mgr. de Gallard, who never spoke of her except with a sort of veneration. Everyone blessed Divine Providence for sending them this angel of goodness and virtue.

The storm of the Revolution now burst forth. The Bishop of Puy was insulted in his carriage, and shortly afterwards was forced to take refuge in Switzerland. When going into exile he gave his portrait to Mother St. John, who came to visit him and ask his last blessing and advice, on the eve of the persecution to which she herself was soon to be subjected. The Congregation of St. Joseph has preserved with love and veneration the portrait of the holy Prelate. After this last sad interview, the position of the young Superior and her Community became still more difficult, for the Curé of Monistrol, a man of spirit and of talent in other matters, allowed himself to be seduced by the Revolution, and endeavoured in his fall to drag down those whose confidence he possessed. What a dangerous temptation and sorrowful trial was this for the Sisters of St. Joseph! However, they did not allow themselves to be deluded or cast down, and in spite of all the efforts of the erring pastor, who went so far as to stir up the parish against the Community, they remained firm and unshaken in the faith, directed and upheld by the heroism of their holy Mother.

Soon the Revolutionists, armed with hatchets, assailed their peaceful home and demanded from the Religious the impious oath imposed by the Convention, and already taken by their unfaithful pastor. Mother St. John, calm and alone, presented herself at the door of the house, and refused in the name of all her Daughters the oath demanded, saying firmly and coolly: "Here the head answers for the body". Disarmed and impressed by the admirable courage of this holy Religious, the Revolutionists retired, exclaiming: "What a woman! There is nothing to be gained in quarrelling with her". Returning again to the charge, they used a different stratagem. They tried to weaken the Community by separating its members from the head, but all was useless. The watchful sentinel baffled their schemes by upholding her Community, encouraging the timid, and consecrating the time to prayer, pouring into the Heart of Jesus the bitterness which filled her own.

The days, meanwhile, became more and more evil. She feared misfortune for her Daughters, and finally, in order to save them, she entreated them to return to their respective families. They bade each other farewell in the midst of sobs, and they parted, begging our Lord to shorten the bitter days of separation. She, in company of two of her Religious, Sister Teresa and Sister Martha, a lay sister, remained courageously at her perilous post, notwithstanding the prayers and tears of their father, who wished to save his two children and take them back to the paternal roof.

At last the fatal hour arrived. A troop of soldiers renewed the attack upon the convent. They forced the locks, penetrated to the interior, and casting the three

faithful Religious into the street, closed the doors. Received first by personal friends, afterwards by their parents, they were soon torn from their arms, handcuffed, and thrown into the prison of St. Didier, in 1793. Their father, overwhelmed with sorrow, walked four leagues and braved all dangers to bring them food. In the midst of privations and sufferings of every kind, Mother St. John was a living example of the courage, the heavenly joy, and the imposing grandeur of the martyrs of the first century. Like them she was not saddened or affrighted by her separation from the world. Deeming that the world deserved to be called a prison, her great soul, illuminated by faith, comprehended that in reality she had been brought out of a cell rather than forced to enter one.

“The world”, said Tertullian to the ancient martyrs, “is a thousand times more gloomy than a prison; its darkness blinds the heart. The world has chains which are heavier, its bonds hold souls captive, it exhales vapours more poisonous; these are the passions of men. The world holds more criminals than the prison, as the latter is filled from its overflow. The martyrs dwell in a dark abode, but they are themselves a light; they are in chains, but they are free in God; they breathe an infected air, but are themselves an exquisite perfume. Let us then”, concludes the African Doctor, “put aside the name of prison; let us call it a retreat. Although the body be confined and held captive, all else is free to the mind and heart”.

As if they themselves had received these powerful exhortations, Mother St. John and her two Daughters transformed their prison into a place of retreat; it

became a convent, a house of prayer. The heart of the Mother, above all, overflowed with joy, and her chains were as jewels to her. In the bareness of the prison, the hard, damp floor which served as a bed, she saw only a happy means of practising religious poverty and mortification. Deprived of hearing Mass and of receiving the Sacraments, she visited in spirit the closed churches, desiring to bathe with her tears and her blood their profaned sanctuaries, and offering each day her life to God, in expiation of the sacrileges which had desecrated them. After the example of the young Virgin, Blandina, whom the *Acts of the Martyrs* represent as a noble mother, because of her courage and lofty exhortations to the other Martyrs, the young Superior of Monistrol was also the noble mother of her companions in captivity, and communicated to them her strength. She even ruled her tormentors.

"The just", says the Holy Spirit, in the Book of Wisdom, "are as an immovable wall against those who curse them and despise their good works". By her calmness, her celestial serenity and her wise answers. Mother St. John confounded her jailers. Did they order her to work on Sundays or feasts, or to celebrate the tenth day, according to the law of the Republic, she replied: "Had I been willing to do that, I should not now be in prison." When baffled, they threatened her with the dungeon. She answered: "Let us go; where is the road that leads to it?". To the cry of "Long live the Republic", which they wished her to proclaim, she continually replied "Long live Jesus; long live Mary!" When, after imprisonment, and after many had been guillotined, the executioner came

at last to tell her "Citizen, thy turn tomorrow", she trembled with joy, and like St. Cyprian, cried out: "Thanks be to God!". "Tomorrow", she said to the Sisters, "will be the most beautiful day in our lives. We must get ready our garments". Mother St. John remembered that she had still in her possession a small piece of money. They decided unanimously that it should be spent for washing and ironing the few things which remained to them, to celebrate the great feast of the morrow. Thus prepared, their lamps lighted by faith and love, these wise virgins joyfully awaited the arrival of their Spouse, and their entrance with Him to the nuptial feast of the Lamb.

Suddenly the door opens. Immediately they rise, to set out for the scaffold, which is for them the ladder to Heaven, when they hear these words: "You are free, Robespierre has fallen, your chains are broken!". At this news, which brought so much joy to others, Mother St. John cried out sorrowfully: "O my Sisters, we are not worthy of the grace to die for our holy religion, our sins have been an obstacle to this great favour!". When, in later years, people spoke to her of this heroic epoch of her life, and of what she suffered in prison, she adroitly turned the conversation, and spoke about the other victims of the Revolution, whom she called saints and glorious martyrs. Rescued from the teeth of the tiger, and delivered with regret from their chains, the three holy Religious returned to their families.

The revolutionary outburst had swept away and destroyed all the convents. Mother St. John and Sister Teresa returned to their aged father, who received them with the joy of Jacob on meeting again his Joseph and

Benjamin. "How happy I am to see you once more", said he; "He who gave me the means of caring for you in your infancy is infinitely powerful; He will let us want for nothing, now that you have suffered for Him. You shall bring a blessing upon the house, and upon the old age of your father."

Whilst the Communities of St. Joseph were thus dispersed, and its ruins, as well as those of other religious orders, were scattered throughout troubled France, Providence provided them with the consolation of a gift both sweet and rare in those times of general desolation. The pious Institute, doubtless, owed this favour above all to the Divine goodness, also to the sentiments of esteem, gratitude and affection with which its fervent charity and devotedness had inspired those who had witnessed their work and could best appreciate it. From his exile, Mgr. Gallard, Bishop of Puy, wrote in 1798 a long letter to his cherished Daughters, in order to console, congratulate, encourage and direct them in the cruel trial they were enduring. He addressed his letter to Mother St. John, as formerly St. John wrote his Epistle to his spiritual daughter, Electa, which name signifies Chosen. We give here, unabridged, this document, worthy of apostolic times, and honourable to the Sisters of St. Joseph.

MY DEAR DAUGHTERS,

You have many sacred claims to my sympathies, and many glorious titles to merit them. Your virtues and my duty, your example and my desire for good, your tribulations and my sorrows, your hearts and mine, all assure you of my lively and constant solicitude for

you. As the eyes of the Lord are always fixed on the just, and the ears of His mercy always open to their prayers, I dare to say also, my dear children, my thoughts turn unceasingly towards you, and my desolate soul ever hears your cry. I recall (could I ever forget?) that you are the precious portion of my inheritance, ever dear to me and so worthy of my love. You have always appeared to me a chosen race, a holy people, the object of complacency to Heaven. In tearing you from your virtuous homes, impiety could not rob God of His sanctuaries, that is to say, your hearts, consecrated to Him by virginity. So far the enemy of all good and all virtue has made futile efforts to lessen your courage. Worthy Spouses of Jesus Christ, like Mary you have remained standing at the foot of the Cross, and you have not refused the chalice of opprobrium and sorrow which Jesus has offered to you. Oh, my dear Daughters, rejoice and glory in the Lord, for the opportunities which Heaven has sent you, to make you more conformable to the likeness of your Divine Spouse, and for the triumph with which He has crowned your invincible firmness! Jealous of your glory, dismayed at the power of your virtue, humiliated by your courage, the father of lies still tries to tempt you. In order to torment and overcome your patience, which he believed he had weakened, he seems to have delivered you, during these times, to all the anguish and horrors of want, that he might oblige you to bend the knee to the idol of crime and impiety, and force you to sacrifice to him the everlasting fruits of all the suffering you have borne. Men can no longer delude themselves with these false views of the prince of dark-

ness, for he himself has torn away the veil which concealed his artifices. The means employed by the impious tended to one and the same end, that of effacing religion and virtue from all hearts. Satan, deprived of happiness himself, strives to procure the downfall of others. If he flatters, it is to destroy; if he promises, it is to seduce; if he gives, it is to corrupt. Oh! can you believe that the voice of justice and humanity can make itself heard in hearts closed to all sentiments of remorse? See how they have treated, and how they still treat those once strong ones of Israel, who, degenerating from their first virtue, have been weak enough to yield before their allurements or threats! What have they gained by their compliance? They have increased the audacity and strength of wickedness, caused a division in the Camp of Israel, and scandalized the children of the Faith. Behold what have been the baneful effects of those acts, the malice of which can be attributed only to terror or cupidity! Our chief pastors have always exposed these dangers. What remains to those who preferred their own lights to those of their guides and superiors? Remorse tears them for having committed evils against Church and country, and for having had more confidence in the deceitful promises of the father of lies than in the oracles of those who have received from Heaven the mission of unmasking and confounding them. Enlightened as you have been, my dear children, by these dreadful examples, which are, without doubt, the subject of your sighs as of ours, far be it from me to think that you would allow yourselves to be surprised by any new snare which the enemy would attempt against your happiness. What

attraction in your eyes might that have which was offered by perfidious and sacrilegious hands, and which you could accept only at the expense of your conscience? Who knows better than you what St. Paul said to the early Christians: "You cannot partake at the same time of the table of the Lord and that of the devil; you cannot drink of the chalice of Jesus Christ and that of His most cruel enemies". The distress in which I see you, my dear Daughters, pierces me to the heart, and, owing to my own personal necessities, I am powerless to help you. But, accustomed as you are to privations and sacrifices, practised in imitation of our Divine Model, Who had nowhere to lay His head, and penetrated with confidence and love for our Heavenly Father, Who feeds the birds of the air, you will cast yourselves entirely into the hands of Divine Providence, and await with patience, from His infinite bounty, the reward of the sacrifices which you have already made, and which you are ready to make again, for His glory and the sanctification of your lives. How holy and unfathomable are the designs of God in our regard, when He has permitted impiety to violate the sanctuaries of virginity, and to cast forth their inmates into the midst of a perverse and irreverent world! Heaven has wished to make you a spectacle to angels and to men. God has scattered you, as seeds of flowers blown about by the wind, and he has strewn you everywhere—in cities, in towns, in country places—to diffuse the good odour of Jesus Christ. Called to so sublime a mission, and having proven yourselves so worthy of fulfilling it, you give me no cause to fear the future. No, my dear Daughters, the true glory of

virgins is to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. You have had the happiness of following Him in the path of His humiliations and sorrows, and you can glory, with the Apostle St. Paul, in bearing the scar of Jesus Christ on your innocent flesh. You envy the happiness of your celestial companions, who have followed their Divine Spouse to Calvary, and who, after His example, have laid down their lives, praying for their enemies and the executioners who immolated them. Oh! I have the firm confidence that I shall yet share with the Spouse of your souls the inestimable consolation of having in you my crown and my glory. Persuaded that impiety looks only for a pretext to again enkindle the fire of persecution against you, I do not fear those new dangers which threaten you; they are no longer dangers for you: but sighing in all the bitterness of my heart at the fresh misfortunes which may smite you, I dare congratulate you on being found worthy to suffer for justice' sake. I congratulate myself on being pastor of such heroic souls, called as you are to the double crown of virginity and martyrdom. I join in your combats, and tribulations, your favours and your victories. Let us humble ourselves under the powerful hand of God, Who has visited us. Let us cast upon Him our solitudes and our needs, and in the midst of our sufferings we shall find our safety, our perfection and our strength in the God of all grace, Who has called us to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

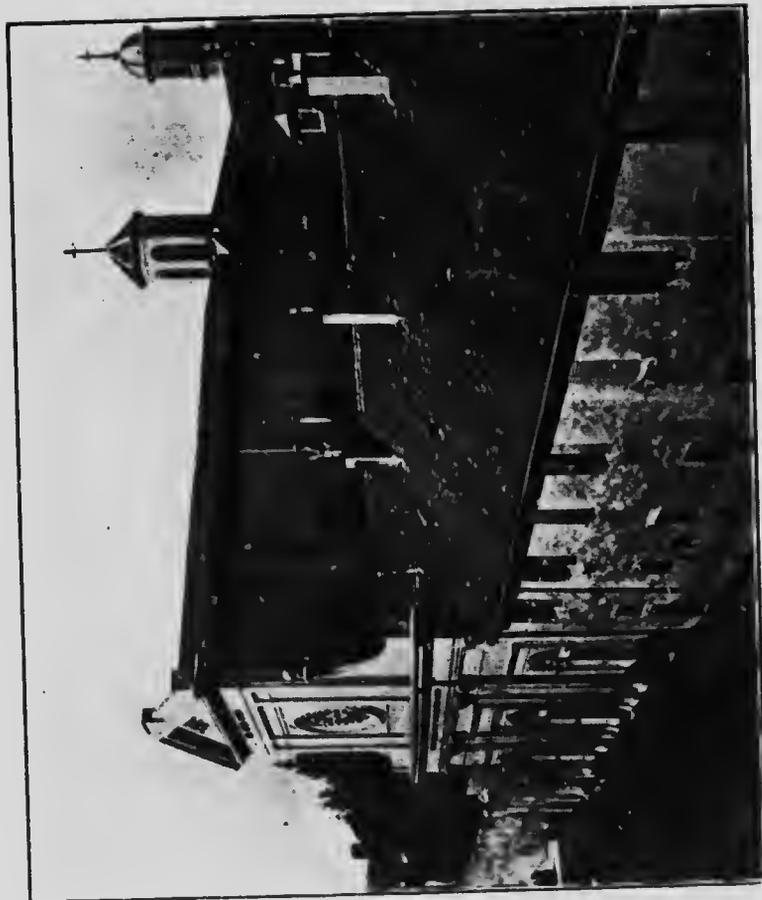
“From the place of our exile, July 19th, 1798.”

As we have said, this letter, full of faith, wisdom and holy love, recalls the admirable Epistles of St. John.

Nothing equals the fatherly tenderness of apostolic hearts for the spiritual children whom they have begotten in the faith of Christ. "Oh, Corinthians!", wrote St. Paul, to his spiritual daughters of Corinth, "my heart goes out to you in the affection I bear you; return me then love for love. I speak to you as to my children". We find in those great hearts of John and of Paul, and of the other Apostles, the first golden channels of that Christian charity which had its source on Calvary, and which must continue through the apostolate to the end of the world, in order to purify and save it.

The venerable Bishop of Puy, confessor of the faith, and the holy Daughters of St. Joseph, in a period of egotism and hatred, revived the apostolic times, when the Christians had but one heart and one soul, and when pagans, pleased and edified by a spectacle so beautiful, cried out: "Those Christians, behold how they love one another!". The apostolic letter of Mgr. de Gallard, and that of Rev. Father Medaille, are both honourable and instructive to the Sisters of St. Joseph. These two documents reveal the primitive spirit of the Community, its humility, its zeal, and its heroic devotedness. It is an example of applying these recommendations of the Holy Spirit: "Remember those who are placed over you. My son, do not forget the commandments of your parents". "Follow the example of the Saints, and listen to the words of the ancients", says the author of *The Imitation*. "Three things make trouble in the world", says the Oriental proverb, viz., "not to listen to the aged, to follow one's own will, and to have a good opinion of oneself."





ANNECY

## CHAPTER III

### DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS

MOTHER St. John, being set at liberty, returned to her father's house in the course of the month of August, in the year 1794, and remained there concealed from the world. In this retreat, which lasted more than twelve years, she looked upon herself as an exile. She passed her days in religious austerity, meditation and continual union with God, praying without ceasing for the Church and France. Faithful to her vocation, she united prayer with good works, catechised children, instructed the ignorant, visited the sick, and procured for the dying the last Sacraments. This last work, as precious as it was difficult in those times of impious persecutions, appeared to be her favourite occupation. In this she was seconded by her brother, whose house was an asylum for persecuted priests. As the Ark of the ancient alliance guarded the Tables of the Law, so her faithful heart, in view of the new alliance, for which she ever hoped and prayed, preserved carefully the traditions and spirit of the Institute, where she had given herself to God in her youth. This heart, which so much desired martyrdom, was an altar of holocausts, where, as in the Old Law, the sacred fire was always lighted. So, when peace was restored to the Church in France, and the hour was sounded for the rebuilding of the sacred edifices, the relighting of the lamps of the sanctuaries, and the re-establishing of religious life, more

happy than Nehemia<sup>1</sup> who found the blackened and extinguished fire in the cistern, Mother St. John possessed in herself the living and pure flame which would shine brightly in the house of St. Joseph. "She was", said the Sisters of St. Joseph in America, "the vessel of election, which God made use of to re-establish our Community after the Revolution."

In 1807 God called her to the city of St. Etienne, in Forez, where the hand of Divine Providence had sown, as heretofore in the city of Puy, the little grain of mustard seed, which was to blossom and fructify under her care. This providential seed was the germ of the new Congregation of St. Joseph. It consisted of some pious women and girls, associated with some aged Religious, who lived together in order to consecrate themselves to the service of God, animating each other to the practice of the most perfect virtue, and devoting themselves day and night to the alleviation of human miseries, which the ravages of the Revolution had increased a hundredfold. They settled themselves at St. Etienne, on the Rue de la Bourse, in the fourth storey of the Pascal house. They were commonly called the Black Sisters, from the colour of their dress, which was still secular, or the Sisters of a Happy Death, because of the care they took of the sick and dying. The Rev. Claude Cholleton, pastor of the principal parish of the City of St. Etienne, and raised in 1804 to the dignity of Vicar-General, encouraged and aided them, as far as possible, in their pious and charitable design. Having consulted His Eminence, Cardinal Fesch, then Archbishop of Lyons, about the new association, he was advised by the worthy Prelate to transform the little

society into the Sisters of St. Joseph, without however creating a new Congregation, but reviving as much as possible, the venerable one which the Revolution had destroyed.

This zealous and powerful Prince of the Church promised him every assistance. He was indeed the protector and one of the great benefactors of the new Institute of St. Joseph. It was in order to enter into the views of His Eminence, and to act with him, that Father Cholleton endeavoured to bring to St. Etienne Mother St. John, of whose rare merit and virtues he had been informed by Father Imbert, a Franeisean of Monistrol, who had preached in Lent at Lyons. This Religious knew how to appreciate her, as he had been her director at Monistrol.

Her parents, who were still living, and weighed down with years, could not resolve to make anew the sacrifice of her who was to them what Tobias had been to his aged parents, the light of their eyes, the staff of their old age, and the consolation of their life. Her aged mother went so far, in the desire to retain her treasure, as to depreciate her daughter. She objected, saying that her daughter was incapable of doing the work desired of her, and that she was wanting in judgment. This little ruse of maternal love, desperate as it was on her part, could not succeed. They knew on the contrary that good sense and solid judgment were the predominant qualities, the distinctive traits of Mother St. John. The latter for her part feared the responsibilities of the office which they wished to foree upon her, and in her profound humility could not bear the idea of being called Foundress, a word employed in the

entreaties addressed to her. She therefore joined in the resistance made by her good parents.

In the end, however, she submitted to the Will of God, manifested by her ecclesiastical Superiors, and went to St. Etienne, on August 14th, 1807. She was received as an angel from Heaven by her new Daughters, who were impatient to call her by the name of Mother. With indefatigable zeal, she imparted to them the primitive spirit of the Institute of St. Joseph, the perfume of which she had so carefully preserved. The new-born Community presented a most edifying spectacle. Each member occupied herself, according to her skill, with work obtained from the manufacturing establishments of the city, observed absolute silence and the most perfect regularity, prayed continually, fasted frequently, and used the discipline and cilice daily. As in ancient Thebaid, or at Citeaux in St. Bernard's time, they practised in all their rigour the evangelical counsels. They deprived themselves of wine and everything that could flatter nature or the senses, slept upon the ground, on straw or bare boards, prolonged their labours far into the night, and rose always before the most industrious workman.

Mother St. John was often obliged to moderate the holy zeal of her Daughters for penance and mortification. When the ecclesiastical Superior judged it proper to modify definitely their austere practices, they placed in his hands cilices, cinctures, chains, iron garters, and other instruments of penance. The Community in the Rue de la Bourse left so precious a memory to the whole Congregation that the Sisters of St. Joseph in America called it the Pearl of the Institute.

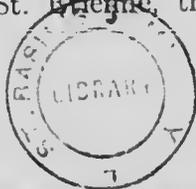
What an astounding thing for the world to see this life of immolation united with an amiable and charming gaiety, a continual joy and peacefulness, the remembrance of which still consoles the last years of those who enjoyed it in youth! "Oh!" cried out one of these willing victims, "how happy we were under our coarse habit, which was increased many times in value by the disdain and insults of the passers-by. Our humble, mortified and penitential life concealed treasures of blessings and heavenly joys elsewhere unknown." She who had thus spoken was endowed with unusual gifts of nature and grace, and embraced at the age of twenty (1805) this crucified and hidden life in Jesus Christ. Taking the habit in 1808, she was delighted to find herself called after her venerable Superior, and under the blessed name of Mother St. John, she afterwards founded the Convent of Chambéry, and was its first Mother General.

The following incident is related of those early days: Two young postulants, having been sent by Mother St. John to a worthy ecclesiastic who was interested in them, to tell him of their approaching admission to religious life, the priest, considering the austere rules of the house, asked them in a fatherly manner if they had sufficient nourishment. "Do not be disquieted", they responded gaily, "for dinner we are served five courses", but they did not state of what they consisted. They did not tell him that soup formed the first course, a plate of vegetables the second, a piece of cheese the third, bread the fourth, water, mixed with a few drops of milk the fifth. Returning after the community dinner, the two Novices found their share of a plate of

macaroni before the kitchen grate covered with coals, which had accidentally fallen upon it. Happy to imitate those great Saints who mixed ashes with their food to lessen its savour, they contented themselves with picking off the larger pieces and joyously took their meal. "Another time", they said, laughingly, "we can say that our dinner is composed of six courses."

Nothing is so admirable, and at the same time so reasonable, as the happiness of souls crucified by Divine love. "If there is any joy in the world", says the author of *The Imitation*, "it is possessed by the pure of heart, and souls detached from all but God." Purity and true liberty are the fruits of mortification and Christian renunciation. "The most terrible enemy of the soul", says the same author, "is the body. Those who flatter it live in bondage; they are like prisoners loaded with chains." Christian mortification purifies and elevates the soul, breaks the chains of sin, and gives her the liberty that opens Heaven to the children of God, according to the expression of a holy Religious: "The body is bound in iron, the soul is at liberty, the iron of time becomes the gold of eternity." It is not, therefore, astonishing that, from the holy little Thebaid, which was the cradle of the new Congregation, we hear songs of joy and hymns of praise and thanksgiving.

Their happiness was complete the day on which the fervent Community of St. Etienne discarded the secular dress to put on the habit formerly worn by the Sisters of St. Joseph. This was on July 14th, 1808. Father Piron, a courageous confessor of the faith during the Revolution, and successor to Father Cholleton as parish priest of St. Etienne, thus addressed the new



Religious upon this occasion: "You are few in number, but like a swarm of bees, you will spread everywhere. You will become as numerous as the stars in the heavens; but whilst your numbers multiply, strive always to preserve the simplicity and humility which ought to characterize the 'Daughters of St. Joseph'".

At this ceremony Mother St. John renewed her youth as the eagle, and her activity gave fresh impulse to the work. God was with her, enlightening her by His Holy Spirit, clothing her with His strength, and communicating to her His wisdom. Firm in her government, vigilant without being severe, prudent and at the same time broad-minded, she directed all things with weight and measure. Her great virtue and amiability attracted souls, her experience awakened their confidence, her admirable spirit of discernment knew how to distinguish the workings of grace in the midst of the miseries, the failings, and the trials of nature. She was what our Saviour said of the Saint whose name she bore, "a burning lamp, shining in the house of God."

The new Community, blessed by God, was not slow in spreading itself. The authorization was accorded April 10th, 1812. Nominated Vicar-General of Lyons, the venerable Father Cholleton called his dear Sisters of St. Joseph to Lyons, and confided to them the care of an establishment founded for the poor of the four parishes of the City. It was situated in the street called St. Pierre-le-Vieux, near the Cathedral, and was placed in charge of Mother St. Paul. This house was the cradle of the religious vocation of the celebrated Mother St. Joseph, whom grace had adorned with extraordinary supernatural gifts, and whose fruitful zeal

founded successively houses of the order in Belley, Gap and Bordeaux, where she was the first Superior-General.

In the City of St. Etienne, besides the fervent Community of the Rue de la Bourse, there was formed in the Rue Mi-Careme a society of pious women, under the guidance of Mlle. Beneyton, who ardently desired to enter the cloister. This was also the wish of Father Piron, the parish priest; but upon the advice of the Archbishop of Lyons, they entered as novices the religious community of the Rue de la Bourse, in the course of the year 1808; and on April 20th, 1809, they took the habit of the Sisters of St. Joseph at Mi-Careme, where a chapel had been built. They were given as Superior Mother St. Paul, who had been recalled from Lyons. In the designs of Divine Providence, the house of Mi-Careme Street was to continue, in St. Etienne, as a religious community, the work of St. Joseph, for a little later the Sisters of the Rue de la Bourse were dispersed, in order to supply different missions. Some took up their residence at Valbenoite, where they established a useful and prosperous institution. The greater number followed Mother St. John, when she was called to Lyons to found the Mother House. Those of St. Etienne took the direction of various houses of Providence, founded by the ladies of the city, who bore the title of Ladies of Mercy. It was at Mi-Careme that Mother Sacred Heart was received and formed to the religious life. She was destined to replace Mother St. John, and was called by the Bishop of Nimes, Mgr. Plantier, the second foundress of the Congregation of St. Joseph.

At that time, the community of Mi-Careme, number-

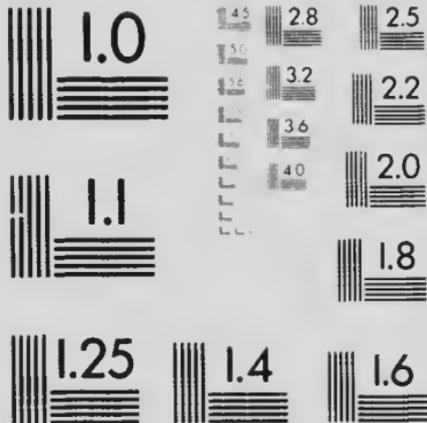
ing more than sixty Religious, directed by the venerable Mother Emelia, was, after the Mother House at Lyons, the most important of the Congregation. No community has more faithfully preserved the primitive spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph, which was communicated originally by Mother St. John to the novitiate of the Rue de la Bourse, renewed afterwards by Mother Sacred Heart of Jesus, and continued successively by her two cherished and worthy daughters, Mother Euphrasia and Mother Emelia. In their spirit of humility, simplicity and self-renunciation, of devotedness and of tender love for our Lord, the Sisters called the chapel their *salon*. In this they spoke the truth, for religious poverty shone everywhere except in that cherished place where their Well-Beloved reposed. It was thus, without doubt, that Mary and Joseph passed their lives at Nazareth. They consecrated to Jesus all that their poverty permitted them to possess. It was for Him that Mary, whose hands, according to St. Epiphanius, were so skilful and active, had woven that beautiful robe without seam for which the soldiers disputed and drew lots on Calvary. The care of the sanctuary where Jesus dwells is fitting employment for a Sister of St. Joseph; this is the spirit of Nazareth.

Placed in charge of the schools of St. Etienne, the numerous Community of Mi-Careme valiantly defended the cause of God, and protected the honour and innocence of women against the invasion of doctrines not less degrading than impious. Now, it is only by preserving the Christian religion that woman's position in society can be maintained, for it is Jesus Christ Who has elevated and exalted her. To whom is it more



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becoming than to the Daughters of St. Joseph to cooperate in the work of Him Who, like themselves, called St. Joseph His Father? Happy the religious houses that understand this, and faithfully fulfil their double mission of loving Jesus and of making Him known and loved !

Meanwhile, as the Congregation of St. Joseph enlarged and extended itself, so did it experience new privations, new wants and new difficulties. In 1812, as there were a great number of houses with only two or three Religious, the Sisters could not but feel the necessity of having a stable government, with but one novitiate, which would insure a thorough and uniform training of subjects. In the absence of that uniformity of rule, there were necessarily many varieties of discipline, many irregularities and imperfect measures. Unity of action, under such circumstances, was almost impossible. Everywhere was felt the necessity of uniting scattered convents, and forming them into one strongly constituted body, the members of which, without being changed, could more easily attain the same end. Therefore, a mother house and a superiorgeneral became a necessity. The choice of the latter was not difficult.

She who had watched over the cradle of the Institute with such motherly care, whose great wisdom had directed and stimulated its first development, and whose ardent zeal had been the instrument of its happy restoration, she who had, under God, given it new life and vigour, was, without doubt, the most suitable person to continue and direct the progress of the holy work. When, after the restoration of peace, Napoleon per-

mitted the Sisters to resume community life, it was with a provision that there should be a central mother house, responsible for those affiliated to it. This mandate, coupled with the reasons given above, led our communities, scattered throughout France, to form themselves into various diocesan Congregations, namely Lyons, Bourges, Chambéry, LePuy, Clermont, Aux Vans, St. Gervaise, Sur Marc, and Annecy. Lyons appeared to be a most natural and fitting centre for a large religious organization such as this Congregation. Crowned as it is by a colossal statue of the Blessed Virgin, under the title of Our Lady of France, and springing from a city consecrated from time immemorial to Our Lady of Fourvières, Lyons was assuredly a fitting place to which the faithful daughters of the Spouse of Mary might confide their Mother House. Thus did our Blessed Lady seem to draw close to herself, and guard in a special manner, the chosen family of her holy Spouse, a touching proof of her love, and an assured pledge of her maternal protection.

Mother St. John was called to Lyons by diocesan authority, after nine years of labour at St. Etienne. She arrived there on July 13, 1816, accompanied by a number of her fervent Religious from the Rue de la Bourse, among them Sisters Teresa and Martha, her two companions in prison during the Reign of Terror. Acting upon the advice of Father Boehard, who had succeeded Father Cholleton after his death, in 1807, and who was not only Vicar-General but spiritual father of the Congregation, Mother St. John fixed her abode upon the hill formerly sanctified by the Sons of St. Bruno, and in the cloisters still redolent of the virtues

of that departed generation of saints. The Sisters lived at first in extreme poverty. After class, and the different other employments of their vocation, they engaged in weaving silk, the general industry of Lyons. Milk replaced wine, and was the only and universal remedy for their indispositions. The Sisters vied with one another in abnegation, renunciation, mortification and love for our Lord. It was the little Thebaid of the Rue de la Bourse, the pearl of the Institute, transported to the hill of St. Bruno. How this Saint must have rejoiced to behold in those holy cloisters a new band of saintly Religious! "I know how to be hungry and to suffer need. I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me", were the words of St. Paul. Thus did Mother St. John and her fervent companions. The higher an edifice is to be raised", said St. Augustine, "the deeper must its foundations be laid." "The highest rests upon the lowest", adds the author of *The Imitation*.

Thus humility, self-denial, and austerity were the foundation of this edifice, destined to light upon its towers the beacon which was for all time to guide the Congregation of St. Joseph. From the hour of its commencement, it was a model of regularity and of the true religious spirit. Nothing equalled the respect and affection which it inspired. "When we were leaving this cherished home, never to see it again", said the Sisters who were the foundresses of the Institute in America, "we lingered to cast a last glance on that blessed house, desiring to engrave forever its cherished image in our hearts."

Seven years later, in 1813, the Sisters purchased a

neighbouring house called the Chateau Yon, rich in traditions, but then in a ruinous condition, only a portion being habitable. By prudence and economy they were enabled to make extensive repairs, and even to construct additional buildings. It is today a boarding-school. Situated on the hill of the Cistercians (Chartreuse), facing Fourvières, and ever under the benign eyes of her who is called Mother of Divine Grace, this establishment could not fail to become a home of benediction, a centre of spiritual life and fruitfulness. Hence it was decided by higher authority that all the local houses of the Congregation should be dependent on the house established at the Chartreuse, and should pay obedience to it, as daughters to a mother.

Elected Superior-General, and placed by the Divine Will on the hill of St. Bruno, Mother St. John, conformably to the plans and desires of the diocesan administration, worked with all her strength to render fruitful this Mount so blessed by Our Lady of Fourvières, this holy source whence flowed the streams of piety which today give fertility to the Provinces of Lyons, La Touraine, La Vendee, La Provence, L'Aquitaine, Corsica, Le Dauphine, Savoy, Piedmont, and fifteen of the vast dioceses of America. The great virtues of the venerable Superior-General attracted from all parts chosen souls, who were as precious clouds resting over the privileged hill, fertilizing it with pure waters. Mother St. John neglected nothing to maintain and increase their purity. She was herself a model of all religious virtues. Accompanied by her Assistant and Counsellors, she was with invariable exactness present at all the religious exercises of the Community. Her

command was a thing not to be resisted; and when she had to announce a change of office, she did it with such kindness and simplicity as disposed all to accept her decisions which were never influenced by human respect. Her choice of subjects was made with so much wisdom, with such rare discernment of disposition and character, that reconsideration was seldom necessary. The local superiors and the other officials of the Congregation found in their Mother-General a perfect model of the spirit that ought to animate them in the performance of their important functions. She recommended nothing without first giving the example. One day, having made the remark that all that was done for God was great, and that the Sisters should inflict a penance upon themselves when they were unfaithful even in small things, it happened that she entered the kitchen and forgot to close the door. The Lay Sister in charge, occupied at that moment, without raising her eyes, called out: "Those who leave the door open must kiss the floor." Immediately Mother St. John performed the penance. The Lay Sister turned around, and seeing the Superior-General prostrate, became confused, and began to excuse herself. "I committed the fault", said the Superior simply, "therefore I must perform the penance."

"Nothing elevates or strengthens authority like the practice of humility and obedience", says the author of *The Imitation*. We read in the annals of the first Religious that it would be difficult to express with what veneration and respect they listened to the words of their venerable Mother, and observed her recommendations. In her will they recognized the Will of God,

Whom she represented, and Whom she consulted on all occasions.

"Like Moses", say the American Sisters, "she had recourse without ceasing to the Lord in prayer. Jesus, in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, was her Counsellor; after Jesus, Mary was her refuge." At seventy years of age, in a delicate state of health, she was frequently seen in the very early morning, in order to escape notice, climbing to Fourvières fasting and barefoot. She there heard a first Mass, at which she received Holy Communion, heard a second one in Thanksgiving, and then returned home in time to preside at the Community exercises. She obliged the Sister who accompanied her to take her breakfast before leaving, and ordered her to keep these morning excursions a profound secret. This continued intercourse with Heaven drew down upon her administration special graces, and gave to her authority an influence and efficacy altogether supernatural. Under her direction all the local houses were happily united, and the Congregation of St. Joseph made wonderful progress.

As the ancient Citeaux, pouring her spiritual riches over the neighbouring deserts, caused to spring up many saintly communities, which were called the daughters of Citeaux, so the Congregation of St. Joseph sent into the world colonies of saintly Religious, whose new foundations became worthy daughters of their mother. From 1823 to 1840 Mother St. Joseph, who had been formed to religious life in the house of St. Pierre le Vieux, at Lyons, and who was endowed with many eminent spiritual gifts, was the instrument employed by Divine Providence to found Congregations at Belley,

Gap and Bordeaux. She died in the odour of sanctity, in the last named city, Superior-General of the Congregation which she had formed.

In 1824, Mother St. John Marcoux, a saintly and gifted Religious, who had been trained in the midst of austerities in the Community of the Rue de la Bourse, at St. Etienne, was charged by Mgr. de Pins, Administrator of the Diocese of Lyons, to open a house of Sisters of St. Joseph in Oulais, in the Diocese of Auby. In passing through St. Pons, a parish in the Diocese of Montpelier, the pastor of which was an intimate friend of Mgr. de Pins, Mother St. John was obliged to leave some of her Sisters. They founded a colony at St. Pons, which is now in a flourishing condition. The remainder continued to the end the journey marked out to them by obedience. Though few in number at first, and deprived of all earthly goods, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Oulais have increased in a truly providential manner. They reckon today nearly three hundred professed Religious, with a novitiate capable of maintaining its spiritual progress. Its branches extend to six of the Southern Departments, and have accomplished great good. Mother St. John Marcoux remained but a short time at Oulais. Called to Chambéry the same year, she founded there the large Community of St. Joseph which edifies Savoy, and of which she was the first Superior-General. Her merit and rare qualities caused her to be held in great esteem by the Archbishop of Chambéry, and by Cardinal Fesch, who at once conceived the project of bringing her to Rome. Queen Hortense, who had known the holy and amiable religious in Savoy, wished to retain her as her friend.

The Community at Chambéry soon sent out a band of fervent Religious to Annecy. This new establishment owes its origin to the pious and noble initiative of a great and illustrious Christian, in whom the Sisters of St. Joseph always found a friend ready to help them in all their works of charity, the Countess of Rochejacquelin, daughter of the Duchess of Duras. Left a widow at the age of eighteen, by the death of her husband, the Prince of Talmont, and attached to the fortune of the Royal Family of Bourbon by a second marriage with the Count of Rochejacquelin, she found herself exiled from France after the Revolution of 1830. During a stay she made at Annecy, she remarked that the children of the poorer classes were absolutely deficient in religious education. She spoke to the Bishop of Annecy, who sadly acknowledged the fact, and expressed his regret in not being able, for want of resources, to open schools to remedy the evil. The Countess offered to defray the expenses, and the Prelate, with deep gratitude, and touched even to tears, blessed God and the illustrious benefactress who had been sent to the people of his episcopal city. By a providential coincidence, the first house occupied by the Visitation Order, and confiscated during the Revolution, was offered for sale by the family in possession of it. The Bishop of Annecy was pleased to have the opportunity of rescuing from secular hands this garden of religion, where St. Francis de Sales had watered his humble plants and cared for his dear "Avettes", as he was accustomed to call the first Sisters of the Visitation. Sharing the sentiments of the holy Prelate, the Countess Rochejacquelin expressed her desire to purchase

the place. After making the necessary repairs, and with the Bishop's approval, she entrusted it to a small Community of the Sisters of St. Joseph, whom they had begged from the house at Chambéry, a branch of the Mother House at Lyons.

Meanwhile, the Sisters of the Visitation, who had returned to Annecy after the Revolution, and established themselves in a more desirable and more convenient part of the city, wished to recover that which had once been the cradle of their Institute. It was, indeed, for them, a precious treasure which they could not but desire to possess. The Bishop, to whom they addressed themselves, understood this, but referred the delicate question to Rome. A Jesuit, charged to examine the case, declared that the Sisters of St. Joseph, according to the design of their Founder, and conformably with the end expressed in their Constitutions, accomplished in reality the first design of St. Francis de Sales, when he founded the Order of the Visitation, and that the providential circumstances which led them into the first establishment of the great Saint, where they faithfully carried out his original plan, ought to be regarded as the expression of the Divine Will. So the Visitandines looked upon it, and the Sisters of St. Joseph have ever since remained in possession of this precious heritage. Thus was established, and in a most solemn manner, a close and direct affiliation of the Institute of St. Joseph to the mind and heart of St. Francis de Sales. The unanimous acceptance of the decision of the Jesuit Father indicated that the little house of the Faubourg de la Perriere, at Annecy, called familiarly La Galerie, must also be regarded as the cradle of the Institute of

St. Joseph, because the pious Daughters of the Visitation, by their first manner of living had, in a way, given it birth, before their holy Founder had been led, by the will of another, to cloister them. Hence the Congregation of St. Joseph, with the Order of the Visitation, claim him for their Founder, and unite in thanking God for such an origin. Their Constitutions also urge them to have a particular veneration and affection for the saintly Daughters of St. Francis de Sales.

Some time afterwards the Sisters of St. Joseph were established in America. Their apostolic and holy work, undertaken at the prayer of Bishop Rosati, of St. Louis, U. S., was organized in 1811, with an apostolic zeal and admirable prudence, by the Reverend Mother St. John, with the help of Rev. Father [unclear], V. G., and Superior of the Congregation [unclear] John Cholleton, nephew of Father Cholleton, like his uncle, esteemed the Reverend Mother, and seconded her in all things. The first mission of St. Joseph destined for America was composed of six Religious, two of them Sister Febronia and Sister Delphine, nieces of Mother St. John. The first of these, named Superior by Father [unclear], had the direction of the far distant [unclear] priests, one a nephew of Mother St. John, and seminarians, who wished to have a share in the work, also set out for St. Louis. The Countess Rochejacquelin, who was interested in a special manner in American Missions, sacrificed her personal jewels to defray the expenses of this Canadian enterprise.

The Sisters left Lyons on January 4th, 1811, and embarked at Havre on January 17th. The journey was long

and wearisome. The opening of this first house in America was accomplished in the midst of the hardest privations. The Sisters had, for themselves and pupils, only log cabins, one room serving at the same time for oratory, parlour, dormitory, refectory and kitchen. Often in the mornings their beds were covered with snow, which fell through the openings in the roof of their poor dwelling; and more than once, when taking their frugal repast, they were obliged to hold an umbrella over their heads to keep off snow or rain. Sometimes, even, they were obliged to beg their bread, but Heaven blessed their sacrifices, and made their poverty fruitful. The holy work increased, notwithstanding these hardships, and today we behold a vast number of Religious distributed in numerous dioceses of the New World, devoted to the education of children in academies and parochial schools, and to the care of the sick in hospitals, asylums, and houses of refuge.

These missions have long ceased to be subject to the Mother House of Lyons. The separation was effected without pain or opposition, with the consent and under the direction of the Ecclesiastical Superiors, the Archbishops of Lyons, Bordeaux and Chambery, and the Bishops of Gap, Belley, and of America. The Missions to Corsica, Touraine, Vendee and Provence still remain dependent on and under the direction of the Mother House at Lyons. The reports given by the Superior-General, after her visitations, tell us of their development, their good works and their success.

While these distant foundations in America were sowing the good seed, more than two hundred and fifty mission houses were opened in the Diocese of Lyons,

and in the neighbouring dioceses. Thus was accomplished the prediction of the Reverend Father Piron to the fervent little Community of the Rue de la Bourse: "You shall be dispersed as bees, and your number shall be as the stars of the firmament."

## CHAPTER IV

### HER EARLY YEARS

REVEREND Mother Sacred Heart of Jesus, second Superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Lyons, belonged by birth to one of the oldest and most honourable families of Forez; it dates back to the Middle Ages, long before 1388, as stated in an old court record preserved in the Archives of the Department of Loire. It was one of those illustrious families from which came the magistrates, who were the honour, the ornament and the strength of ancient society in France. The first Mayor of St. Etienne, nominated by the King in 1745, was Jacques Tezenas. The grandfather of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart of Jesus was Shield-bearer, King's Counsellor, and Commissary of War. To these titles her great-grandfather joined that of Captain of Rochella-Molliere and Firminy. In the eighteenth century, another of her ancestors took part, as an officer, in the glorious campaign of the Count Marshal Saxe.

As saints are not the work of nature and of blood, but of grace, doubtless it matters little, for their real honour, that they spring from noble ancestry. They themselves are the first to show how little value they attach to it. St. Jerome, nevertheless, in his eulogy upon St. Paula, remarked that she descended on the one side from the Gracchi and Scipios, and on the other from Agamemnon, so holding that she had the noblest qualities of the two most noble races in the world.

But in the family of the Tezenas piety and virtue were as hereditary as honour. They founded, at St. John Bonnefond, a prebend, of which the titulars were nominated by them up to the year 1789. They possessed a seigneurial pew in the church, in recognition of this pious and generous foundation. Gabrielle la Vehue, connected with the family by marriage, was the most generous among the foundresses of the Hotel Dieu and Sisters of Charity, at St. Etienne, in 1740. It was she also who, in 1737, erected the Chapel of St. Ennermond, which later became a parish church. In 1793 three aunts of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart of Jesus, Religious Hospitalers of the Order of St. Augustine, at St. Etienne, were thrown into prison for their faith. One of them, Superior of the Hospital, heroic as the Venerable Mother St. John, burned with the desire of martyrdom, and shed tears of regret when the death of Robespierre restored her to liberty. After the Revolution the last survivor of these Christian heroines was, with Madame Tezenas, at the head of all the good works in the city of St. Etienne.

The Tezenas bore upon their shield the Christian motto: *Deo dante nihil potest invidia*.—"Envy can do nothing against the gifts of God". "Nothing can abase that which God has elevated, and nothing can elevate that which God has abased", says St. Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed Prelate of the East. "It is the Lord Who gives, it is the Lord Who takes away", cried out the holy Patriarch Job; "blessed be the name of the Lord." From the example of the great personages of the Old and New Testaments, the Tezenas made it their glory to proclaim the dominion of God over all things,

and their perfect trust and confidence in Him; they feared the Lord, but they knew no other fear. Hence Reverend Mother Sacred Heart had only to follow the noble and Christian traditions of her family, traditions invariably preserved and continued. Her father, Benedict Tezenas, of Montcel, was Justice of the Peace at St. Etienne. He was an exemplary Christian, and every day recited the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. Her mother was a heroic woman, endowed with those rare qualities which the Scriptures apply to the strong woman, and worthy in every way of being proposed as a model. She was a daughter of Joseph Lybois, a former Shield-bearer and Counsellor of the King, and Anna Maria de Montguiche. The latter, having lost her parents at an early age, was educated by the Carmelite Sisters, of Paris, under the care of Madame de la Jarrie, an intimate friend of her mother and Prioress of the Monastery. In gratitude, Mlle. Montguiche desired that the Prioress should be present at her marriage, and that the ceremony should be celebrated in the Chapel of the Convent which had sheltered her infancy. She thus associated this pious sanctuary of her early years with the new life on which she was about to enter, and seemed to indicate by this act her intention of continuing in her new sphere the religious life and pious practices in which she had been so carefully trained.

Mr. Lybois, having been appointed Collector of Customs in Auvergnny, brought there his young wife, who became the mother of three children. Anne Lybois, the future mother of Mother Sacred Heart, was born at Issoire, in 1759, the same year as Reverend

Mother St. John, who afterwards became her daughter's spiritual mother. She received, at the Convent of the Benedictines of Clairmont, a solid Christian education, which made her that admirable woman "clothed with strength and beauty", described by Solomon, "whose right hand was ever extended to the unfortunate and needy." According to Montalambert, many lived, at this period, lives of great sanctity in the world, as members of the Third Orders, thus purifying and elevating the married state. One of these blessed homes served as a cradle for the second foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

After her marriage to Mr. Tezenas of Montcel in 1784, she went to dwell at St. Etienne. "The few contemporaries of that period who are still living", says a journal of St. Etienne, "have preserved the memory of the entertainments given them by the young people that city. Among others, the Knights of the Target tendered them a magnificent reception. Everything seemed to promise them long life, peace, prosperity, and happiness". Unfortunately it was not to be. Only a few years had passed when the great Revolutionary storm of 1789 burst upon France and over Europe, darkening the life entered upon with such glowing prospects. "This young woman, to whom the future had appeared so beautiful", continues the journal, "to whom her adopted country had given so smiling a welcome, suddenly saw her safety compromised, and the lives of her dear ones endangered. It would take too long to tell of the anguish that tore her heart during this time of universal madness. This happy bride, who had been received with so much

enthusiasm and love, was forced to leave the city in 1793. On foot, and alone, bearing her young son in her arms, she went to Lyons, to contend with the executioners for the head of her husband. In those deplorable days, when virtue was punished as crime, and crime glorified as virtue, we behold this noble woman seated, with her babe, upon the steps of the Court House, that she might not lose the propitious moment to cast herself at the feet of the judges of the bloody tribunal, and make them listen to the voice of the desolate wife and mother. This heroic act met with success, and Madame Tezenas returned to St. Etienne and Montcel, where she witnessed the terrible events of the Revolutionary period. In the midst of a thousand trials she kept a courageous heart always raised towards Heaven, and detached from earthly things.

Fearless of increasing the dangers which surrounded her family, she had the generous courage to make her home in the city and at Montcel a refuge for proscribed priests, who remained faithful to God and His holy Church. Among these ecclesiastics were the distinguished Abbé Genevet, afterwards parish priest of Villefranche, the Abbé Montagnin, Dom Terasse, the last Prior of Chaise-Dieu, and the Abbé Rousset. In times of the greatest danger they were concealed and secretly provided for in the outbuildings. When surveillance became less strict, they shared the apartments and table of their charitable hosts. This house, blessed by Heaven, was moreover the temple of the Lord, Who also was obliged to hide Himself. The Holy Sacrifice was often offered there, upon improvised

altars, which disappeared as soon as the Holy Oblation was ended; for this new species of crime was, when discovered, often punished by death. There also the Sacrament of Baptism was frequently administered. On these occasions, the little bell at Montcel, by a special and prearranged ringing, called the eldest son of the house, John Joseph Tezenas, to assist at the holy ceremony, and he became, thanks to his piety and charity, the godfather of many of the neighboring children. Thus, for the soul as for the body, Montcel was a house of salvation to all the country. The presence of mind and imperturbable coolness of Madame Tezenas protected the new sanctuary against the frequent visits of those satellites, the house-searchers of the Revolution, and several times saved the guests from the greatest danger. One day, when the family were taking their repast with a priest, they heard the revolutionists were coming. Without being disconcerted, Madame Tezenas concealed the priest, and went to meet the visitors, invited them to refreshments and gave them full and entire liberty to search her house. Seeing her assurance, they believed that their prey had escaped, and they retired. By a cruel chance, this assurance which saved others, nearly deprived her of him whom she had once snatched from the executioners.

One evening in springtime, when all the family were assembled at Montcel, they suddenly saw coming, by the path which led from the Village of Bonnefond, of which Montcel formed a part, a troop of these dangerous visitors. M. Tezenas had only time to warn his wife that he would conceal himself in the house of M. de

Grezieux, at Chazette, a property belonging to Montcel; but unfortunately, all the avenues were closed against him. Obligated to return to his own house, he threw himself, without being observed by anyone, behind a screen, under a large, old-fashioned chimney. Madame Tezenas, believing her husband in a place of safety, received her terrible visitors with her usual composure. "You may, if you wish, search my house", she said to them, "and even behind this screen", moving it aside. At the sight of that dear head which she uncovered to them, she fell unconscious. M. Tezenas recognized, in the band of searchers, a man of the neighbouring village, and, feigning to be at his ease, said to him: "There you are! They told me you wished to take my life; on the contrary, I see I am dealing with friends. Help me to restore my wife to consciousness; she has had a great fright." "He is right", answered the man appealed to in this friendly manner; and all gathered around Madame Tezenas, who, little by little recovered her senses. "We came", they said, "because we were told there were priests here. Have no fear for your husband." They made a minute search of the house for priests, who happily were in safety elsewhere.

At another time, at midnight, some quick knocks were heard at the doorway of Montcel. It was a young man, who begged with eagerness to speak to Madame Tezenas. He was admitted. "You will pardon my importunity", he said to her, "but I am sent here to find a priest. Do not refuse help to a poor, dying man, who has not been to confession since his First Communion, more than forty years ago; you have heard him spoken of", and he named a dangerous man, who had

caused the imprisonment of many priests and citizens of St. Etienne and the surrounding country. Madame Tezenas asked for his address, and told the young man he might return, promising to do all in her power to help the unfortunate sick man. After his departure she went to find the Abbé Genevet, who was then at Monteel, and related to him what had passed. "It is a plot", she added; "at least I fear so. They have come here in the hope of discovering a priest, and thus bringing misfortune to you and to us all." "Who knows"? replied the Confessor of the Faith: "God has, perhaps, heard this poor sinner at the moment of death; I will go to the Chapel to consult our Lord." A short time after he reappeared, in the costume of a labourer. "I will go," said he, "under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary; I cannot allow a soul to perish, if it really needs my ministry. Pray for me." And, having spoken thus, he directed his steps to the place which had been indicated. The inmates of Monteel betook themselves to prayer, trembling for the safety of the holy priest. The day passed, and the man of God did not appear. The following day the anxiety of the family was redoubled; but, towards evening, the appearance of Father Genevet brought joy to the hospitable fireside. "Give thanks to God", he said, on again beholding his pious friends; "I was in time to prepare the dying man. Upon my entering his room, he cried: 'I am dying; I will be damned for all eternity, I have done so much evil'. The thought of his past life had almost driven him to despair. I spoke to him of the mercy of God, he confessed his sins with contrition and sincerity, and I administered the last Sacraments.

'I knew well', he repeated several times, 'that Madame Tezenas would have pity on me, and that in her home would be found some of the faithful priests of God'. The poor man died blessing your name, and proclaiming the infinite goodness of our Lord and Saviour." The inmates of Montcel burst forth into acts of thanksgiving, and redoubled their zeal to receive within their walls and protect these holy priests, whose ministry wrought such miracles of charity. It is unnecessary to say that this blessed home did not receive priests who were unfaithful to their sacred calling.

A curate in the neighborhood, whom the Revolution had no doubt led astray, as it had the Curé of Monistrol, offended the people of the village by speaking publicly, and in an unbecoming manner, of the devotion of the Rosary. His declamations breathed but impiety against what he called "the tedious repetition of the Hail Mary", and implied a condemnation of the Church and her greatest Saints, who approved of the recitation of the Rosary. He misunderstood the end of man, which is constant union with God, and the nature of love, which proclaims itself unceasingly and untiringly. "Love delights in repetitions", says the author of *The Imitation*. The teaching of this priest tended to destroy the habitual practice of the presence of God, ejaculatory prayer, so dear to the pious soul, morning and evening prayers, the recitation of the litanies, frequent Communion, daily Mass celebrated by thousands of priests; in a word, to ruin the entire edifice of our holy religion. "Does the number affect the Almighty"? demands a learned and pious author; 'does the repetition burden, do the details divide His

power, or overwhelm Him?" Treating of the Rosary, Pere Lacordiere says: "Rationalism smiles as it beholds files of people pass, continually repeating the same words. He who is enlightened understands that love has but one word, and that, though said always, is never repeated." A great journalist says: "Nothing is so inexhaustible as the admiration which the sublime inspires; and holiness is but constant contact with the essentially sublime". Prayer, which unites man to God, is but the adhesion of the soul to the sublime. Wherefore, the Royal Prophet says: "Thanks to aid from on high, brought down by prayer, I have in my heart a means of continually ascending towards Heaven." Behold faith, united to good sense and genius! Informed of the scandalous teaching, by her domestics, who had been tainted by it, Madame Tezenas carried the information to the Parish Priest, on the occasion of one of those visits she loved to make to Monteel. He acknowledged and confirmed the fact by obstinately maintaining the offensive doctrine of the rash preacher. The faithful Christian woman thus addressed him: "Know that the Rosary has always been recited in my house. Since your doctrine differs from that which the Church teaches, be not astonished that I separate myself from you. Monteel will never uphold an enemy of the Church and of Mary." After this lesson she rose with dignity, and left the unfaithful priest. "Salt which has lost its savour is good for nothing but to be cast away", says the Evangelist, and the Mistress of Monteel felt these words were applicable to him. Such was the noble woman who became the mother of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart.

Margaret Mary Virginia Tezenas, in religion Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was born on December 8th, 1795, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. It was a beautiful day to enter into life; it began, as it were, with the rising, and under the first and purest rays of the Morning Star. What happier presage than this heavenly radiance beaming upon the cradle of this favoured child, whose name, Mary Virginia, so sweetly identified itself with that of the Virgin Mary? Illumined by the exalted mystery of the Immaculate Conception, the early days of the future Mother of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph gave promise of a blessed future to her numerous spiritual children. It was not in vain that God, Whose wisdom directs all, had placed the foundations of this great work under the heavenly guidance of His stainless Mother, the faithful and inspiring Companion of St. Joseph. Was it not to confirm and guarantee more and more, to the Daughters of St. Joseph, the favours and maternal tenderness of Mary Immaculate? For already, in the twofold origin of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph at Puy and Lyons, we have seen that the most Holy Virgin wished to have near her, and under her eyes, the cradle of this pious Institute. Was she not presented to the Sisters of St. Joseph as the model whom, after the example of their father St. Joseph, they should unceasingly contemplate, study and imitate? Thus, the threefold treasure of Nazareth, the Hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, became the three favourite devotions of the one who was destined by God to become their spiritual mother. A holy priest, the Abbé Rousset, administered the Sacrament of rege-

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neration. She had for sponsors her brother, John Joseph Tezenas, who was the eldest of the family, and her grandmother, Madame Tezenas, an eminent Christian of noble character and profound religious knowledge. The mother of the little Virginia understood too well the duties of maternal love to trust her children to the care of strangers. Notwithstanding their number she wished to nurse and watch over their infancy herself. Thus did she care for her nine children with a mother's true and faithful devotion. Virginia, the sixth, had from her tenderest years been formed to habits of sincere piety. While yet very young, she had instinctively so great a horror of even the shadow of sin, that in order to prevent her from doing anything wrong, it sufficed to say such a thing would offend the good God. She would immediately check herself, and give up her own will, to comply with what was requested of her. Night and morning, when the child could hardly lisp the words of the prayers, she repeated them after her grandmother. This exercise, ordinarily tedious and fatiguing for young children, never wearied the little Virginia. As the years rolled on, this happy disposition produced in her the most beautiful fruit. Her grandmother, observing this, and being so thoroughly capable of appreciating it, could not refrain from saying of Virginia: "There is a child who, later on, will make the world speak of her; she will one day be placed at the head of some great administration." The future verified the penetration of the venerable grandparent.

At the age of four years, the loving child was once on the point of being taken away from the tender care of her family. She was intelligent, playful, and very

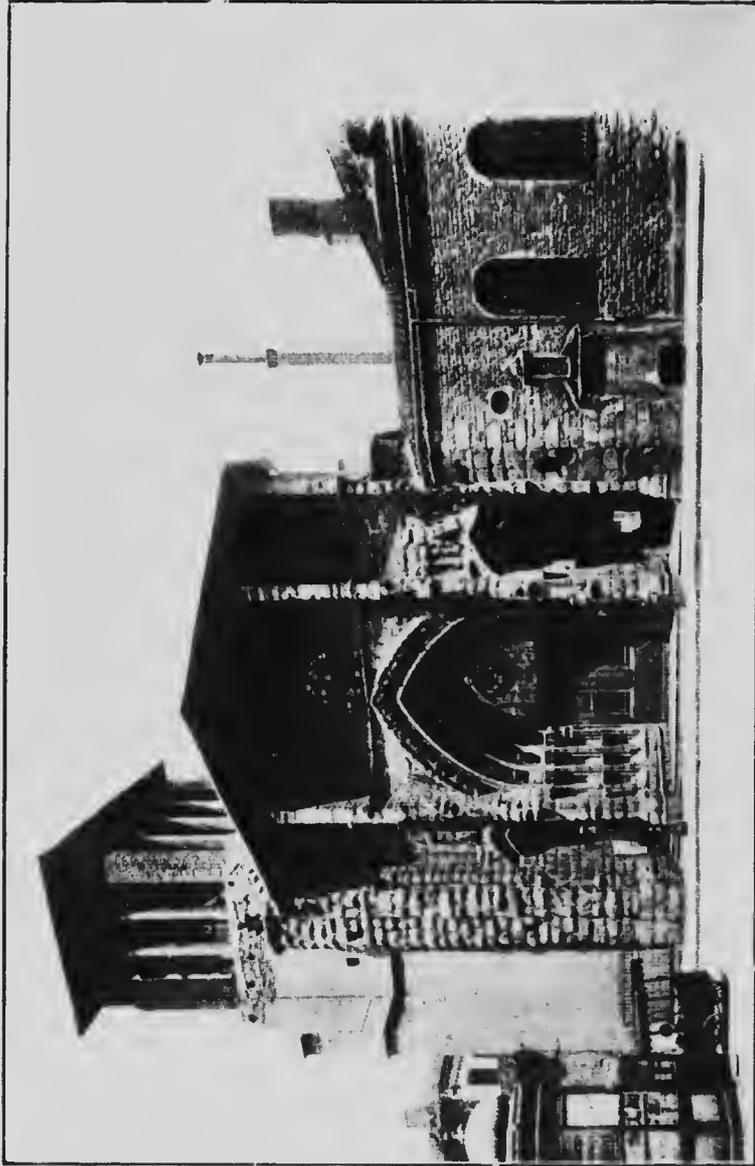
lively. All her movements denoted exuberance of life, and she was passionately fond of amusement. One day, when playing with her brother, August, in the garden of Montcel, she was eager to gather a pretty flower growing at the edge of the water, that she might give it to her brother, whom she tenderly loved. But at the moment of plucking it, her feet slipped on the grass, and she fell into the water. August saw all, but was too small to help her. He ran to the gardener, who was working at a short distance, and, taking hold of his clothes, he screamed: "My Nini is in the water! Quick! quick! take my Nini out of the water!" The gardener hastily rescued her, and placed the unconscious child on the bank. Assiduous and careful attention was lavished upon her by the servants, who only informed her parents when all danger was passed, and they could say: "Rejoice, God has saved your child!" "Oh! why did you not let me die then? I was sure of Heaven", Virginia said, when she had grown older. She was not aware that a richer and more glorious crown was reserved for her, a crown equalling in brilliancy that of St. Teresa, of St. Chantal, and of her illustrious contemporaries, Mother Emelia, Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family, and Madame Barat, Foundress of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. God wished her to be among the number of those great souls who are the spiritual mothers of so many others, and whom the Holy Spirit calls the most beautiful among the daughters of Israel.

The intelligence of Mary Virginia was extraordinarily precocious. Her keen intellect, joyous disposition, quick-witted answers, and, above all, her good heart,

could not but recognize her most lovable. She was the joy and pride of her family. Everyone caressed her. Her brothers would not be separated from her. They took her with them on their hunting and fishing excursions, and when the playful child returned to the Lodge, her dress wet, and soiled with mud, she hastened to repair her toilet, to avoid bringing a reprimand upon her beloved brothers. At home her kindness ruled all. After God, Virginia loved her mother above all others. She regarded it as one of her greatest faults to disobey her commands. On one occasion, eager to finish a tie, which she intended for her, she pretended not to hear her mother when she commanded something else. Madame Tezenas, surprised at the want of obedience in her child, gave her a severe reproof. Virginia felt her fault, keenly and throwing herself at her mother's feet, sorrowfully begged her pardon, and declared many times that she was inconsolable for having caused pain to so good and holy a mother. She was then nine years of age. Two years before this, when the cruel Revolution began to subside, her aged grandmother wished her to take part in a religious ceremony, to which were admitted only those who were very pious and faithful, and upon whom the greatest reliance could be placed. They assembled at the house of Abbé Rousset, who secretly exercised his ministry during the days of terror, when Catholic France was obliged to submit to the tyranny of the impious. The ceremony was the removal of the Blessed Sacrament from the retreat to which it was exiled by the Revolution. The little band of chosen and faithful souls surrounded it with love, and accompanied it to the

Church, where the priest replaced it with joy in the sacred Tabernacle. "Remember all your life", said the great Christian, to her little granddaughter, "the august ceremony in which you have this day taken part." The pious child never forgot the privilege with which our Lord had favoured her, by associating her with His first modest triumph in the parish. She loved to relate this episode of her childhood, and all through life her delight was to be before the Blessed Sacrament. Happy the souls, happy the families, who love the most Holy Sacrament of our Altars, and who, enkindled with the fire of divine love, are inspired to say with the Royal Prophet: "How lovely are Thy Tabernacles, O Lord! A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand palaces of kings! For the sparrow hath a house, and the turtle dove a nest for herself, where she may lay her young. Even so, Thy Altars, O Lord of Hosts, shall be my retreat and my well-beloved habitation."





CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

## CHAPTER V

### HER CALL TO RELIGION

As VIRGINIA increased in age, and the period of her First Communion approached, the care and vigilance of this Christian household was redoubled to prepare her for this great act. The Community has a lovely tradition of this time, received from her paternal grandmother, who had held the child at the sacred font of Baptism. The venerable godmother, in union with the mother, applied herself in a special manner to communicate to the little Virginia a deep religious knowledge, by means of catechetical instructions and conferences, wisely combined and frequently repeated. Their teaching was principally on the Divine Eucharist, and the pious grandmother took great delight in preparing and adorning the soul of her little grandchild for the reception of this holy Sacrament. "Your heart", she said to her, "will become the tabernacle of the Lord; soon it will become a living ciborium, where Jesus, the tender Lover of children, will dwell." The heart of the young and amiable neophyte opened with delight, as the chalice of a beautiful flower, to gather the heavenly dew which the great soul of her grandmother distilled in drops. Her enlightened mind, like a flood of clear, soft light, filled the child's soul with a sweet radiance. In this manner were the first impressions engraven in this heart, predestined to bear even the name of Jesus, whose sweet odour was to draw others to

our Divine Saviour. In 1804, at the age of nine years and a half, in the parish church of St. Etienne, Mary Virginia Tezenas went for the first time to partake of the Bread of Angels. Worthy by her innocence of such company, the angelic child could not contain herself with joy. As soon as she had received Communion, she felt in her young heart a fire until then unknown. She took the unalterable resolution of giving herself entirely to God, and besought our Divine Lord to grant her the grace of one day in consecrating herself to Him in the religious life. It was ten years before she was able to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, which was conferred upon her in the Church of St. Chamond, at the same time as upon her sister, Adele, who afterwards became the venerable Madame Vailleton, and who possessed the amiable and great virtues of her mother. From that time there existed between these two Sisters, who loved each other so tenderly, a holy emulation in the practice of virtue. Having received the Sacrament which made them strong and perfect Christians, soldiers of Jesus Christ, they vied with each other in the exercise of penance and mortification. Full of the thought expressed by the author of *The Imitation*, that we advance in virtue only in proportion as we do violence to ourselves, they never recoiled before an act of renunciation or generosity. In the city, during the winter, they arose early and assisted at the first Mass. In the country, during the summer, they went to the parish church of St. Bonnefond, which was an hour's walk from their home. They set out very early in order to reach the church at sunrise, the hour at which the Pastor, Father Albron, said Holy

Mass. In fear of oversleeping themselves, and not wishing to awaken their parents, they gave orders to the gardener to pull a certain little cord, one end of which hung outside the window, the other being attached to Virginia's arm. On their way, the two sisters said their morning prayers, and conversed together on the means of passing the day in a holy manner. Virginia never failed to make the Holy Hour, in honour of the Sacred Heart, to which she had a particular devotion. Every day she recited the Office of the Blessed Virgin. The ardour of these two young and fervent Christians had more need of restraint than of incentive. The servants were edified by their recollection, particularly at night prayers, at which all assisted, and could not help admiring their virtue, their sincere piety, and their charity, which embraced all, without distinction of persons. Madame Tezenas taught her children to have compassion on the needs of the unfortunate. Being president of the work of the Ladies of Mercy, and being associated in most of the societies for the relief of the poor of St. Etienne, she never ceased to seek out the needy. In her errands, she took in turn each of her children, teaching them to sympathise with others, and habituating them to deeds of charity. With love they climbed to the garrets, cared for the infirm, consoled the afflicted, succoured poor families, solaced the sick, and clothed the orphans. No unfortunate escaped the charity of this holy family. God alone, Who was the witness of their good works, could reward them for the alms they unceasingly bestowed upon the poor of St. Etienne and its vicinity. Death alone could exhaust this unparalleled source of beneficence. Even

in her last moments, from her dying bed, Madame Tezenas still desired to aid and encourage the Society of the Ladies of Mercy. After the example of her saintly mother, Virginia devoted herself with indefatigable zeal to all these good works. She was among the first to establish, at St. Etienne, the Sodality of the Children of Mary, which has accomplished so much good. In organizing this new work, she had the assistance of Mlle. Theolliere, of Treuil, Constance Payret, Benigna Testenoir, and Lucy Gerinon. They were directed by a holy priest, the Abbé Vuilherme, who was a devout servant of Mary, and at that time Pastor of Ste. Marie, at St. Etienne, and later parish priest of St. Nizier, at Lyons, where his name is still held in veneration. The grandchildren of Madame Tezenas, the niece and grandnieces of Virginia, continued the good work of their grandmother and their aunt.

While Madame Tezenas was training her children in these pious exercises and charitable works, she did not allow them to neglect study or domestic duties. She held the opinion that the education of her daughters should be broad, solid and complete. The Abbé Cognet (later Grand Plenipotentiary of Lyons) was private tutor to her sons, and directed also the studies of their sisters. Great emulation and earnestness prevailed in this little family college. To animate and sustain the enthusiasm of his pupils, the skilful master desired that the recreations should be pleasant and healthful. He always presided at and sometimes took part in their play; he also directed their excursions, which they took on holidays in the neighborhood of Monteel. On one of these excursions the little troop

of scholars, provided with a lantern, were exploring a miner's cave, with their preceptor at their head. Suddenly the light was extinguished, and they were plunged into profound darkness, in the midst of an inextricable labyrinth formed by a network of innumerable passages, which had been used in removing the coal. Their teacher, Abbé Cognet, was much alarmed. "Remain here", he said to his pupils, "while I search for a light. Do not advance or go back one step." He groped along, but soon ended by losing his way. He was seized with dreadful anguish. Fearing to wander farther away, he stopped in consternation, under these sombre vaults, and had recourse to God in fervent prayer. While he cried to Heaven for safety, and above all, for the safety of the children, he heard the resounding step of a man. It was a miner returning to his underground work. Abbé Cognet cried for help, the workman heard his call, came with his lamp, and delivered the unfortunate lost ones from their dangerous situation. During this time of peril the children, who had not realized their danger, were faithful to the recommendations of their guide, and passed the time during his absence in singing hymns. The Abbé thanked God with all his heart, and brought them safely home to their parents.

In the education of this family, domestic work had a large part, as Madame Tezenas understood well its importance. She knew that the Holy Spirit was pleased to represent to us the mother of the great King Solomon, the strong woman, spinning and weaving linen and wool. St. Jerome, so learned, and so penetrated with the sense of the Holy Scriptures, which he

taught the Roman ladies, rigorously prescribed manual labour to the descendants of Scipio, Fabian and Camillus. This great genius did not fear to descend in this regard to the smallest details. A woman deceives herself who thinks that, because Providence has given her wealth, she may dispense with work, which is the penalty of sin. If she wishes to live a Christian life she must, while hands and eyes are occupied, frequently raise her heart and mind to God. Charlemagne held that his daughters, the Princesses, and his relatives should be constantly employed threading the spindle or weaving wool, for he feared idleness, the root of all evil. M. de Maistre put the mending of linen in the first rank of work for women. Barnave, from the Hall of the Convention, wrote to his sisters: "Make stockings, leave politics alone." (It was politics that first absorbed, and afterwards destroyed him.) There is, in these several recommendations, a deep and delicate comprehension of the true life and education of the family. The Tezenas of Montcel understood and practised this precept, inculcated by Holy Scripture and by Christian men. The daughters of Madame Tezenas, when their studies were over, occupied themselves with household duties, watched over the servants, ordered the meals for the family, and prepared them when necessary. For this each one was assigned her week. They attended to the sewing, ironing, mending and embroidery, sometimes repairing with their work-baskets to the large green lawn, where they passed the time in pleasant conversation and singing.

Whilst engaged in these different employments, Virginia enlivened all by her gaiety, her amiable con-

versation, her lively and witty replies. It was she, so to speak, who guided the whole household, without ever suspecting it herself. She had such an ascendancy over those who surrounded her that she drew all hearts to her without showing any desire to do so. The workmen and the servants almost worshipped her. If a cloud arose in the family, she knew how to dispel it by her adroitness and amiability. Her affection for her brothers gave her a most helpful influence over them. In the evening she waited on them, looked after their wants, in case of need counselled them, and ingeniously concealed their little escapades. Thus she won their love; but Virginia was always and above all a source of edification to her family. Madame Tezenas had a sister at Issoire, the wife of M. Girod, whose son was later the Baron of Langdale and Peer of France. She went often with her family to visit this beloved sister, who, having no young children of her own, adopted hers, and made a feast whenever they came to see her. During these visits at Issoire, they frequently attended social entertainments. Virginia and her sister, Adele, always as tenderly united by piety as by blood, were ingenious in finding excuses to absent themselves from balls and soirees. This was made easier when Adele, after her marriage to M. Vailleton, had the care of her first-born. The child became a sufficient reason for not attending these lively gatherings. When the circumstances were such that they could not be excused, the servants, having been previously instructed, would come at an appointed hour to announce that little Eugene had need of his mother. The two sisters would hasten away, and after caring for the child

would give themselves up to exercises of piety. Every year, on the feasts of St. Anne and St. Benedict, patrons of M. and Madame Tezenas, Monteel assumed a new charm. It became like a sanctuary. The children feasted their parents, who were to them objects of true veneration. By her respect, tenderness and loving disposition, Virginia was at once the soul and the delight of those charming family reunions. The year Adele's eldest child was born she wished to present him as a festive bouquet to his good grandparents. To do this she arranged a pretty basket, and deposited little Eugene in the midst of the foliage and flowers. The happy grandparents pressed to their hearts the precious cradle, and covered it with kisses and tears of happiness. Monteel seemed to present at that moment a beautiful picture, the likeness of two lovely aspects of nature,—the bright and rosy tints of the early aurora, united to the pure gold and brilliancy of the setting sun.

Remorse meanwhile rested in the heart of her who was the principal cause of such innocent gaiety. Virginia, in her haste to arrange the basket, had thoughtlessly cut some branches of foliage from a neighbor's hedge. She reproached herself with this as a great fault, and had to acknowledge it, entreating her mother to recompense the owner. This scruple of the innocent young girl was not the least beautiful flower of this family feast. The parents who had raised and formed children such as these were most worthy of the veneration with which they were surrounded.

It was a most edifying sight to see this pious father and mother, now advanced in years, still reciting every day the Office of the Blessed Virgin. When M. Tezenas'

sight had become so defective that he could no longer read his prayer books, it was his custom to repair to the chapel of his country house, and there, before the picture of our Blessed Lady, converse with her whom he called his Good Mother. It was only after this outpouring of most filial devotion that he would consent to leave. The two pious old souls of Monteel recalled the two aged Saints of Hebron, Zaehary and Elizabeth, of whom St. Luke says: "They were just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame." How beautiful is the house of a Christian family, the mother at the hearth with her children, the father, cheerful after his work, spending the evening hours in company with his household; prayer in common with the domestics; retiring in good time; rising early; and, in this pure atmosphere, the children, vigorous in mind and body, forming around their parents a radiant crown! Thus says the Holy Scripture: "On the Mountain of Lebanon, young and robust branches encircle the stately cedars." "The house of him who loves and fears the Lord shall be blessed. Round about him his sons shall encircle, as a beautiful plantation of young and vigorous olives. His daughters, adorned with virtue, will be the beauty of a sanctuary, or as a garden of roses in Jericho." Monteel, with its venerable parents, surrounded by their nine children—four sons and five daughters—realized these pure and pleasing images designed by God Himself, and formed one of those Christian homes, whence go forth the honour, life and strength of France, and which are now, alas! so rare. For if each age of the world presents a special evil of its own, the absence

of a Christian home is one of the greatest evils of our time. Pascal has justly said: "Many of the misfortunes in this world come from this, that people do not know what home means."

The patriarchal hearth of Montcel was a sanctuary worthy to receive, and suitable to preserve and develop heavenly gifts. It was for the vocation of Virginia, who still bore in her heart the purpose of consecrating herself to Jesus Christ in the religious life, what the warm pure air of the conservatory is for a rare and precious plant. This attraction, as we have seen, dated from her First Communion. The God of the Eucharist had revealed to her the secrets of His love, and she had understood. This vocation, the fruit of grace, the consequence and reward of her purity, and of her tender love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, seemed to form an integral part of her soul. But when, where, in what place, in what congregation would it be possible to follow this attraction? Of this she was yet ignorant. To secure this favour and obtain this knowledge, which would bestow on her soul the complete liberty of the children of God, she crucified her innocent flesh, she fasted, watched, slept on the hard floor, and used the discipline on her delicate body. She went to Valfleury, accompanied by her faithful friend, Miss Baley, where she made a retreat, under the direction of the Lazarist Fathers, to know the Will of God. Her days were passed chiefly in the little church, before the Tabernacle, near to the Heart of Jesus. She remained there so long that one day a good nun smilingly asked her if she would bring her a pillow for the night. In her room, instead of reposing, she continued her pen-

ances and prayers. From her cell, which was near, her friend often heard the blows of the discipline. Having returned to Montcel, Miss Baley hastened to entreat M. and Madame Tezenas to allow Virginia to enter the religious life. "She would never be allowed to perform, in the convent, the penances she now imposes upon herself", said Miss Baley; "there she would have superiors who would moderate her zeal and ardour." Some days afterwards, Virginia made known to her family her aims and pious desires. Too Christian to dispute with the Lord a treasure which was most dear to them, her virtuous parents contented themselves with asking a delay before making the sacrifice so painful to their feelings. This same year, she was sponsor for one of her nieces, a daughter of her sister, Adele, that beloved sister who so zealously emulated her virtues. Whilst returning from the church, the godmother said to Virginia: "We have contracted grave responsibilities toward this child." She understood, and practised, to the fullest extent, these Christian obligations. She was a guardian angel to her newly-baptized niece. Her watchfulness, her care, her tenderness constantly surrounded and accompanied the child until her last sigh. Some months before her death, which happened early, her godchild said to her: "If you die before I do, you will always protect me, you will never let me be lost?" "Be tranquil", responded her godmother, with a smile, full of confidence, "God is very good; He will take you to Himself rather than allow such a misfortune to befall you."

Meanwhile Virginia languished in the world, though edifying her friends more and more by her exemplary

life. Conversing one day with her eldest brother, who knew the object of all her desires, she communicated to him the idea which she had formed of becoming a Religious Hospitaliere at Mont Brison. "Come with me", said her brother; "business requires my presence in that city for a few days; you can spend the time there in the house of the Ladies of Charity, to ascertain whether God has called you to live among them." This proposition made Virginia happy, and, with the consent of her parents, she went to visit these good Religious, who received her with much joy, as they knew the reputation of the Tezenas family, and had prayed ardently to Heaven to send them a subject such as Virginia. But God had other views for her. While she was with the Hospitalieres, her soul was a continual prey to sadness, a state which was not usual with her. She seemed to hear above all a voice which said to her: "It is not here that I wish thee to be." She returned home without hesitation, where her brother found her, after concluding the business which had brought him to Mont Brison. Virginia sought her confessor, Father Piron, and gave him an account of the trial which she had made. "I am convinced", said the good Pastor, "that you are not called to that kind of life; God has other designs upon you." The Holy Ghost inspired him to advise his penitent to become a Daughter of St. Joseph, in the holy Community of Mi-Careme, which, among other works, had the important charge of educating children. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Mi-Careme excelled in the infinitely precious science of instilling in the hearts of their young pupils the love of God, the esteem of good, and the fear of evil, but they

were not so well versed in secular knowledge. It was to raise them to a degree of culture and education more in accordance with the exigencies of the time that the Abbé Piron had conceived the idea of directing Mlle. Tezenas to their Community. No one appeared to him more suitable than she to accomplish this mission, without danger to her habitual modesty, simplicity and fervour, virtues which formed the distinctive characteristics and the principal glory of the first generations of the Institute of St. Joseph.

When the Curé of St. Etienne imparted this inspiration to his young penitent, she answered: "I cannot deceive you, I have never thought of becoming a Religious at Mi-Careme. My wish is to enter the cloister, because, in leaving the world, I wish to sever all relations with it, and to bid it a complete and eternal farewell." "I know your sentiments", replied Father Piron, "but in proposing to you this Community I believe I am favouring your desires, considering that my plans are to obtain the enclosure of these Sisters." Then he spoke so favourably of the Religious of St. Joseph, and of the good that their teaching was doing in St. Etienne, that Virginia hesitated no longer, and begged Father Piron to obtain her parents' consent. Here, however, he found great difficulty. From the moment the proposition was known, they worked on all sides to weaken the determination of the young girl, and turn her from her purpose. "You will suffer", they said, "in a Society, the members of which do not possess education equal to that of persons of quality. It is suitable for the common people." To these human and worldly considerations, Virginia responded cheer-

fully: "What matters that? Shall I not find in this a resemblance to our Divine Lord, Who chose His Apostles from among simple men; and do we not owe the poor education and Christian civilization?" By these replies the young girl confounded her opponents, and without doubt raised herself in their esteem. "Seneca, an eloquent and wealthy philosopher, educated an emperor", it has been said, "but St. Peter, without wealth or letters, was the educator of a new human race." The pupil of Seneca was Nero; the pupil of Peter was the elite of the world, and bore the beautiful name of Christian.

Calm and tranquil, awaiting the moment fixed by Providence, Virginia ceased not to pray, and to have recourse, above all, to the Blessed Virgin, devotion to whom, after that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was the life of her soul. At last came the hour so long desired. In 1821 a great mission was given in the City of St. Etienne, by the celebrated Carthusian Missionaries, Fathers Moiland, Dufetre and Baricond. The first died Archbishop of Toulouse, the second Bishop of Nevers. Virginia followed the exercises of the mission with great fervour and assiduity. She consulted Father Dufetre regarding her vocation. He encouraged her strongly to persevere, and with the aid of Father Piron, finally obtained her parents' consent. Happy to be able to follow the attractions of grace, the pious young girl hastened to put her affairs in order, and to complete her trousseau. These preparations were accomplished with a joy very pleasing to our Lord. Seeing the gaiety of Virginia, the care she took of herself, and the air of festivity which she gave to her attire, her friends

believed that they had worked a change in her sentiments. Virginia, they said, had renounced the convent. She would not dress so gaily if she persevered in wishing to become a Religious. The sweet and ingenuous child rejoiced in secret at the delusion of the world, because it contributed to veil from the eyes of her fond parents the sight of the painful sacrifice which was fast approaching. On All Souls' Day it was accomplished in a manner prompt and generous.

The Sisters of St. Joseph, having no chaplain, went to Mass in the parish church. They were seen every morning passing silently, with lowered veils, from Mi-Careme Street to the church. On All Souls' Day, Virginia, who knew the custom of the Sisters, joined them. "I am going to Mass", she said to her mother, "I need to pray for all my deceased relatives." After placing a tender kiss upon the foreheads of her father and mother, she went to the church with the Sisters. There she offered to God the sacrifice of all that she held most dear in this world, and coming out from Mass she followed the good Sisters to their convent. Entering, she approached Mother St. Paul, with whom she had had several conversations: "My Mother", she said to her, joyously, "I am all yours; I will not return to my family." It was Ruth saying to Naomi: "Be not against me, to desire that I should leave thee and depart, for whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go, and where thou shalt dwell I will dwell; Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." (Ruth 1, 16.) On that day was witnessed at Mi-Careme something of the joy of Citeaux, which burst forth into canticles of thanksgiving when Divine Providence sent to them

St. Bernard. The example of the young girl, like that of the great Bernard, attracted to the monastery recruits as numerous as they were saintly. "Let us hasten in the odour of her perfumes", said many of those who loved her, and a crowd of maidens followed, to consecrate themselves to the King of Kings, singing songs of joy and gladness.

## CHAPTER VI

### HER PROGRESS IN VIRTUE

IF JOY was great among the Religious of St. Joseph, it was not so in the bosom of the Tezenas family. Thus, when a saint returns to God, there is joy in Heaven and sorrow upon earth. At dinner-time the family waited for Virginia in vain. Seeing that she did not return they were in doubt, and sending to Mi-Careme, they soon learned the truth. The young novice wished to spare her well-beloved parents the pain of a sad farewell; nevertheless, when they saw the separation consummated, they were inconsolable. M. Tezenas, above all, felt so keenly the loss of her who was the solace of his old age, that for some time he had not strength to go to the Convent. While they wept at home, the young postulant said in her heart, as St. Bernard had said in his: "If you begin, begin well." And again: "In becoming a Religious, I wish to be generous and refuse nothing to grace." She threw herself into the work with ardour, fully persuaded that it would be vain for anyone to hope to be a perfect Religious if they neglected to be a perfect postulant. It was not that she did extraordinary things. She was actuated by this principle, so important to the spiritual life, that perfection consists, not in doing great things, but in doing those which obedience commands, though they be but trifles. Her favourite maxim was to perform ordinary actions extraordinarily well. "The smaller

our actions, the nobler should be our intentions", said M. de Rance. "Do a little, but do it well", says St. Francis de Sales. The Religious of Mi-Careme could not sufficiently admire the ease and joyous eagerness with which their new companion fulfilled all the duties of the novitiate. She had none of the stiffness or harshness of those devotees who imagine that they cannot be pious without being sour, and who thus render piety forbidding. "Good humour, still good humour, always good humour", said a teacher of the spiritual life. "God loves the cheerful heart", says St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians. This was the real character of Virginia. Prepossessing, amiable towards all, her devotion was so pleasing that one could not see her without esteeming her, loving her, and feeling drawn towards her. Attentive to the smallest details, she was exact in rising in the morning, in reading, in the refectory, and being the first at all exercises. She joyfully employed herself in sweeping the rooms, the stairs, dusting the floors, washing the dishes, carrying coal and wood to the different apartments, making the fires and sifting the ashes. She did not wish to yield to anyone what she called her rights as novice. She had, on the other hand, a tendency to perform the works of others, and nothing was more common than to see her take part, when she could, in some lowly undertaking. The Superior could rely upon her when she desired anything well done, and to her she had recourse when the task was painful or repugnant. On these occasions the fervent postulant had not even the appearance of making a sacrifice. Although accustomed to comfort and consideration in her father's house, her humility would not tolerate

the least mark of distinction. The first time she came into the refectory, the Superior had prepared a porringer and a plate somewhat better than those which the other Sisters used; they had also given her a glass instead of the small bowl then used. At a glance Virginia saw it all, and turning to the one who served, said: "No distinction, my good Sister, I must have the same as the others. I would like to have my numbered porringer, also my cup and saucer of earthenware." At the first sound of the morning bell, everyone rose from bed, and some minutes after assembled in the chapel. Virginia was there the first. The Sisters asked her one day, at recreation, how she dressed so quickly. "I do not know", she said, "but I dress as quickly as I can, that I may be soon near my Jesus, to thank Him for watching over me during the night, and to receive the blessing of my Guardian Angel."

When Virginia had been two months and a half in the novitiate, Mother St. Paul asked her, during recreation, what name she wished to have. She replied: "Your will is mine, but if the choice is left to me, I will take that of Sister of the Sacred Heart of Jesus." "I would never have thought of this name", said the Superior. "Mother, permit me to write three names, one of them shall be that of the Sacred Heart; I will place them upon your table and draw. The Mother, smiling at the simplicity of the child, complied, and three times, successively, she drew the name of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. "To the faithful and generous soul I will give my name anew", said our Lord, in the Apocalypse. This loving Divine promise seemed to be literally fulfilled in the fervent novice of St. Joseph. So the

Superior said: "I cannot refuse you this name since God has given it to you." This circumstance overwhelmed Virginia with joy, for she saw the end of her probation was near.

The Reception of the Habit took place on the 29th of January, 1822, the feast of St. Francis de Sales. This amiable Saint was the ornament and glory of the Institute which realized his favourite idea. His feast was a great one for the whole Community, and Father Piron, wishing that the ceremony should be conducted with pomp, invited a large number of clergy. The Tezenas family, and many of their friends and acquaintances, were present. Two young nieces of Virginia, dressed in white, carried the basket in which the religious habit was placed, to be blessed, before it clothed the new Spouse of Jesus. In the midst of the Sisters' choir they saw, in elegant attire, prostrate before the altar, the victim about to make the offering of herself to God. The reception began by the singing of the *Veni Creator*, and was followed by an eloquent and touching discourse, which drew abundant tears from all eyes. She who was the cause of those tears was the only one who did not weep. The sermon being finished, Virginia answered with firmness the questions usual on such occasions. While they were singing the Hymn of the Virgins, she went to take off the worldly dress, and robe herself in the livery of the Spouse of Jesus Christ. When she re-entered the sanctuary an incident, as unexpected as it was affecting, interrupted the ceremony for a moment. Her little niece, Fanny Tezenas, aged three years, seeing her aunt return garbed in the poor habit of a nun, began to cry aloud: "Give me back my

Auntie; I do not want my Auntie like that." This loving child became an admirable Christian woman, worthy of the holy Religious, who continues to shed so much lustre upon her family. Virginia prostrated herself again at the foot of the altar, and blessed her Saviour, who had deigned to receive her among the Daughters of St. Joseph. On leaving the chapel, some of her friends asked her what were her feelings during so touching a ceremony. She answered: "An impression of strength, which raised me above myself." From this holy and solemn moment, Sister Sacred Heart redoubled her zeal in the practice of the virtues and perfection which the name and vocation of the Sisters of St. Joseph imply. This vocation makes them in a special manner the Sisters of Jesus and Children of Mary. Happy those souls who, like Jesus and Mary, form part of the Holy Family, and dwell in the blessed home of St. Joseph. The Son of God and the Queen of Heaven and Earth preferred it to all other houses.

Full of holy joy in her beautiful vocation, Sister Sacred Heart was soon after employed as Mistress of Boarders in the house of Mi-Careme. To the duties of this office she consecrated herself with a devotion whole and entire. One would have said she belonged no longer to herself. The closing of class did not separate her from her pupils; she was always with them during study, at table, at recreation, and even when they slept. The indefatigable Mistress united the work of teaching to the anxieties of watching over them. As a teacher she imparted knowledge in a clear, earnest and attractive manner, which carried

light and knowledge to the minds of her pupils, without fatiguing or wearying them. She had the rare gift of stimulating her pupils and of advancing them in piety. Faith, and the love of God, and gave life and animation to her instructions. Everything served, through her zealous efforts, as a means to good. A festival was a subject for a composition, an accident of little significance, a sickness, a misfortune, a fault even, became the occasion of the most useful and salutary lessons. She had a way of saying things which elevated the most ordinary and enlivened the less interesting subjects. Her words, her smiles, her silence inspired and breathed piety. "There is a silence which speaks", says the author of *The Imitation*.—"A silence which works" (*silentium negotiosum*), as St. Augustine expresses it. In a word, everything in her instructed and edified her pupils, who were full of respect for her virtue. A simple wish expressed by their Mistress was to them a command. They were happy when they could procure her a gratification or a pleasure. The fear of displeasing her was a most powerful check to disorder. Another Mistress surprising a child one day in a fault, the little culprit said: "Dear Sister, punish me as you will, but do not tell Sister Sacred Heart; that would give her pain." In the event of any infringement of rule, the entire class upheld the authority of the Mistress. Sister Sacred Heart related that on one occasion, a child having formally resisted her, she had no need of punishing her, for her little companions left her no time to be indignant. "What?" they cried together, "Is this the way you answer our beloved Mistress, who is so good to us? Obey at once,

and do not oblige us to tell you twice." Before these injunctions, the little recalcitrant was obliged to capitulate. "When I have a class", said the wise Mistress, later, "I have always one pupil who is my cross. If the cross were not there one would have reason to complain. The author of *The Imitation* says: "In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is strength of soul, joy of spirit, the consummation of virtue, and perfection of holiness." This sublime doctrine of *The Imitation* the new Religious was capable of understanding. Besides her piety, those virtues which so strongly attached the hearts of the young pupils to that of their Mistress were her goodness, her charity, and, above all, her compassion and sympathy with them in their little troubles and sufferings. On such occasions the good Sister redoubled her kindness and care. Like a mother, she made the sufferings of her pupils her own. "Sorrow, shared, unites hearts more closely than joy." In moments of bitterness and irritation, she welcomed all; she listened with patience to their complaints, discontent, and reproaches, and, without being influenced, awaited the proper moment to reprimand and correct them. She could, with marvellous delicacy, penetrate the depths of their souls, and discover the source of their tears. Then, with sweet affection and affability, she inspired confidence, which came as a ray from the sun, dissipating the last clouds, and insuring the serenity of both hearts and countenances.

It was especially when preparing them for First Communion that the holy and clever teacher exercised her zeal. Several months in advance, she took the

children individually, gave them little instructions, and indicated to them some practices proportioned to the needs and character of each. As the great day approached, her pious care was redoubled. During the retreat, which preceded the First Communion, she more than surpassed herself. In preparing them for confession and absolution, she referred chiefly to the love of Jesus for us, and the horror we should have of sin, which saddens and offends Him. Her words were so persuasive and so touching that her pupils often left her presence bathed in tears. After the grace of their First Communion, she did not lose sight of them. Their faithful teacher neglected nothing which could confirm them in their good resolutions as she knew what value perseverance adds to love, which accepts nothing limited by time. She repeated, without ceasing, that Jesus loved us to the end, and He would crown only those who persevere to the end.

The activity of her life did not lessen the visible calm and profound reflection which were evident in her soul. However occupied and apparently distracted by her many duties, her day was one of constant prayer. In her the life of Martha was admirably united to that of Mary. To speak of God was her pleasure and constant practice. Thus, her presence at recreation marked it with a spiritual stamp, and insured innocent and amiable joyousness. Her playful character led her willingly to enjoy the witticisms of others with a good hearty laugh. We do not fear to repeat, with a pious and grave author, that it is a principle of the religious life that a joyous disposition is one that will make rapid progress in perfection,

because the sad—I do not say the serious—are sad wrestlers. "A saint who is sad makes, often, a sad saint", said St. Francis de Sales, with his characteristic wit. "Happy", says the Holy Spirit, "are the people who know how to be joyful."

Virginia was now called to make her religious profession. The better to prepare her for it, Mother St. Paul sent her to Lyons, where she could pass some time in reflection, according to the custom of the time, before her final consecration. Divine Providence used this means to show to the Superiors of the Congregation of St. Joseph one who would be to them a powerful aid, one who was destined to shine on the hill of St. Bruno as a burning light, to illumine all about her. The venerable Mother St. John received Sister Sacred Heart with great kindness, but without suspecting that she held in her arms the one who, like Eliseus, would receive her mantle, inherit her spirit, continue and perfect her work. Some days after she presented the new-comer to Father Bochard, Vicar-General and Superior-General of the Congregation of St. Joseph. Conformably to the severe spirit of discipline, he made use of every circumstance to test the subjects, in order to assure himself that they knew how to practise true virtue, of which humility is the root and foundation. Sister Sacred Heart knelt to receive his blessing, but inadvertently leaned on a chair when rising. Father Bochard harshly reprov'd this indulgence, and treated it as an act of immortification. Immediately the humble Sister threw herself upon her knees, and asked for a penance. Without allowing the feeling of edification he experienced to appear, he told the Superior, when

alone, to "try this Sister severely". And Sister Sacred Heart was indeed well tried, and given the lowest employments in the house during her month's stay at Lyons. You might see her now at cooking, then washing the kitchen utensils, peeling potatoes and vegetables, afterwards sweeping the rooms and halls. The care of the shoes and lamps was confided to her. She was spared none of the practices of humility and mortification then in use in the Community, whether in the refectory of the novitiate, or at recreations. She was also called to help in the pharmacy and infirmary. The humble Religious performed perfectly these different works, and was the more delighted the more painful and repugnant they were. When leaving, Mother St. John, embracing her tenderly, said: "Tell Mother St. Paul she may admit you to profession; be always a faithful Spouse of Jesus, and a humble Daughter of St. Joseph." Sending her back to the Community of Mi-Careme, Mother St. John inwardly congratulated them on possessing so precious a treasure. On her side, the young Religious of Mi-Careme bore away in her heart the most filial veneration for her who was the Foundress and Mother of the well-beloved Institute to which she was about to give herself without reserve, and forever.

Happy in the prospect of soon pronouncing her vows, and of consecrating herself wholly and irrevocably to our Lord Jesus Christ, Sister Sacred Heart hastened to return to St. Etienne and rejoin her pious companions. But the devil wished to trouble her holy joy. She, who was so good, so attentive, so charitable towards each Sister, experienced all at once a violent

antipathy towards one of them. It was evidently the work of the enemy, "who", says the Evangelist, "tried to sow tares in the field of the husbandman". This trial was later on related by Sister Sacred Heart herself, to one of her neices, a Sister of St. Joseph, who consulted her about a similar temptation. "I know from experience", she said to her, "what it is. Use the remedies I employed; I found them most salutary. The temptation could not have been stronger; everything displeased me in that person, her manner seemed to me mean and ridiculous. To conquer myself, I began to pray for her. I could never make you understand how much it cost me, but I was resolved to do everything to gain the victory over myself and the demon. Seeing that the temptation pursued me everywhere, even to Holy Communion, where I experienced those feelings of repulsion kneeling beside her, I became disgusted with myself. I showered kindness upon kindness on her, and selected her for a companion, to such an extent that my Superior believed that I had a particular friendship for that Sister. Poor Mother! she knew not, until later, the struggle I had to free myself from this aversion." Thanks to God, the temptation yielded to Sister Sacred Heart's generous efforts. But, as the author of *The Imitation* says: "One temptation follows another, and we shall always have something to suffer, because we have lost the advantage of our primitive happiness." This is what happened to Sister Sacred Heart. The first temptation was succeeded by another, still more painful, that of discouragement. The thought of the obligations she was about to contract inspired her with great dread. She considered herself as useless

in the Congregation of St. Joseph, composed of souls so generous and so advanced in perfection. To become the Spouse of Jesus Christ seemed to her an honour of which she found herself unworthy. The perpetual Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, which she was about to pronounce, appeared to impose on her duties above her strength. She then consulted her director, Father Piron. "I dare not advance", she said to him, in an excess of fear; "no, Father, I will not make my Vows. Better never to enter the convent than to be a bad Religious!" Father Piron, knowing her virtue, commanded her to proceed.

It was on the 2nd of December, 1823, that Sister Sacred Heart made her profession. Father Piron, who knew the strength of the trial she was undergoing, concealed himself behind the altar, fearing that she would fall at the last moment. But hardly had the fervent Novice pronounced these words: "I make my Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience; I promise, according to the Rules of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, to practise, with the grace of God, the most profound humility in all things, and the most cordial charity towards my neighbour", when the temptation ceased. Calm succeeded the storm, a sweet peace took possession of her soul, and she gave herself without reserve to her Well-Beloved, accepting all the crosses He would be pleased to send her, asking, like the angelic doctor, St. Thomas, nothing but His love. She regarded the day of her profession as the happiest and most beautiful day of her life.

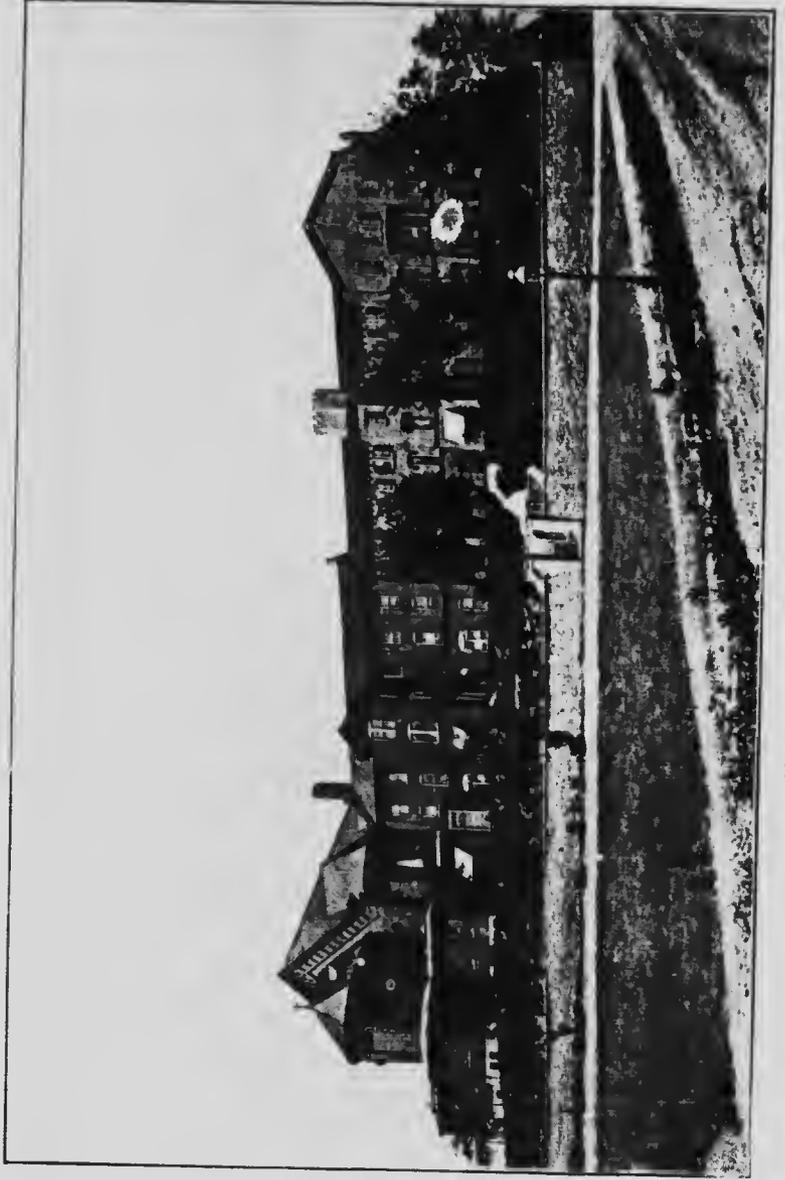
Her happiness was complete when her sister, Victorine, came to share this life with her. Since the

entrance of her dear Virginia into religion, Victorine Tezenas had not ceased to sigh for the moment when she, too, could embrace the religious state. She felt an inward call to a more perfect life, to a life hidden in Jesus Christ, according to the expression of the Apostle St. Paul. The profession of her sister tended to increase her thirst for a life of abnegation, but she had to wait some time, to take care of her aged parents, who still suffered from the loss of their dear Virginia. At last she broke the sweet ties of home, and came to augment the number of the good Sisters of the Community of St. Joseph, which, since the example and vocation of her sister, had been increased by recruits from the most distinguished families of St. Etienne. Victorine took the name of Sister St. Francis.

Entering the same Institute, with talents and qualifications very dissimilar, the two sisters emulated each other in fidelity and virtue, and had the same Spirit of God, for, says the Apostle St. Paul, "there is indeed a diversity of graces and of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Spirit Who communicates them; there is diversity of ministries, but it is the same Lord Who sends them; there is diversity in supernatural gifts, but it is the same God Who acts through all. One receives from the Holy Spirit the gift of speaking with wisdom, another receives from the same Spirit the gift of faith. It is one and the same Spirit Who operates in all these works, giving to each one His gifts, according as it pleases Him. As our body, though but one, is composed of several members, so it is with the mystical body of Jesus Christ. The eye cannot say to the hand 'I need you not', nor the head to the feet 'I have no need

of your help'; often the members which seem the weakest are the most necessary." Thus, with their different talents and services, the two sisters shared the same spirit of faith in the Congregation of St. Joseph. They were two beautiful flowers of exquisite perfume, as different as the rose and the violet. "The sun has its light", says the Apostle, "the moon and the stars have theirs, and this variety makes the grandeur and beauty of the firmament. One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars, for star differeth from star in glory." It is the same in the religious life as in the heavens.





MOTHER HOUSE. ST. LOUIS, MO.

## CHAPTER VII

### APPOINTED SUPERIOR

A FEW months after Sister Sacred Heart made her profession, she was placed at the head of the Novitiate of St. Etienne, which had been maintained to assist that of Lyons. Her humility was startled at a task so delicate and so important, and it needed the formal expression of the Will of God, by her Superiors, to make her accept it. This choice was dictated by wisdom, and justified by the admirable zeal and rare aptitude which the new Mistress of Novices had employed in the boarding-school, to inspire the young girls with a taste for virtue, to give them solid instruction in religion, and direct their advancement in the way of love. In the Novitiate, Sister Sacred Heart was in her element.

The Novitiate is the source whence flows the perfection and spiritual beauty of the whole Institute. It is the nursery where the plants and flowers are prepared, which are to ornament the garden of the Divine Spouse. The form which they take, and the colours they receive, ordinarily continue and last to the end. The Holy Spirit says: "The young man, when he is old, will not depart from the ways of his youth." Sister Sacred Heart, realizing this, feared her responsibility. "We can only give that which we have", she said; "it is necessary to be holy to sanctify others."

"The measure of your success", wrote a holy prelate

to his priests, "will be that of your own sanctification. You will inspire and produce virtues in others in proportion as you labour to increase them in yourselves. If your zeal is not lighted from the interior fire of a sincere and lively piety, it will be without effect. 'Physician, cure thyself, if thou wouldst cure others', says the Divine Master."

Deeply penetrated by these truths, Sister Sacred Heart prepared herself for her new office by redoubling her efforts to advance in perfection. This meant for her a sort of interior revolution, a long step forward on the way of religious perfection. A celestial light caused her to see clearly that she belonged no longer to herself, that she must now be, more than ever, all things to God and to souls. After her love for God, her great desire was, indeed, love for souls. She had, without doubt, been a fervent Religious, but now she understood and felt strongly that henceforth she should be in the hands of God as an instrument, submissive, docile, and without human respect. The thought of her nothingness overwhelmed her, and the Holy Ghost appeared to her, in a more sensible manner, as the great and only Sanctifier of souls, Whom she should attract, by prayer, into the hearts of those confided to her, assisting His powerful grace by imitating his patience and sweetness.

It is thus the Saints have acted; following the example of Him Who, alone being great, came on earth only to show benignity and love. "The Saints" said the biographer of a worthy contemporary of Sister Sacred Heart, "ignored violence, contentions and noise. Their voices were not heard in public places; they did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the

smoking flax. Possessing their souls in patience, they reigned by influence rather than by authority, their actions and words were efficacious, because they were calm, humble and meek." Such was the character of the government of Sister Sacred Heart in the Novitiate of St. Etienne. She realized that she must first gain their love and confidence, and this she had very little trouble in accomplishing. Hardly were the newcomers installed in the house when their good Mistress was before them, leading them on by a thousand delicate attentions, sweetly initiating them in the Rule, and habituating them, little by little, to the austerities of religious life. She knew, by her own experience, how poignant are the griefs caused by separation from one's family. Her heart possessed the secret of soothing these pains with such care that the young novice was soon consoled, finding in her a motherly tenderness which she had never suspected. This mother watched night and day over the health of her children; their clothing, their food, their beds were the objects of her solicitude. She seemed to divine their wants, and was most ingenious in finding means of contributing to their happiness.

Full of cheerfulness, as we have seen, and an enemy to sadness and fretfulness, she sought to make the yoke of the Rule light and sweet, telling them frankly that she did not like stiff, morose, or moody novices. It seemed to her, as to St. Francis de Sales, that a happy joyousness should be the inheritance of innocent souls. "You would not do anything in the world to offend God", writes this Saint to St. Chantal; "this is enough to make your life full of joy." Sister Sacred Heart

knew well that the greatest and holiest souls have need of relaxation. A hunter expressed his astonishment at the Apostle St. Paul caressing a partridge. "What do you hold in your hand"? said the Apostle. "A bow", replied the hunter. "Why is it not always bent?" "Because it would lose its strength." "Well", replied the Apostle, "it is for the same reason that I give some relaxation to my mind."

Consequently the wise Mistress attached great importance to recreation. "Watch over the prayers and recreations", said Pere Crozet to the venerable Mother Calixte, at the end of a conference they had regarding the manner of directing the establishment of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Corsica, of which they had charge. To enliven and sanctify the recreations of the novices, Sister Sacred Heart took an interest in them, joining in their conversations, and taking an active part in their holidays and feasts. She possessed, in a rare degree, the talent of putting everyone in good spirits, and she excelled in organizing religious games, both instructive and amusing, which caused them to forget the trials of the Novitiate.

A great pleasure for the postulants and novices was to group themselves around their dear Mistress, in the summer house, or under the shade of the hedge. Sometimes they seated themselves on the lawn, and, forming a circle about her, were entertained by her words of wisdom and pious stories. "Man lives not by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God", says the holy Gospel. With what delight they listened, wishing never to leave her! The hours were too short. Her conversations were spiritual,

full of prudence, delicacy, grace, refinement and animation. Her manner, her sweetness, her words elevated and expanded all hearts. Weariness vanished, courage was renewed, and each returned after recreation, with new ardour, to the serious duties of the Novitiate. Their spiritual training made itself apparent by their happy dispositions, and strengthened their fervour. The inspirations, and, sometimes, astonishing lights, which illuminate souls, opened to them new horizons, communicating to them, at the same time, the courage to advance in perfection, regardless of the sacrifices to which nature would be obliged to submit.

Renouncement is the first law of the religious life, and Sister Sacred Heart, who knew well how to practise it herself, spared nothing to make her novices familiar with it. She wished them to be perfect. The simple word "virtue" means strength, courage and generosity, in imitation of our Divine Model upon the Cross. According to this doctrine, each humiliation, each sorrow is a loving kiss of the cross. Our life work is to mortify by the spirit the works of the flesh, to afflict it, to subdue it, to destroy it. As a small leak is sufficient to cause the loss of a boat, as a half-extinguished coal is sufficient to set fire to a house and consume it, so the practice of mortification neglected, even for a short time, places us in imminent danger of losing that degree of virtue which has been so painfully acquired. This work of mortification must endure to the end of life, for the old man never dies within us. "Self-love does not die within us until a quarter of an hour after death", says St. Francis de Sales, speaking from his clear and profound knowledge of the human heart.

Directed thus, according to the Spirit of God, the religious novitiate is, indeed, a harsh trial to nature. But Sister Sacred Heart served as a model to the novices, always performing the penances she imposed upon others, loving to take upon herself whatever was most difficult without losing that dignity befitting her position. One of her good Daughters, capable of appreciating her, said: "There was in her a mingling of simplicity and true distinction of manner, which rendered this possible. Moreover, she knew how to apply wisely that general law of mortification and annihilation, according to the character, temperament, and needs of each subject. . . . the supernatural operation, as in the natural, each creature increases and fructifies according to its nature and its species. Water, the principle of life, transforms itself into sap, becomes white in the lily, red in the rose, and purple in the violet, although these three flowers grow in the same soil, blossom under the same sun, and inhale the same air. Thus grace acts in the soul," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem. "Under the inspirations of that grace, please the words of the prudent Mistress of the Novitiate, who, like the plants preserved in her dear plants, each in its own manner of growing, blossoming and fructifying, under the rays of the same Son of Justice, and the dew of the same divine grace. Nothing was forced and her Novitiate, to use the comparison of St. Jerome, represented a smiling garden, where each flower had its own perfume, and reflected brightly its own natural color.

At each feast or mystery of our holy religion, Sister Sacred Heart thoughtfully gathered the divine lessons

which flowed from it, and encouraged her novices to renew together their good resolutions. "Providence", says a pious Prelate, "has placed islands in the midst of oceans, so that navigators may go ashore to rest and obtain provisions, before re-embarking upon their perilous voyage. In like manner God and His Church have appointed festivals along life's way, the ocean so fertile in wrecks, that we may refresh and enjoy ourselves. O Lord, repair our fragile vessels, strengthen our souls, and prepare for our storms. "It is thus", says *The Imitation*, "that recurring feasts, well sanctified, become for us an eternal feast in Heaven." "Our mysteries", says Madame Berulle, "are living sources of grace." "If Christians", adds Bossuet, "were well imbued with this spirit they would not be ignorant of anything which would lead them to perfection." We see how conducive to sanctity was the method followed by Sister Sacred Heart. Not only the beautiful feasts and holy mysteries of the Church, but even the smallest creature, may see the soul towards God. For St. Francis of Assisi, a stream, a flower, a bird recalled them lovingly to their Creator, the immense and luminous world. "Do the flowers, the heads, sing but of His glory? The insect lost in the grass, the hidden dew, speak eloquently of God to the pure of heart." "For your instruction, you wish for miracles", says St. Augustine "but you do not need them, you have them in your eyes, but you see them not." The rain, shed by the clouds, upon your hillsides, is every year changed in wine, as at Cana of Galilee. All creation reveals God,

His goodness, His power, His love, and every creature can be made to serve as a ladder to reach Him.

This broad and forcible manner of instructing by faith and reason, of raising the soul towards God, by motives both natural and supernatural, appealed to the mind of Sister Sacred Heart, who wished, above all things, to cultivate solid virtue, capable of resisting temptation. Thus flourished the Novitiate of St. Etienne, under her watchful eyes and shining example. A sweet peace, perfect order, a perfume of piety, a celestial serenity captivated the hearts of those who penetrated this enaale. One felt there a breath of gladness, mingled with the spirit of sacrifice, and the love of self-denial. This was the love that bore all without pain, and made everything easy. "A proof that we love is that we wish to suffer for the one beloved", says St. Francis de Sales; "it is this charity which makes our sojourn here a heavenly delight, rendering us insensible to pain or sorrow."

The tender solicitude and superior intelligence which Sister Sacred Heart manifested in the Novitiate seemed a presage of the future Mother-General. The venerable Foundress and Superior of the Sacred Heart, Madame Barat, possessed the same talents. Her novices, whom she called her dear white flock, on account of the colour of their veils, and whom she regarded as the hope and future of the Congregation, were the favourite objects of her care. These two great souls manifested the same love and tenderness towards the young Religious, so precious in their respective Institutes. Whilst Sister Sacred Heart occupied herself zealously in the Novitiate of St. Etienne, the Commu-

ity of Mi-Careme suffered a grave trial, the consequences of which modified the position of the Mistress of Novices and better prepared her to fulfil the functions for which God destined her. The Abbé Fournion, a Missionary from the Diocese of Lyons, had recently founded on the Hill of the Chartreuse a new cloistered Community, under the protection, and bearing the beautiful name of the Sacred Heart. Looking for means to carry on his work, the zealous Missionary came to St. Etienne, and held a long consultation with the Sisters of St. Joseph, upon his recent foundation, and all the good it was to accomplish.

Among the Religious of Mi-Careme, several had not renounced the cloister, which at first they had hoped to enjoy. Thinking to find in the house of Abbé Fournion that which they so much desired, two of the Sisters left, without giving the matter serious reflection. But Father Recorbet, then Vicar-General, informed of this irregularity, sent them back to their Community, so that they would be according to rule. They obeyed promptly, but neglected nothing that would hasten their admission to the Sacred Heart Convent.

During this interval a division existed at Mi-Careme. Mother St. Paul herself was inclined towards the cloister, of which Father Piron had spoken at the beginning. She had also desired, with the cloister, perpetual adoration, and for this had purchased a large enclosure, near Montant, with the intention of building there. The expense of furnishing had already been made. Unfortunately, these works, perhaps a little inconsiderate, had been the means of placing the Community under great indebtedness. Reverend Mother

St. John, being informed of these proceedings, came to Mi-Careme, and, after examining affairs, thought it her duty to take Mother St. Paul and a young Novice with her to Lyons. Some days after, other Religious were called to Lyons, and placed, as Mother St. Paul and her Novice had been, in different houses of the Congregation.

Sister Sacred Heart was named Superior of St. Etienne, which position, under such trying and delicate circumstances, demanded an administration both wise and prudent. This nomination was like a thunderbolt to her. The pain which she experienced was so intense that her hair became white in one night. "Our Mother" said a venerable Religious, "was as white in a few hours as one would be at seventy yeras, and she was not yet thirty."

She met with financial embarrassments. The house was overwhelmed with debt, and entirely without resources, because the Religious who had gone away had taken not only their trousseaux, but their dowries also. The result of these sufferings, as of all others that Mother Sacred Heart was called upon to endure, was perfect resignation to the Will of God. Feeling in herself the impossibility of drawing the house out of the abyss into which it was plunged, she deposited the keys at the feet of the statue of St. Joseph, saying: "I place all in your hands. I regard myself only as an instrument ready to serve you. To you I give the temporal charge of this house; and to Thee, sweet Heart of Jesus, I confide my Sisters; Thou wilt conduct them to perfection, and make them according to Thine own Heart. Thou knowest with what pain I have

accepted the burden which has been imposed upon me. A victim was necessary to fill the vacancy which was made by Mother St. Paul's departure, and I am this victim. O, my God, why hast Thou not removed far from me this bitter chalice? This sacrifice is above my courage! Is it in expiation of my sins, in punishment for my infidelities, that Thou imposest it upon me? It is not my ignorance alone that I deplore; it is my incapacity, my powerlessness. I adore Thy designs, but I do not comprehend them. I submit to Thy Will, but on condition that Thou governest for me, that Thou shalt act for me."

Happy, a thousand times happy, the soul who thus unites herself humbly to the Will of God! She has meditated on Jesus, a willing Victim, and has understood His reply to His Eternal Father, Who demanded a sacrifice for the salvation of the world: "Yes, My Father." At each immolation which was asked, we shall see that Mother Sacred Heart repeated this *fiat* to her Well-Beloved.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HER ACTIVITY

SCARCELY was the new Superior installed on her Calvary when creditors came from all parts. From a feeling of delicacy, she did not wish to make known to her family the deplorable position in which she found herself. Her first act was to sell the house in the country, near Montant, which had been bought by Mother St. Paul. She sold also a portion of the garden adjoining the Convent of Mi-Careme, but this was not sufficient to pay the debt. She organized a work-shop for ribbons, another for weaving, and a third for sewing. Where the Sisters often passed the greater part of the night, labouring to provide for the needs of the Community. The good Superior was far from imposing on her daughters these night-watches, but, knowing the extreme poverty of the house, they sacrificed themselves with pleasure to aid their well-beloved Mother. Joy beamed upon their faces when, coming from their work, they could bring her a little money. Mother Sacred Heart did not spare herself; she was at the head of every undertaking, descending even to the smallest details. She occupied herself especially in the boarding school, was attentive to every part, directed and shared even the manual work of the pupils. Day by day she could be seen distributing sewing from a work-basket to those who had neglected to bring it from home. In this way they were taught to labour in early youth.

She was beautiful in the midst of these little acts, she animated all by her good example, was cheerful in conversation, interested, affectionate and pious. The demand for their work increased, which was most opportune, for money was needed for repairs and furnishings. The linen was so insufficient, after the departure of the Sisters who were recalled to Lyons, that Mother Sacred Heart was obliged to take the curtains that remained on two or three beds, to make neckerchiefs and night-dresses for her daughters.

Informed of their poverty, the venerable Mother St. John begged Father Cholleton, Vicar-General, to ask some of the Religious, who had left St. Etienne, to leave a portion of their dowry. Two or three consented, and Mother Sacred Heart was very grateful, as she suffered keenly on account of being unable to provide necessaries for her Community. One day the Sister in charge of the kitchen asked for money to go to market, to get something for dinner. Mother Sacred Heart had nothing in the treasury, but without allowing her embarrassment to appear, she bade the Sister wait awhile, saying it was not yet time to go. She hastened to the Chapel and prayed, pouring out her soul to the Sacred Heart. "My Jesus, send me what is needed for the dinner of my daughters, your spouses. You have said: 'Ask, and you shall receive'. Your spouses have nothing." While she still prayed, a knock came to the door. It was an unknown person, who brought a small sum for a novena of prayers. The Superior re-entered the Chapel to thank our Lord. She had just enough to pay for the dinner of her dear Community.

On another occasion she had borrowed the sum of one

thousand francs from a working woman, who, learning of the poverty of the house, and fearing to lose her savings, went to the Superior and demanded her money. Mother Sacred Heart did not possess a sou, but, full of confidence in Him who caused a great tree to grow from a seed of mustard, and a harvest from a grain of wheat, she replied coolly to her creditor that, if she would have the goodness to return in two days, she would reimburse her. Leaving the parlour, the poor Superior went to the Chapel, and placing herself humbly behind the high altar, rapped at the place which corresponded to the Tabernacle. "My Lord", she said, "Thou knowest what has passed, and where I am. We are compelled to pay this sum the day after to-morrow. The Spouse should answer for His spouse." She then returned to her occupation. The day indicated arrived, and no help had been received. "Lord Jesus", she said, "Thou seest my trouble; the moment will soon be here". The portress came to tell her that the woman was in the parlour and asked to see her. "My Jesus", sighed the Mother, "answer for me". Thus praying, she entered the parlour. "You have come", she said to the woman, "to get the money which is due you?" "No", answered the latter, "the confidence with which you assured me that my money would be returned me to-day made me understand that I had been mistaken, and that I have nothing to fear. I have brought you a small sum which I pray you to add to the first. I trust you entirely." The good Mother hastened to thank our Lord, with tears of joy and gratitude. She had always possessed the gift of gaining the confidence of others.

A farmer, acquainted with the Tezenas family, who had lent money to Mother St. Paul, hearing of her departure, and the state of the house, thought the fruit of his labour was in danger. In his trouble he went to consult the Superior of another establishment. Here he learned that the house of St. Joseph was heavily in debt, but that Mother St. Paul had been replaced by Mlle. Tezenas. "Oh! Mlle. Tezenas?" cried the farmer, completely reassured, "to Mlle. Tezenas I would send my last sou, if she wished it".

The Community of Mi-Careme was always happy in the midst of its poverty. The faith, confidence, and patience of the fervent Superior communicated itself to the Sisters. Mother Sacred Heart made them see in their poverty a resemblance to our Lord, and this consideration filled them with joy and courage. They were glad to suffer and endure for Jesus, after the example of their loved Superior. Her courage was above all fatigue; we might say that work cost her nothing. She devoted herself entirely to her Community, on whom she imprinted her spirit, and of whom she was, so to speak, the soul. She cared for the wants of each Sister with unwearied patience, and the goodness which made her enter into the smallest details, went out from her heart to everyone. One day she called to her room a young Religious, whom she wished to conduct a class in sewing. "Mother", replied the Sister, "I have never done that work; I am afraid", "My child", interrupted the amiable Mother, "look at these new scissors. Oh! how well they will help you, with God's aid, and your confidence in Him". The Sister laughed; she could not resist the goodness of her Supe-

rior, and going to the class, succeeded very well. Mother Sacred Heart directed her Community with a charity which embraced all, and a vigilance which nothing escaped. The first to rise, she rang the bell when the Sister in charge forgot to do so. She swept her own room, never permitting anyone to do it for her, saying: "The Superior should give the example. I should give edification by observing the Rule". She always took her share of the manual work of the house, and would not allow anyone to replace her in these employments.

Faithful herself to her holy Rule, she regarded it as one of the most essential duties of her charge to cause it to be observed by others. She maintained, with reason, that to despise the Rule would infallibly lead to graver faults. "He who breaks the hedge", says the Holy Spirit, "shall die by the serpent". This figure expresses clearly the danger of neglect of Rule, which is the hedge of the religious life; consequently, one of Mother Sacred Heart's greatest griefs was to see it transgressed. Whenever this was the case, she lost her usual sweetness for the time being, and reproved the guilty ones severely. Animated by her spirit, the Sisters maintained a strict observance, even in the smallest things. They never allowed themselves to remain in bed in morning, or retire to rest before the Community hour. This zeal for regularity did not lessen the love of the Mother for her Daughters. Under her firm but gentle authority, each Sister felt herself at ease. She captivated all hearts, and knew of many means known only to virtue, how to dispose them to the most generous devotedness. No one could resist her, as she would always say: "Do this, as I would myself". If, some-

times, Sisters showed indifference in accomplishing the thing commanded, a look, accompanied by the words: "You do not wish to help me?", would touch their weak and feeble hearts, and urge them on to most heroic sacrifices.

Her care to give pleasure to others had hidden sources of an exquisite delicacy. Her charity revealed itself in all forms. Forgetting herself, she thought but of others. She understood, she divined the slightest indisposition, applied the necessary remedies, informed herself of their result, and had recourse to many little attentions that only the heart of a mother could imagine. It might be said that the suffering and the needs of her children were ever present in her mind, so that she knew how to distribute to each what was most fitting.

When a Sister became seriously ill she never left her. She was always present at the doctor's visit, and he gave no order that she did not superintend. She considered herself the special nurse of the sick, and wished no other to perform for them what she herself could do. We see her sometimes making their beds, frequently preparing and administering the medicines, and fulfilling those humble offices so often repugnant to nature. The wants of the most repulsive nature seemed to have a special attraction for her charity. When the illness was lingering or tedious, she saw that the invalid was not deprived of Holy Communion. "When our Lord Jesus Christ fortifies you by His presence", she said, "you do not suffer less, but you bear your sufferings better". When they were tempted to defer Communion, because, owing to their illness, they were not able to apply them-

selves seriously to prayer, she would answer: "Prayer is uniting ourselves to God", or she would say: "We unite ourselves to Him by suffering".

She held it as a principle that while rendering to the sick all that the most tender charity required, we should avoid entertaining them with too human sentiments, and, on the contrary, should neglect nothing that would turn them towards the Creator, especially at the moment when they were on the point of leaving all creatures.

Once, when she was taking care of a dying Religious, the latter, in sentiments of lively gratitude, wished to kiss the hand which served her so tenderly: the good Mother, adroitly substituted her crucifix, as though she would say: "Behold Him towards Whom, at this moment, you should direct all the affections of your heart." When the illness was judged mortal, she did not leave the sick one in ignorance, nor allow her to cherish chimerical hopes of regaining health. "Although a Sister of St. Joseph should always be ready to leave this world", she said, "I earnestly desire to be told when my last moment shall arrive, and I would believe myself wanting in charity were I to neglect to do for others that which appears to me so important".

The Religious, under those circumstances, became the exclusive objects of Mother Sacred Heart's solicitude. She never left her, that she might assure herself the invalid had the necessary assistance, and to procure for her, with the last sacraments, the spiritual succours that the Church offers to her children in that supreme and terrible struggle, this much dreaded passage from time to eternity. According as death approached, she

redoubled her pious tenderness towards her daughters. She prayed without ceasing at their bedside, and strove to sustain the poor agonizing one by her exhortations, and to inspire her with sentiments the most suitable to raise her courage, and reanimate the confidence of the soul which was on the point of appearing before her Creator.

When, despite her efforts, death robbed her of her child, the good mother did not abandon her. Faith and Christian love followed her even to eternity. She hastened to procure for the departed one the suffrages of the Church, had Masses said in the different parishes, and in all the Communities. On this subject the Sister portress said one day at recreation: "I would not like to have too many deaths among us; they tire me too much". "How is that?" they said to her. "Because I am obliged to travel to all parts of the city, to get them out of the flames of Purgatory". Her response having elicited a burst of laughter, she said: "Yes, yes, you may laugh; however, I must rap at all the convent doors and must find all the priests of the city, in order to have them offer Masses". A Religious having asked permission to insert, in her last will and testament, a clause, the end of which was to ask for Masses each year, Mother Sacred Heart replied: "Poor child, you have no need to ask that; if I am in the world after you, you may be sure you will not need them.

Her maternal solicitude made her treat equally, and without distinction, all Sisters, whether choir or lay. Mother Sacred Heart loved to repeat: "Children of the same family have a right to be equally loved, although they may have different employments in their Father's

house". The good Mother even appeared sometimes to give the preference to those Sisters whose lowly duties were more conducive to the practice of humility. "Be faithful to your vocation", she recommended them, "and you will be greater before God, for serving us, than we who are served". Each of her daughters had free access to her. At all times she received those who wished to speak to her, listened to them calmly, showing no fatigue, no impatience at their weakness or tediousness. She consoled them in their troubles, and shared even in those of their families, of which she informed herself, that she might soften their grief and partake of it with them. "During my novitiate", said a Sister, "my mother was ill, and Mother Sacred Heart always inquired for her with the liveliest interest, entering into the most minute details". She sympathized with all, forgetting herself to think of others. She possessed a rare delicacy of manner in winning the affections of the Sisters. To one Novice she gave the name of a benefactor or benefactress, to another the name of a tenderly loved father or mother. "The manner of giving", said a moralist, "is often better than the thing given", and Mother Sacred Heart, by her delicate tact, knew how to double the value of her gifts.

So much goodness won the hearts of her Sisters, alleviated their fatigues, and gave to regularity and work an ever increasing ardour. "Love feels no burden", says the pious author of *The Imitation*. "If it is felt, it is loved", remarks St. Augustine, "and a burden loved is always well carried". Under this sweet and happy influence, the house of Mi-Careme was not only relieved of its poverty, but began to prosper. As the boarding-

school was a great means of revenue for the establishment, the teachers took every means of increasing and assuring its success, and spared no effort to improve themselves. The Superior gave the example by taking lessons in Italian. They founded a second boarding-school, for children of a better class, and a day school, to facilitate the instruction of those of more moderate circumstances. By these means, all classes had the opportunity of growing in knowledge. A Chaplain was attached to the house, for the instruction and service of the Sisters. The Abbé Desheures, successor to Father Piron, seeing the good work accomplished at St. Etienne by the Sisters of St. Joseph, seconded them by his influence.

Mother Sacred Heart, well known and loved by the principal families of the city, enjoyed the confidence of all, and the house, blessed by both God and man, soon counted several hundred pupils. Nothing equalled the affection and gratitude of these children for those who were for them the cause of so much happiness. The feast of the Sacred Heart was truly a family feast. The holiday that accompanied it was taken usually at Montcel, and was presided over by the venerable Madame Tezenas, who thus became the grandmother of the numerous family of Religious and their pupils. On the occasion of one of those charming fetes, the carriage of Montcel came to take the little ones of the school. In their haste, the children crowded in. "Take care", said the driver, "you are very numerous, you will cause an accident; we shall upset on the road". "We are not Lay Sisters, *qu'on verse*", replied the young ones, wittily. This ingenious little play of words increased the

high spirits of the joyous band, but near the City Hall their joy was interrupted by the accident foretold by the coachman; the bottom of the carriage became weakened, and they were all deposited on the road, with their provisions, apricots, cherries and pears, which soon became the pray of the assembled street urchins. Happily the accident ended here. The loss of provisions was repaired at Montcel, and the relating of the adventure to the elder boarders, who had gone before, formed one of the most pleasing diversions of the holiday. During these feasts, in the midst of the sweet and innocent joy which filled all hearts, the Superior was inflexible regarding the Rule. She never permitted herself, nor did she give permission to the Sisters, to take any repasts with their friends. At dinner time, the Community without exception went to the woods of Longeron, which became their dining-room. The good parents had gently conjured their daughter to remain with them, but the Holy Rule overcame all considerations. They recognized and so well respected the scrupulous fidelity of their child that they ceased to press their invitations. An incident which illustrated the inflexibility of Mother Sacred Heart upon this point occurred when she was Superior-General. She was returning from a visit to Valfleury, and her carriage was passing along the park of Montcel, when she met once more her aged mother, whom she had not seen for some time. Desiring to offer a sacrifice to God, her resolution was to drive on, but Sister Jane Francis, who accompanied her, feigning illness, said: "Mother, as a favour, permit me to stop a moment at your home", at the same time directing the carriage towards Montcel.

Afterwards, whenever Madame Tezenas saw this Sister, she would say: "Dear Sister, do not forget to become ill when you pass our home, especially when you have Virginia with you".

She who imposed sacrifices upon herself, felt them so much the more keenly, as she cherished tender affection for her family, of which, after the example of St. Chantal, she constantly remained the friend, the counsellor and support. The victories which the saints gain over themselves strengthen their virtue, and are at the same time the secret of their salutary influence. That which Mother Sacred Heart exercised over her pupils was such, that it was sufficient to speak to them of her to make them obedient. One day a little girl had recited her catechism, after reading it only twice. Her Mistress, admiring her quickness, said to her: "My child, you will learn another chapter". This did not please the pupil, who had made haste only to go to her amusements. She refused to obey, when the Superior, coming in, put to flight all disobedience. "How is it, my dear little one", she said, "that you do not like to study? Oh! I am sure you will do this to please me, and I will give you a nice orange". The child looked at the Mother lovingly, studied, and soon recited the disagreeable chapter. "I am satisfied", said the Superior, "but another time you will study without the promise of an orange, will you not?" The child looked as though she would say: "Love is stronger than fear".

The virtue of Mother Sacred Heart was such that it exercised an influence even upon persons of the world. A lady presented herself in the parlour, one day, who showed a disregard for modesty in dress. The Superior

of Mi-Careme approached her very graciously, and presented her with a pin, saying: "Madame, I am pleased to offer you this, because I perceive you haven't one, and you must be inconvenienced, seeing that your toilet is not complete". This lady said afterwards: "The Superior of Mi-Careme reproves in a manner so agreeable that one hastens to amend". She never again approached the Convent but with a correct and irrefragable toilet. We have said that Mother Sacred Heart was no respecter of persons. Nothing prevented her from fulfilling the smallest duty. When the Angelus surprised her in the parlour, no matter what persons were present, she would say: "You have, no doubt, preserved the good habit of saying the Angelus; let us say it together". This pious fidelity was the habit of her life. When in the world, Sundays and feasts were often, for the Tezenas family, days of visits and receptions. Having charmed their visitors by her amiability, Mother Sacred Heart always found means to assist at Vespers with her sister. On her return from the church, she again entertained the company, who suspected and venerated the motive of her absence.

This noble woman held the poor in honour, loved them with tenderness, and one of the most pleasing duties of her life was to assist them. She coaxed her mother to adopt some orphans, and charged herself with their education. Presently, by soliciting her mother and acquaintances for aid, she helped unfortunate workmen, who were not able to pay their rent. Often she paid the baker's account for those to whom bread had been refused for want of money. Once she saved the father of a family, whom they were going to

seize for debt, begged the bailiff not to prosecute him, and promised to be responsible for the poor unfortunate. Her charity extended to all kinds of miseries. Her gentle hand dried the tears of the afflicted, and gave alms and bread to those who were hungry. Strangers sometimes took advantage of her generosity, but she continued to give with perseverance and liberality. Thus, long after her departure from St. Etienne, the poor whom she had helped still wept for her and the afflicted regretted her who knew so well how to pour the balm of consolation upon the wounds of their hearts, which are often more painful than those of the body. The seraphic Teresa says: "We advance in the love of God in proportion as we advance in the love of our neighbour". There is a holy reciprocity, as charity towards our neighbour wins the heart of God, and the friend of his brother becomes the intimate friend of Jesus Christ. This sweet intimacy fills the soul with peace, confidence and joy. Thus Mother Sacred Heart enjoyed constantly a great tranquility of heart, which nothing could trouble.

An exacting creditor at one time threatened to seize and imprison her if, within forty-eight hours, the payment which he demanded was not made. But she lost nothing of her calmness, assisting at the repast and presiding at the recreation of the Community with her usual cheerfulness. Meanwhile, at heart, her suffering was like death. The thought of the scandal, and the advantage which the enemies of the Church would gain thereby against religion and her Congregation, overwhelmed her. But God, to Whom she had recourse unceasingly, came to her assistance, and by the gen-

rosity of a saintly friend she was able to satisfy the creditor, who now blushed for his brutality, and made the most humble apology.

Thus her confidence in God was never disappointed. She patiently waited, in her difficulties, for the Divine hand to remove all obstacles. Meanwhile her great resource was prayer. "Prayer," she said, "is the nourishment, strength, and life of the soul. Prayer is to converse with God directly. Prayer is to love. Prayer is to desire ardently. A desire is that which we expect, which we ask, which we urge, which we entreat. The soul which prays well forces the Will of God, it makes God do as it wills." Prayer, in her eyes, was the first duty of a Superior. St. Teresa writes: "The pastor who does his duty should place himself upon the top of the mountain, so that he may find and protect his flock." Now this elevated place, for a mistress of souls, is prayer. Prayer is the Sinai, where Moses conversed with the Lord and saved his people. After prayer, deeds follow.

The Superior of Mi-Careme accomplished these two equally well. Her activity embraced all. The wisdom of her administration saved her house when in want, and her direction perfected the work. Mgr. de Pins, Administrator of the Diocese of Lyons, wished that the Novitiate, interrupted for some time by the grave embarrassments and trials of the house at Mi-Careme, should be re-established there, with new developments. The intention of the Prelate was to foster religious vocations, to care for the health of the numerous aspirants of Forez, who were accustomed to the vivifying mountain air, but more especially to confide them to the care

and direction of a Superior whose great prudence and rare capacity he highly esteemed.

Seeing her family thus increasing, the zeal and energy of Mother Sacred Heart, which seemed to have reached the extreme limit, were again redoubled. "Those who hope in the Lord," said the Prophet Isaias, "find their strength always renewed; they take wings, as the eagle, and fly without being weary." She placed at the head of her Novitiate her worthy Assistant, Sister Euphrasia, reserving for herself the general supervision, presiding at the conferences and spiritual reading, and assisting at the instructions given by the Chaplain, that she might learn how to give religious instructions to the postulants.

For efficient work, education demands well instructed teachers, and these the never-tiring Superior endeavoured to form. Though she considered the training of the mind important, religious education and formation of character held a higher place in her estimation. On these depended, in her eyes, the future of the Congregation; consequently, she exhorted the Sisters to be faithful to study, prayer, and self-denial. She was accustomed to say to the postulants: "The first year of probation in the Novitiate is to meditate on the Cross, and the year preceding profession is to attach yourselves to it by the three Vows, as by three nails. Poverty, Chastity and Obedience are the instruments of this religious crucifixion, which will terminate only by death." She inspired them to love it, and animated them by her example. She taught her Daughters that true perfection was to be found in the perfect observance of the exercises of the common life. "Let us love God," she

said with St. Vincent de Paul, "but it must be by the work of each day; it must be at the expense of our hands and the sweat of our brows." She also frequently recommended abandonment to the holy Will of God. "We must be satisfied with the light of pure faith, not searching into the future, not anticipating it, but accomplishing the everyday duties which the present places before us, happy to find in them no human support, and then to rest sweetly in our Lord Jesus Christ." She related that, in the midst of the most serious troubles which harassed her mind, a sweet peacefulness took possession of her each time she said: "What art thou? Thou art nothing but a worm of the earth." "Let us do all in our power to contribute to His glory from passing events," she would say: "He has no need of us to do such and such things."

In her direction, Mother Sacred Heart was careful to avoid excessive indulgence or rigorous severity. Meeting with a soul, generous, elevated, and capable of great things, she introduced her at first, sweetly, into the way of perfection, discovered to her, little by little, its paths, urged her, with wisdom and moderation, then did not hesitate to demand from her the most heroic acts, and the practice of the most sublime virtues. Had she, on the contrary, to deal with a soul, weak and timid, she applied herself to reanimate, encourage and strengthen her. She proposed nothing above her strength, and contented herself with an honest mediocrity, which is the way of a great number, and which suffices, often, to do a little good. The author of *The Imitation* makes our Lord say: "I expect, of some, ordinary things; of others, extraordinary." Thus acted the wise Mother.

Their faults did not repel her, but she desired, for a foundation, faith, docility and energy. She dismissed two postulants, one who could not resolve to bear leeches prescribed by the doctor, and another who failed frequently in silence. According to the example of the greatest masters of the spiritual life, she insisted particularly upon the obligation of silence.

Silence is the great strength of the Rule of St. Benedict. "Little silence, little virtue; much silence, much virtue," writes St. Bernard. St. Odon, Abbot of Cluny, taught that silence is the father of holy thoughts and great actions. "Peace and charity", he added, "abide in a community where silence reigns." "Our Lord," said Mother Sacred Heart, "loves to speak to your souls, but you must be attentive. If you are inattentive when I speak to you, you believe yourselves wanting in respect. What is it, then, when you do not listen to Jesus Christ? A novice or postulant who speaks without necessity, in the time of silence, who walks heavily, who opens and closes doors without care, moves the chairs or furniture noisily, exposes herself not only to drown the voice of Jesus in the bottom of her heart, but prevents her companions from hearing Him also, and puts obstacles to their progress in the spiritual life." "God," says a master of the spiritual life, "deigns sometimes to cry out, to thunder in the ears of sinners; but in those exquisite relations with His friends, He is accustomed to speak in a low voice." Regarding the affections, that which is said in a low voice is worth infinitely more than that which is proclaimed aloud.

Mother Sacred Heart knew by intuition these secrets

of sanctity. She sometimes deviated from her ordinary kindness, when it was a question of faults against silence, and inflicted severe penances for failing in it. She also attached great importance to the recitation of the Divine Office, took care that each syllable was articulated distinctly, and that all the ceremonies were carried out with gravity and reflection. The Religious does not pray alone when she recites the holy Office; she prays with the Church, for the whole universe, and she commits a species of injustice if she does not acquit herself of this function in a proper manner. Her faith inspired her with a true respect for the most humble employments, because they represented to her best the humility of Jesus Christ. They attracted her attention very particularly. She watched over the sweeping of the apartments, the cleanliness of the furniture, the washing of the linen, the order and economy of the kitchen. Each Sister, Choir or Lay, Novice or Postulant, applied herself alike to these charges. She observed, especially, the manner in which those of education and position in the world acquitted themselves in these duties. If they manifested repugnance, this was, in her eyes, the best means of judging the solidity of their vocation. "Such a postulant," she would sometimes remark to her Counsellors, "drags along with indifference. If God calls her to be a Religious, it is not in our house, she must go to a convent where there is less work. It is not for us to judge other religious congregations," she would add, "but it is for us to imitate the poverty, simplicity, and laborious life of the house of St. Joseph at Nazareth." The salvation of souls was one of the great desires

of Mother Sacred Heart. She did all in her power to strengthen and inflame the zeal of the novices and postulants. "You are here," she would say to them, "to form in yourselves apostolic hearts. You will be dispersed, in time, among the children's parishes, to aid the ministers of Jesus Christ, to teach the Catechism to the children, and spread the love of God by your instructions and example. But to be able to give, you must possess, to give much, you must have much to give, and we usually give of that which we have in abundance. Now, the Novitiate is the great reservoir, from which you can draw unreservedly." She who spoke thus understood well religious life and its work in our times. In all ages holy souls have, according to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ to St. Teresa, brought with them salvation to the world. With how much greater reason is it true in our day, when we can no longer count upon men to guard the faith and save society? In spite of the developments of material progress, there exists, among men of our epoch, a work of dissolution, which makes one tremble. "The hope of salvation," says Madame Barat, "will be in the weaker sex. The men of our times have become as women. Transformed by faith, women have the courage of men." By her enlightened direction, sure and deep penetration, the aptitude and qualities of the future Superior-General revealed themselves in the character and spirit of Mother Sacred Heart.

## CHAPTER IX

### ELEVATION TO GENERALSHIP

THE HOUSE of Mi-Careme had become great before God and man. The importunate creditors had disappeared, the boarding-school was in a flourishing state, and the Novitiate had received numerous subjects. Happy in these acquisitions, the religious family of St. Joseph and its excellent Superior blessed the Lord for all that His grace had deigned to operate in them, without suspecting that they were on the eve of a separation which would cause them profound grief. It was the holy soul of the venerable Mother St. John, so worthy of celestial communications, who seemed to have received from Heaven the first indication of the sacrifice which the Divine Will was disposed to demand from the Community of St. Etienne. While making one of her official visits at the houses of Mi-Careme, enlightened from on high, she said to the Sister who accompanied her: "At last I have found her whom I need for my dear Congregation, and for whom I have long searched." "Who is that?" said her companion. "The Sister who will replace me," replied Mother St. John. "I am old and infirm; the Superior of Mi-Careme will one day be your Superior-General." The good Sister paid no attention to these words; such was the universal affection and veneration in which Mother St. John was held, on account of her great virtue and heroic past, that there seemed little probability of such an event."

But some time after, Mgr. Pins having judged that the Superior-General, considering her great age and infirmities, should have an Assistant, Mother Sacred Heart was called to Lyons to fulfil that important office. The letter which Mgr. Pins wrote on this subject, in the name of Father Cholleton, Vicar-General, brought consternation to Mother Sacred Heart, to her entire Community, and her well-beloved family. Madame Tezenas, despite her eighty years, went in all haste to Lyons, accompanied by her daughter, Madame Vialleton. She entreated Mgr. Pins, saying: "I have not long to live, leave me my cherished child to close my eyes; leave her to her aged father, who will die of grief if he is deprived of the object of his affection." Notwithstanding this touching prayer, Mgr. de Pins was immovable in his resolution. Mother Sacred Heart was obliged to separate from her Community at Mi-Careme in 1838, after governing it for fourteen years. "The Saints," says St. John Chrysostom, "leave something of themselves in the places where they have lived, and when they are gone we preserve, with a sweet sadness, the perfume of their presence." Thus the house of Mi-Careme treasured always the memory of the virtues of her whose beautiful soul has since found in Heaven many of those whom she then left, and who, after their vocation, owe to her their perfection, and the celestial crowns which now adorn their virginal brows.

Mother Sacred Heart reached the Mother House in time for the retreat, which was given in the month of May. She had need of those days of silence and reflection, in order to draw from prayer the strength and courage which were necessary for her in the midst



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of the sacrifices which the holy Will of God imposed upon her. These sacrifices were increased, owing to the delicacy of the position in which she was placed. The Community experienced a general alarm, and was divided into parties. The greater number of Sisters ardently desired to retain for Superior General the venerable Mother St. John. Others, foreseeing her loss, and wishing to preserve an image of that well beloved Mother, cast their eyes upon her Secretary, Sister M. Antoinette. Arriving in the midst of these little troubles, Mother Sacred Heart appeared as though imposed by diocesan authority, with a mental reservation on the part of the Prelate to substitute her when he desired it. Many became excited, and, forgetting for the moment a principle of the spiritual life, that it is necessary to be calm to judge, still calmer to condemn, they circulated these words, expressed with some bitterness: "Behold the lady who comes!"

In the midst of this storm, Mother Sacred Heart redoubled her humility. In order to calm their fears, she sent back to St. Etienne Sister Bernardine, who had been her companion, and who was very much devoted to her. Left alone, she cast herself more than ever, with all her troubles, into the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This Sacred Heart, the Friend *par excellence*, led her to another formed to his image, that of the venerable Mother St. John. This great Christian, who had nobly borne the chains of martyrs, was inaccessible to the petty miseries which affect ordinary souls. Like Solomon, she had received from God, with the gift of wisdom, that which the Holy Spirit calls greatness of heart. Thus, elevated above the crowd, as a noble

queen, she overwhelmed with goodness, care and tenderness, her whom she recognized as sent from God to second and continue her work. Inspired with the beautiful name which she bore, the Mother-General seemed to say with St. John: "It is necessary that she should increase and that I should decrease." This humble and exquisite delicacy was carried to such a point that she tried to efface herself, and, at the approach of the elections, she secretly left the Mother House, and went to one of the establishments in the north of France.

This flight, inspired by the example of the Saints, while edifying the Sisters, caused the Community great excitement. Sister Delphine, following in haste, overtook the fugitive at Roanne, and brought her back to her sorrowing family. Being asked why she wished to escape, she replied, in her simple and naive manner: "Ah! well, it would be better, because, seeing me in some corner of the Chapel, they would say: That good old woman, we must not pain her by leaving out her name. If I go away, at least they would not see me." The elections took place on May 31st, 1838. Mother St. John was continued at her post, and Mother Sacred Heart was named Assistant-General.

United by the love of God, these two souls understood each other perfectly, and, by their affection, deference, and mutual esteem, were to the Community a source of edification. Mother Sacred Heart, animated by that spirit of faith which so characterized her, was happy to be in daily contact with one who had been imprisoned for Jesus Christ, and whom she venerated as a saint. She did nothing without consulting her, and lived with her in a state of dependence and filial obe-

dicence. For her part, Mother St. John, whose humility, age and infirmities made her sigh more and more for the moment when she would be relieved from the burden of superiority, gave her Assistant knowledge of everything, acquainted her with the many wants of the Congregation, and strove unceasingly to draw all hearts to her. Never was the name of St. John the Baptist (whom the Saviour called greatest of the children of men) more fitly borne, or his virtues more zealously practised than by the venerable Foundress of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The Spirit of emulation in the practice of charity between the two Superiors, in the trying circumstances by which they were surrounded, recalled touching memories from the lives of the Saints.

Mother St. John's days were numbered. These two beautiful souls reflected something of the union and ineffable harmony of the heavens, Mother St. John pure, serene and majestic, like a star completing its course, and Mother Sacred Heart bright and beautiful as the morning star. They came together and mingled their light for a time, till one sank below the horizon, leaving the other to shine alone. Around about the stars we sometimes see clouds, but they do not always succeed in obscuring their brightness; on the contrary, the gentle light penetrates and completely disperses them. A Sister imagined that the new-comer was lowering her in everyone's esteem. One day this temptation was so strong that she entered Mother Sacred Heart's room abruptly, and without any explanation, burst forth in bitter complaints. "You are continually trying to mortify me, and to destroy my reputation," she said; "I have kept my trouble to myself for a long

time, but I can bear it no longer." When the torrent of bitter words had ceased flowing, the good Superior, who had listened in silence, surprised and confused at what she had heard, embraced the Sister affectionately, and said to her, in a tone of relief "I am so thankful, Sister, that you have told me your troubles; let me assure you that they are entirely without foundation. Thank God, in all that has caused you so much pain, I was never actuated by the sentiments of which you accuse me. I have always entertained feelings of the most tender affection for you." These words were spoken with so much kindness and evident sincerity that the poor Sister, now convinced of her error, was overwhelmed with confusion and moved to tears. Her peace of mind was restored, the most filial confidence replaced her distrust, and happiness once more reigned in her heart. After this incident, whenever Mother Sacred Heart noticed that anyone seemed sad, she lavished upon her little attentions, multiplied her acts of kindness, showed her marks of confidence, and did all that lay in her power to learn from her the cause of her grief. With this end in view, she received complaints, murmurs and reproaches patiently. She united in her direction great prudence and exquisite tact. She was, at all times, the humble servant of Mother St. John, and taught her Sisters to love and respect, ever more and more, one whom she regarded as the angel of the Institute, and confessor of the faith. This humility established everywhere the reign of peace and holy joy.

After remaining a few months at Lyons, Mother Sacred Heart was obliged to return to St. Etienne, to attend to some business matters. Her visit to Mi-

Careme was a real holiday, not only for her dear Community and her own family, but for the whole city. Everyone was pleased to see their revered Mother once more; but duty soon carried her away from her friends. When leaving, she took, as companion, Sister Marie Antoinette, a friend of her childhood days, who had given her many proofs of devotedness. This Sister was necessary to fill the place of the Secretary, who had left the Congregation to enter the Sacred Heart Convent. The Assistant-General depended upon the zeal and intelligence of Sister Marie Antoinette to make up for this loss, and she was not disappointed.

Mother Sacred Heart, on her return from St. Etienne and her dearly loved Mi-Careme, seemed to redouble her zeal and solicitude for the new family Providence had given her. She was the servant of everyone, but wished no one to serve her. Silent and retiring, she hid so carefully the rich gifts which God had bestowed upon her that one would have to live with her intimately to appreciate her worth. The few prejudiced Sisters, who believed, on her arrival at the Mother House, that it was a grand lady who was coming, found her to be in reality one of the most fervent and most humble of Religious, one who neglected none of the smallest details of the rules and customs. In the refectory, she was often seen begging her meats, eating them on her knees, and accepting, with delight, mortifications and humiliations. As these extraordinary penances could be performed only with permission of the Superiors, when Mother Sacred Heart became Mother Superior, she regarded it as a privilege of her position to be able to give herself permissions of this nature, which others

would not easily have granted her. In this she followed the example of Mother St. John. A Religious tells us that, during her novitiate, she had seen Mother St. John taking her dinner on the floor in the refectory, with the simplicity and humility of a child, and that the sight moved her to tears. Another Sister relates

"saw her once, on Good Friday, at the door of the Chapel, with a rope around her neck, kissing the feet of the Sisters."

Refraining, as much as possible, through delicacy, from all that concerned the general management, Mother Sacred Heart gave herself up entirely to the details of common, everyday duties. As at St. Etienne, her zeal and energy were directed, in a special manner, towards the important work of the Novitiate. Solidity in learning, but, above all, solidity in virtue, was the constant object of her efforts. The choice of teachers being carefully made, she exacted good work, and, to assist them, procured professors in grammar, arithmetic, history, geography, book-keeping and writing. Reviews and drills were given, to perfect what had been taught. When the Abbé Granger, Vicar-General, was named Superior of the Congregation, he gave all possible help to the good Mother; he himself selected the subjects for literary compositions, and criticized them before the Superior-General and teachers. Each reception was preceded by an examination on the special branches which the postulants had studied. This consisted of an oral test, given by their teachers, followed by one from Father Granger.

As culture of the heart and religious perfection greatly surpass culture of the mind, the greatest care

was taken to secure this in the Novitiate. Mother Sacred Heart said: "The Novitiate is the cradle of the religious life, the mould in which the Religious is modelled. If she allows herself to be formed on this model, great good can be accomplished for her Congregation." Father Granger gave a retreat to the teachers and Mistresses, and while the venerable Mother St. John continued her conferences to the professed Sisters, Mother Sacred Heart presided over those in the Novitiate, and her exhortations were so full of unction that the novices came to profit by them. "We have great graces at our disposal", she would say, "it remains for us to make good use of them. We must first of all form a good intention in the morning, and renew it, from time to time, during the day; in this way we shall gain numberless treasures. Each beat of our heart may be an act of love. Our aspirations should be as natural as breathing. Thus we shall lay up gold for eternity without perceiving it."

She marked out, as a great enemy to purity of intention, thoughtlessness, which may be compared to those birds spoken of in the Gospel, which gather up the good seed scattered by the roadside. Thoughtlessness is most opposed to the religious spirit. One who does not acquire a spirit of reflection is exposed to commit many faults. Thoughtlessness deprives us of the merit of our good actions. We cannot mount to Heaven on a spider's web. "Love is not thoughtless", says *The Imitation*. As an iron, which seems to be on fire in a hot furnace, so the heart of a spouse of Jesus Christ should be ever burning with a holy love, until it is nothing itself but pure love.

She ardently recommended the practice of the presence of God, urging them to try it for one year, assuring them that at the end of this time they would find themselves at the height of perfection. Regularity was priceless in her eyes; she looked upon its acquisition as the special work of a good novice, and gave a bright example of it herself. She rang the bell in the morning, when it was forgotten, as she was accustomed at Mi-Careme, and from that until the time for retiring she was the first to answer it. Nothing was trifling in her eyes. The better we are able to do great things, the less little things seem beneath us. Afterwards when her many occupations and frequent interruptions prevented her from being present at all the exercises, she made up these devotions at other times, and never retired to rest without having said all the prayers of Rule. The fatigue and irregularity caused by her journeys never prevented her from performing her spiritual exercises. As soon as she took her place in the carriage, she began her prayers; then lowering her veil, she spent the rest of the time in meditation. Once, having glanced at her travelling companions, she said: "I am happy to be among such good people; I am sure you would be glad to say the beads with me", and she began immediately to recite them, and all answered without hesitation: her holy audacity charmed them. Such was her manner of acting when Divine Providence placed her upon a pedestal, as it were, whence she was to serve as a beacon light, to illuminate the whole house. In one short year she had won the affection of all.

Venerable Mother St. John had reached the extreme

limit of old age, and her ever increasing infirmities kept pace with her years. God permitted this long and beautiful life to be gloriously ended by a cross which it sometimes pleases Him to send to His most faithful servants in their declining years. It is a cross often given to Superiors, to serve as their Golgotha; it is an echo of the cry of our Lord: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" It is this feeling of complete abandonment which gives them the last trace of resemblance to their Divine Model.

Bishop de Pins asked for the resignation of Mother St. John. In doing this, he did not use the tact or discretion due to one who had spent her life in advancing the work of the Congregation, and whose courage under difficulties had won for her the admiration even of those who had been the cause of them. The special Benediction, which she had received from the Holy Father at her last election, seemed to approve of her as worthy of spending the remainder of her religious life among her spiritual children, whom she still loved with a mother's tenderness. In drawing up the resignation which he demanded, the Prelate felt, for some time, that he was undoing what the Sovereign Pontiff had approved; he hesitated, and his hand trembled.

Mother St. John, after her resignation, went to Ars, showing the same simplicity and nobility of soul which had always characterized her. There she hoped to spend some time under the direction of the Cure, whom the Church now regards as a Saint. United to God, in meditation and prayer, she begged Him to bless her dear Sisters, who had gathered together for their annual

retreat, which was to terminate by the election of a new Superior-General.

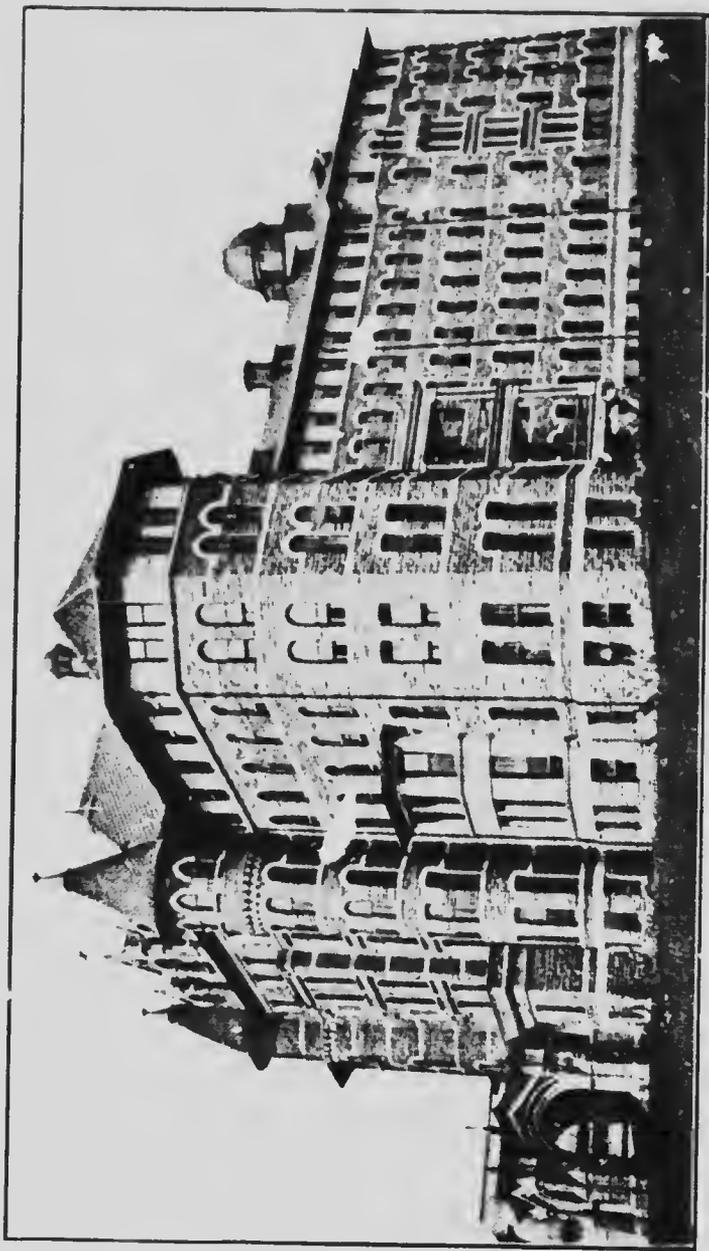
Mother Sacred Heart's retreat was spent entirely in fervent and continual prayer, accompanied by penances, and such severe fasts that her Secretary, Sister Marie Antoinette, who watched her closely, feared that she was doing more than her strength would permit, and considered it her duty to inform the Confessor. "Say nothing to her", was his answer, "she is pleading for her Congregation."

While the two fervent spirits were thus having recourse to God, the one at Ardenne, the election of the faintly Cure, the other at ... mo, in the midst of her Sisters, preparations were made for the election, and special prayers offered for the coming of the Holy Spirit. On May 10th, 18... Sacred Heart was chosen by a unanimous vote. There was only one who did not vote for Sister ... Heart. "What"? said an aged Religious, "was there one who did not vote for Sister Sacred Heart?" ... as the reply, "that was herself." It was true, ... said, one short year sufficed to win for her love and confidence. Happiness and joy were on every countenance, as they gathered around their new Mother, promising to love and obey her. Sisters who had at first feared her arrival at the Mother House, learned to love her, because they saw in her the model Religious, the living Rule, the tender and devoted Mother. St. Joseph's Congregation felt that great day all the truth and sweetness of the words of the Royal Prophet: "How good it is for brethren to live together in unity."

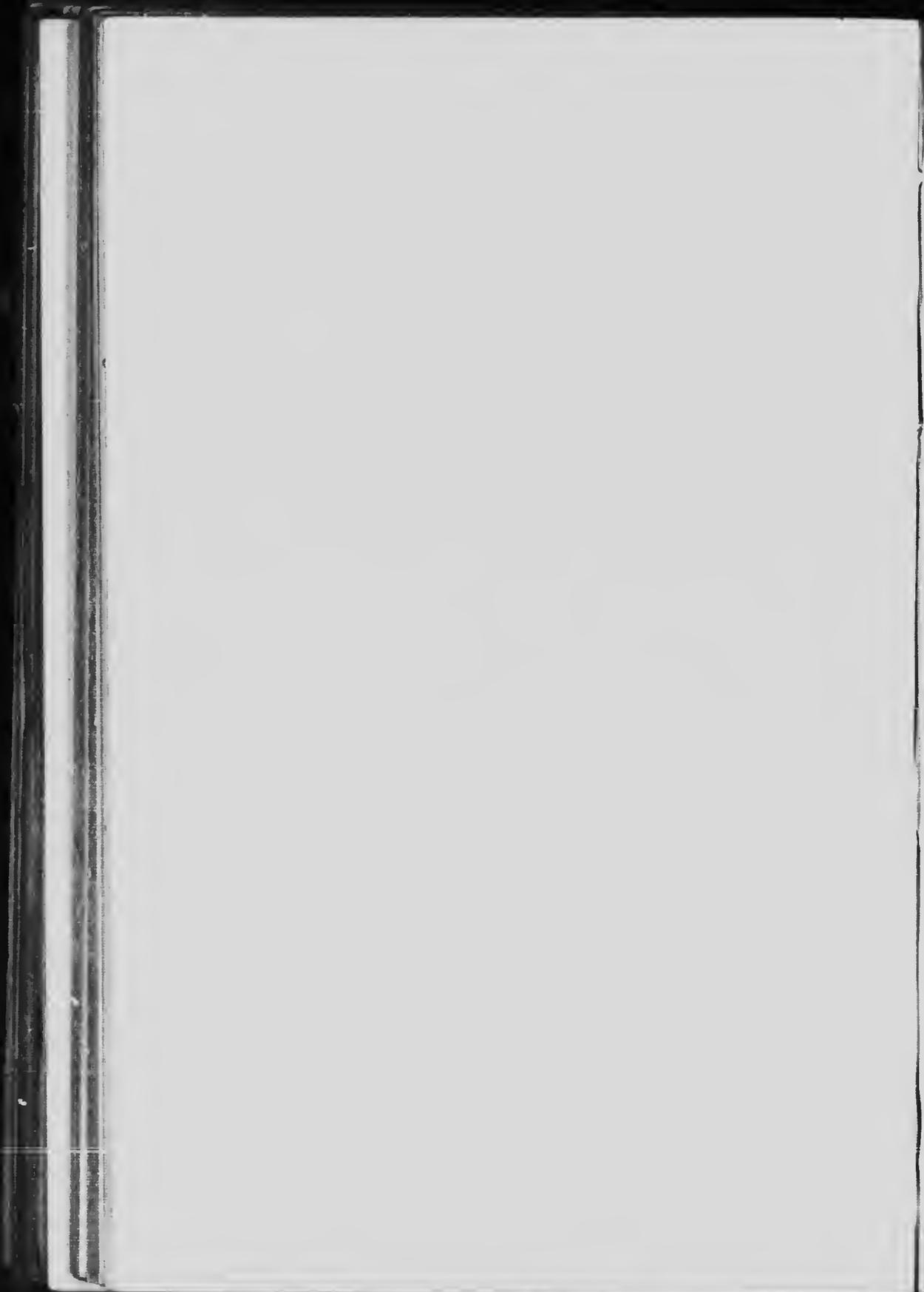
The venerable Mother St. John could not be forgotten on this eventful day in the annals of the Community. A special messenger was sent for her to Ars, and her return added to the universal joy. They were greatly edified by the venerable Superior, now in her eightieth year, promising, as a young novice would, perfect submission and obedience to the new Superior. From that moment, her profound humility made her choose the last place, and when Mother Sacred Heart begged of her not to do so, she replied: "Permit me to keep it, I wish so much to obey. Our Lord is too kind to me, in giving me time to prepare for death, not to allow me the means and opportunity of imitating Him. If I have a favour to ask of you, it is to be given well at the end of the courtyard, where I shall be more retired. That little solitude will help me to commune with God. I shall have greater liberty to speak to Him, and it will also give the Sisters greater liberty with you."

The new Superior-General, on the contrary, wished as a child to have her saintly Mother with her, and entreated her not to change any of her former habits. There was nothing more touching or edifying than the childlike confidence of the one and the profound humility of the other; it was a holy rivalry: "The emulation of the best gifts", according to the words of the Apostle St. Paul. The venerable Mother St. John held to her point, and obtained her request, although it placed her in a delicate position, which might easily assume appearances quite opposed to the beauty of the reality.

While the noble-minded Mother was enjoying freedom from the cares of her former position, by prac-



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tising humility and by uniting herself more closely to God, Mother Sacred Heart was overwhelmed with the heavy burden which had been placed upon her, and with confusion at the thought of her inability. She sought consolation from our Blessed Lord, and with tears implored Him to look kindly upon her in her troubles. "I am nothing, I can do nothing", she repeated continually, when in prayer. "Show me what You want me to do", she would say; "I shall be the humble instrument or Your holy Will." In the Sacred Heart of her Lord she placed all her undertakings and trials. St. Joseph was chosen by her to provide for the temporal wants of the Community. She placed at the feet of his statue the keys of the house, with a letter, in which she exposed to him her personal needs and those of her spiritual family. She seemed to say to St. Joseph: "This is your house, you are at home here; provide for us as you did at Nazareth. The confidence of this humble child of St. Joseph increased with her wants, and sometime later she placed a small statue of this great Saint in her empty money chest, saying: "You have never disappointed me when I confided in you."

Trials seemed to augment her love for prayer, and she frequently said: "The more I pray, the more easily I accomplish my duties." Therefore, she would not retrench a moment of time set apart for prayer, meditation, and Office. Sometimes, leaving her ordinary duties for a short time, she would steal away to the Chapel, and there, alone, in the holy presence of God, repeat with St. Francis of Assisi, the beautiful aspiration "My Lord and my God! My God and my All!" She

called these moments of rest, rest which renews activity, and which is the secret of the strength and power of the Saints, who gave no time to amusement or pleasure, except what was strictly necessary. The author of *The Imitation* says: "They seldom went abroad, they spoke but little, they worked late and rose early, they rested, and that rest, taken for Him and with Him was even more active, more fruitful than work." "As the sun sends forth its rays of light", says St. Cyprian, "as the day brightens, as the stream flows, as the dew falls on flowers and plants, so does the Holy Spirit infuse His graces, His strength and His light into the hearts of those who pray." Behold the source from which the Saints derived their strength, the secret of which was known to Mother Sacred Heart.

## CHAPTER X

### HER GOVERNMENT

HAVING had recourse to God, who gives the knowledge and light necessary, Superiors next need the assistance of counsel. The Holy Spirit says: "The wise man, who listens with understanding, shall become still wiser, and shall know how to govern." And again: "Advice shall direct you and prudence shall keep you from sin." Conformably to this advice, Mother Sacred Heart hastened to select counsellors to share with her the heavy burden of responsibility. Sister Marie Louise, who had been successively Superior of Tarare and Eeonome at the Mother House, was elected Counsellor, and named her Assistant. A sweet and holy intimacy, which lasted until death, sprang up between these two souls, so worthy of each other, exemplifying the words of Bossuet, that "for the happiness and well-being of some of His creatures, God has predestined certain persons and certain places." Sweetness and gentleness were the distinctive characteristics of Mother Marie Louise, and after the death of Mother Sacred Heart, she was chosen to succeed her.

Mother Theodosia, Superior of the house at Grand Lemps (Isere), was called to the Mother House and appointed to assist Mother St. Xavier, the Mistress of Novices. A short time after she received, with Mother Aglai, the direction of the Novitiate. Both were in the vigour of youth, and worthy by their zeal, virtue,

and profound religious spirit, of the important charges confided to them.

There are sometimes narrow-minded persons who, through fear of lessening their authority, refuse to receive counsel from their subjects. An illustrious and holy Religious says that one of the signs of a noble soul is modesty and diffidence in self. Mother Sacred Heart possessed in a high degree this mark of true greatness. In everything, no matter how unimportant it might be, having first referred the matter to our Lord, and obtained prayers from others, she never hesitated to ask advice from those who surrounded her. "Wisdom is found in counsel", said she. Thus in her government, there was no precipitation, no arbitrary rules, no pride, or personal authority. Though she did not feel bound to follow all, she listened carefully, and, according to the word of the Holy Spirit, proved and accepted that which was good. "To act with intelligence, trust not all kinds of spirits", says the Apostle St. John, "but prove them, and retain that which is good." This prudent discernment of spirits is of great importance to Superiors. St. Ignatius does not hesitate to say: "Great prudence, with passable holiness, is better than great holiness, with ordinary prudence." With great holiness, Mother Sacred Heart had that rare prudence which elevates and honours authority, and ensures sincere respect without exacting it. God, Who had destined her to exercise a part of that authority, wished it to be respected, and consequently had endowed her with all that was necessary for that end. She had common sense, she saw at a glance what was to be done, and how it could be

promptly, easily, and perfectly accomplished; she saw at the same time, the end for which it was done, and the means to obtain that end. When she was obliged to render an account of temporalities she gave the details in an unhesitating manner. Obstacles did not take her by surprise, nor did they irritate or discourage her. How often did she reply with a sweet and gentle smile to criticisms and unjust censure! How often, unknown even to Superiors, she concealed sadness under the veil of humility and profound respect! On many occasions she drained the chalice of bitterness to the very dregs, and relished the gall as others would intoxicating liquor. Great virtues seemed to be practised by her as easily as ordinary virtues by others. In her whole deportment she showed a calmness and self-possession which charmed all about her, and revealed the eternal union of her heart with the Heart of her Divine Lord.

A few months after she had been raised to the dignity of Superior-General, she heard that her aged father was dangerously ill, and ardently desired to see his beloved child once more. She hastened to St. Etienne, to find him nearing his last moments. When he saw Virginie, as he always called her, he embraced her tenderly and said: "Now that I am surrounded by my children I shall die happy." He had great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, recited her Little Office, until the day of his death, kept a small statue of her near him, and in many ways gave her proof of his love and devotion. He was like a child who wished to die in the arms of his Mother. It would seem as though this venerable patriarch's devotion to Mary

changed his death to a beautiful feast, at which he was to be united to the one he loved. Faith makes us look upon death as the birthday of the soul, and upon the tomb as a cradle where sleeps the body of the child of God, awaiting its resurrection. This fervent Christian received the last Sacraments with full consciousness, and the greatest possible devotion. He followed the ceremonies attentively, and answered all the prayers for the dying, while Madam Tezenas kneeling by his bedside, mingled her tears and her prayers with those of his children. The dying man cast a last look upon them, which seemed to say: "We shall soon meet in heaven." In the act of making his thanksgiving after Holy Communion, he fell asleep in the Lord, on December 6th, 1839.

The children gathered around their mother, but her eldest daughter, Madame Vialleton, swooned away. Till then her faith and Christian love for her father had helped her to conceal her feelings; she had been strong and brave, but the effort of closing her father's eyes in death had exhausted her strength, and the effects of the shock she had received caused them to fear for her life. However, God did not require this second sacrifice of the desolate family, and Madame Vialleton, whom the people loved as they did her mother, lived to perpetuate the religious memories attached to the venerated names of Monteel and the Tezenas.

Mother Sacred Heart was the consoling angel in this double trial, her lively faith imparting strength to those about her. She said: "We have one more protector in Heaven; we must thank God for the dear

ones He has left us, and try to walk in the footsteps of the one He has taken to Himself." The time she spent at St. Etienne was not entirely devoted to her family. She profited by this occasion to visit her Communities in the city and surrounding country, speaking to each Sister particularly. They with childlike confidence opened their hearts to her, fearlessly, and without constraint. The good Mother never failed to ask: "My child, are you happy? Have you any trouble?" She avowed that when the Sisters were candid and open, she experienced great consolation, she read their souls as a book, and conversed with them for a long time without being fatigued. If, however, there was a lack of candour or simplicity, her attention was withdrawn, in spite of herself. She listened painfully, and found no words to reply. At times she was inwardly enlightened. "My dear child", she would say, "you have not the courage or the grace to make yourself understood, I shall tell you what is wrong"; and she would do so, her words producing a sweet and salutary effect. When she had spent several days occupied with this duty, the Sisters inquiring if she were not tired, she would reply: "Oh! no, dear Sisters, when we find, as we do here, such frankness, such confidence, and such a sincere desire to advance in virtue, nothing is fatiguing." Even grave faults, if frankly acknowledged, give us the right to hope for all things from the goodness of God. On leaving a Community, she assembled its members, pointed out the external defects she had noticed in the house, gave them kind advice, and earnestly tried to make them understand the importance of following

the holy Rule very exactly. Infractions of Rule, she would say, are like leaks from the roof of the house, or crevices in the walls, if we do not take care, the house will gradually fall into ruin. As at Mi-Careme, the slightest deviation from Rule was punished by a reprimand or a penance. If the fault were grave, she used a severity which at first was a surprise to meet in one so sweet and amiable.

Having visited all her Communities, and taken leave of her family, Mother Saered Heart hastened to rejoin her Sisters at the Mother House. They had written her letters of filial condolence, after her father's death, and told how anxiously they awaited her return. Her home-coming caused general rejoicing to all at the Mother House, of which she was the life and soul. Shortly after her return, she inspected the different departments. Nothing escaped her keen glance, and, when the Community was assembled, she would, with great tact, tell what she had remarked. She would not allow the smallest fault against religious poverty to pass uncensured, tolerated nothing expensive or elegant, but she, nevertheless, insisted on order and economy. She often passed through the dormitory, in the morning, just as the bell rang, to see if everyone answered it promptly, in conformity with the words of Scripture: "At the hour for rising, hesitate not." At meditation, she watched carefully that this exercise was piously accomplished. "I shall always remember", said a Sister, "that, while in the Chapel one day, I was overcome by sleep, when, suddenly, I felt someone touch me on the shoulder. I turned and saw our Reverend Mother. 'Would you like me to bring you

a pillow?' she said, 'you would be more comfortable.' I assure you I no longer felt like sleeping. These public corrections were made so kindly, and with so much gentleness and affability, that we were often glad to receive them, and never tempted to complain or murmur."

As at St. Etienne, she gave particular care to the recreations. "This exercise", she would say, from time to time, "is a point of Rule, and we should fulfil it as well as the others, I might say even more exactly, for meditation may be made at some other time than the hour prescribed, but it cannot be so with recreation." She also gave the example, and notwithstanding her numerous occupations, was the first to answer the recreation bell. Here a spirit of warmth and gaiety reigned, which put everyone at ease. She walked, conversed, and played games, in which all were ready to join, and they came from this exercise filled with new zeal. She loved to give them pleasant little excursions, especially on her feast day. Once the Community, with that of St. Cyr, went to Mount d'Or. At three o'clock in the morning they started, and at five everyone was in the Chapel at Mont Cindre, where the Cure of St. Cyr celebrated holy Mass. During Mass they sang hymns, and all received Holy Communion. The little Chapel never witnessed such a beautiful feast. One would think that a band of angelic spirits had descended from Heaven, and brought with them holy joy and heavenly music. Thanksgiving over, they breakfasted on the lawn, and passed the time in innocent and agreeable conversation. During the day they went to visit the Museum, in the environs

of Lyons, known as Folies-Guillot. They afterwards visited the Sisters of St. Cyr, and Mother Sacred Heart made her regular visitation, saw each of the Sisters, and gave motherly advice to all. The rest of the day was spent in the old Chapel, where the religious exercises were performed, meditation, spiritual reading, and private devotions. The murmur of prayer, and the joyful singing of hymns filled the solitude of Mont Cindre, and the ancient Hermitage saw the renewal of happy days long past. In the evening they recited, on their way to Lyons, the beads and other prayers. Gratitude and joy filled their hearts, and the whole Community, more fervent and more united than ever, thanked God and H<sup>e</sup>'s holy Mother.

As the Sisters of St. Joseph had no convent in the country, the Postulants went every Thursday to the suburbs of Lyons, preferring those localities near other houses of St. Joseph, as St. Cyr, Francheville or Dardilly. The Community of Dardilly remembered for a long time a visit made them by Mother Sacred Heart. She came in the evening, and wishing to see each one privately, a good part of the night was passed in spiritual conversation.

On the following morning, as she did not enter the Chapel for prayers and meditation, the Sisters thought she was resting after the fatigues of the previous night. "We will not awaken our dear Mother", said the Superior. "she is sleeping; I went to her room, and all was silent within." They carefully avoided making the slightest noise, lest it should wake the weary one, who, they thought, was enjoying a much needed rest. In the meantime, all went to hear Mass, and, on

returning, found the same stillness in Mother Sacred Heart's apartment. What must have been their surprise when, entering the room quietly, and not without some anxiety, they found the room in perfect order, and Mother Sacred Heart nowhere to be seen. Search was made in the house and grounds, but to no purpose. When excitement was at its highest, a dairy-maid from the Chartreuse came, smiling, and said: "You are looking for your Mother Superior. Ah! she is more active than any of you; she is over at the Chartreuse, and begged me to come and wish you good morning." On being interrogated, the maid said: "Mother Sacred Heart left your house at three o'clock in the morning, in her wagonette, and reached the Chartreuse before the Community had risen. I wish you could have seen the surprise of the Portresses, when they opened the door for her!" Mother Sacred Heart enjoyed the little ruse, and also saved her time, every minute of which was consecrated to her spiritual family.

It has been said that the manner of giving a thing is often worth more than the object given. No one knew better how to give than Mother Sacred Heart. Hearing that one of the Communities was destitute of linen and other necessaries, she wished to give some assistance, and for this purpose devised a plan which afforded great amusement to the poor Sisters. Writing to the Superior, she begged her to receive kindly two little Americans, who she said, were going to ask her hospitality. "I will send a little trousseau with them", she added, "and they will arrive tomorrow." On reading this letter the Superior was quite perplexed, and said to herself: "To please Mother Superior, I

would, indeed, impose any sacrifice on the house, but she knows our poverty. However, we must make the best of the situation." On the following day, according to expectations, a carriage arrived from the Mother House, two Sisters stepped out, then followed a large trunk. "That is the trousseau Reverend Mother was to send", thought the Superior, "and what a size! But where are the little Americans?" Hastening to welcome the visitors, she made inquiries. "We have them here", they said, laughing; and, opening a basket, presented her with two loaves of sugar, saying: "Mother Superior begged that you would not receive them unfavourably." The mysterious trunk was soon opened and found to be well packed with clothing and linens for all the Sisters. The Superior shed tears of joy and gratitude, and the whole Community blessed God for giving them such a Mother.

When there was question of the Sisters' health, Mother Sacred Heart entered into the most minute details, and gave many proofs of her care. She knew each Sister's disposition, and would not allow any of them to conceal from her their fatigues and troubles. She gave to each the assistance and remedies necessary, giving particular attention to cases of lung trouble, so often the result of teaching in crowded class rooms. She showed marked kindness to the inmates of the Infirmary, but none were offended at this; they knew she had no favourites, that all were equally loved.

If a Sister had to go a journey, she saw that a good lunch was prepared, and always added some little delicacy. Often, as the Sister was about to leave, fearing that she was not sufficiently clad, the good

Mother would hasten to her own wardrobe for extra wraps, saying: "Take these, my child, they will protect you from the cold." When the traveller returned, she received the same attention. Upon entering her room she would find fresh evidences of thoughtfulness, the author of which she could easily divine. One of the Sisters relates that she often heard the Reverend Mother thus address a Sister, who came to her for some articles of clothing: "Are you sure you have all you need?" and without waiting for a reply, she would with a happy smile, present her with a garment she herself had made. What was set aside for the use of the good Mother often disappeared in this manner; therefore, the Sister who had charge of her wardrobe, seeing that all her clothing was given to others, decided not to give her any more until she really needed it.

Sometimes in community life we meet with trials which, because they are hidden, are all the harder to bear. Earthly solace can do very little to lighten them. This cross may be the death of a father, who leaves the mother without fortune, sometimes even without the common necessities of life; or it may be orphaned children, left without a guardian and without help. Who can understand all the bitterness, all the pain, all the secret tears which are shed by a poor Sister under such trials? Her motherly tenderness discovered those invisible crosses, she mingled her tears with those of the afflicted, she did all in her power to comfort them, and also begged the assistance of the Community to lighten the poignant sorrow of their companions. God alone knows how many parents, children and orphans she aided. Often when Novices made their

profession, and divided their clothing in common, she claimed a share for her proteges. The Sisters in charge of the linens knew the great joy the good Mother experienced in giving, and relates that, when she was lucky enough to find that for which she was looking, she would call a Sister aside and say: "I know your good parents will be pleased to receive this, therefore make haste and send it to them." A great Doctor of the Church says that a mother must have a heart ever ready to love, and a hand ever ready to give to those she loves. We see to what a high degree Mother Sacred Heart practised these two duties of a mother. Judging from her kindness and attention to the younger Sisters and their parents, we can easily imagine what were her feelings of devoted tenderness towards the senior Sisters, especially towards the aged Mother St. John. This noble soul bore a strong resemblance to the great Apostle. After having said with him: "I fear neither tribulation nor chains", she could now say: "My life is hidden in Jesus Christ;" I know how to suffer; I know how to accept humiliations, my Saviour has taught me this science." We know where to find the Divine Model, Who, for thirty years, led a hidden life, in silence and humility. The humble Foundress, after the example of her Divine Master, endeavoured to avoid the veneration with which she was treated. A holy emulation in virtue was kept up between the aged Mother and her worthy daughter, Mother Sacred Heart. Mother St. John, who was now eighty years old, still knelt to ask permissions, and Mother Sacred Heart would raise her from the ground and casting herself at her feet, in her turn would beg

her blessing, thus sharing in her act of humility. In the lives of the Saints, we do not find anything more edifying or more touching than this combat of humility, in which one rejoiced in being the lower, while the other tolerated being looked upon as the greater.

Mother St. John never ceased to thank God for His goodness to her dear Sisters. She was happy to see Mother Sacred Heart love the Sisters as she herself loved them, to know that she continued her good work, by sympathizing with them in their sufferings, labouring for their sanctification, and using every means in her power to develop the resources of the Congregation. They followed her example, they walked in her footsteps, the Mother lived again in her children. Our venerable Foundress in her cell, prayed as Moses did on the Mount, and while blessing God for His great goodness, besought Him to assist Mother Sacred Heart in her trials and struggles. She spent her time between her cell and the Chapel, walking with the assistance of a cane, not wishing to trouble a Sister to help her. After the evening meal, the venerable Mother would make a profound bow to Mother Sacred Heart, and taking a pitcher of water, would return to her room, reciting prayers as she went. It was thus that the Fathers of the desert acted, they did not wish to be served. "I have not come to be served, but to serve", our Lord has said. The Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph, especially those of the Mother House, will never forget these acts of humility and simplicity.

If Mother Sacred Heart's maternal ear could detect the slightest cough of an ailing Sister, she was still more attentive to any sign of indisposition in Mother

St. John, whom she regarded as the Mother of the Institute. Her tenderness, respect and care redoubled as she realized that this precious life was fast passing away. She would have prevented the flight of time, if it were possible, as she felt that it must soon separate her from one she loved so dearly. An accident occurred about this period, which increased her anxiety regarding her. The aged Superior, in crossing the court-yard, slipped on some ice and fell; she was unable to rise, and the Sisters ran in great haste to her assistance, lifted her tenderly from the ground, and carried her to her room. The physicians, Doctors Bonnet and Berlois, of the Hotel Dieu, were summoned immediately and found that her shoulder was dislocated, and that an operation was necessary, which, on account of her age, would be serious. Mother Sacred Heart never left the bedside of her beloved Mother, and the Sisters awaited the result in prayer. The patient sufferer had a crucifix placed before her, and kept her eyes constantly fixed upon it. She who had braved the executioners, and played with their chains, had no need to fear skilful surgeons, or the instruments used by their experienced hands. The great courage and patience shown by the aged and infirm Religious so surprised Dr. Bonnet that he could not but exclaim: "It is good to have to deal with holy Religious, one can do what he will without difficulty." This good Mother, in the midst of her suffering, has given us an example of heroic patience and sublime resignation."

While Mother St. John was confined to her room, Mother Sacred Heart and the Community united their fervent petitions for the recovery of their dear Mother.

God blessed their filial love, the venerable invalid grew strong, much sooner than they dared to hope, and the Congregation had the happiness of preserving for some time the life of their Mother and Foundress. Mother Sacred Heart had assisted at this operation upon Mother St. John, and followed the various phases of its course with loving anxiety. It was the same in all trials of this kind that her spiritual daughters were obliged to endure; all wished her near them, to sustain them by her presence. It was she who held Sister Adelaide in her arms during a severe and critical operation, necessitated by a frightful cancer. "You will be with me", said another Sister. "while they remove the fistula from my eye" and the good Mother held the sufferer's hand during the painful ordeal.

"It is the nature of love", says a master of the spiritual life, "to render assistance. There are a thousand things that it sees, understands, feels, and knows how to remedy or alleviate. There are a multitude of duties and little services that only love can accomplish. Love quickens the intellect, gives to the eye clear-sightedness, to the feet speed, to the arm strength, to the hand gentleness." These instincts and qualities of Christian love explain the spiritual success with which Mother Sacred Heart carried out her noble mission. She loved her daughters with a holy love, and from the Mother House it was diffused through out the various houses of the Congregation, which were visited by her from time to time. It is not astonishing, then, that we see so many noble virtues exemplified among those Sisters who dwelt on the Hillside of St. Bruno.

## CHAPTER XI

### HER VIRTUES AS SUPERIOR

As we have related in a previous chapter, the Religious of St. Joseph, prior to the Revolution, and during the first years that followed it, formed, after the example of the Sisters of the Visitation, houses independent of one another. A united ecclesiastical and administrative government had, it is true, replaced this individual management, but the establishment of a uniform discipline called for time and consideration; this the very nature of the case demanded. There are certain customs which time alone can efface. The desired reform being effected, it is necessary to maintain it, hence the necessity of general inspection, which should be made with patience, charity and prudence.

Mother Sacred Heart now hastened to acquit herself of this important duty of her charge, having consecrated, as seemed fitting, the fruits of her zeal to the Mother House. She was not unacquainted with the perplexities and difficulties of this delicate task, and for this reason, before setting out on a visitation, confided herself in a special manner to Divine Providence, praying Him to guide her, direct her proceedings and bless her words, so that all might be done for the greater honour and glory of God. Soon she became aware of certain little apprehensions on the part of those whom she visited.

Later, she laughingly told that, in one of her first

visits, she saw at a distance, the Sisters taking their recreation, some of them standing at the open door. The Sisters perceived her also, and in the twinkling of an eye, the whole Community disappeared. When the Superior entered, the house seemed vacant, she searched several rooms, but no one presented herself. The Mother and her companion were laughing over their deception, when, finally, a Lay Sister arrived. Mother Sacred Heart welcomed her with her usual amiability, while the other Sisters listened in a neighbouring apartment. The welcome extended to the Lay Sister dispelled their thoughtless fears: "She is not so terrible as we thought", said the fugitives, "hear how kindly she speaks"; the door was gently opened, and the Sisters appeared. Mother Sacred Heart advanced to meet them, tenderly embraced them, and very soon the whole Community was in her arms, blessing God, and perfectly happy in her company. Often, when the Superior-General was leaving a house, the Sisters would be heard to say: "Oh! how could we fear such a visit; may she often return to see us! What a pleasure to be with her!" The local Superiors above all, were happy to offer her their services. "You will give us great pleasure", answered the Reverend Mother, "if you can come to our aid; however, be not uneasy about it, think of your own daughters before all." This proof of gentle goodness delighted the hearts of the Sisters, and disposed them to become interested in the needs of the Mother House, the requirements of which they had occasionally feared.

The Mother-General sometimes arrived at a house unexpectedly, and saw at a glance whether the general

state of affairs was conformable to Rule. Each Sister rendered to her a detailed account of her dispositions, habits, occupations, health, and the customs of the house. She also visited the schools, questioned the pupils, examined their exercise books and their work, carefully noting at the same time, whether order and silence were well observed; she was accustomed to say that upon the discipline of the school depended the progress of the pupils. She then proceeded to examine their intercourse with those outside the Community; she desired that, in their dealings with the parish priest, the Sisters, by their words and actions, should show great respect. "You are here", she said to them, "to aid him in the salvation of souls. You should never join in complaints that seculars raise against him, nor even listen to them, your duty is to soften, to pacify, to reconcile, to excite confidence in souls, especially in those of your children. Act in a similar manner towards other priests, say nothing that might injure their sacred ministry, and when obliged to speak of them, do so with the utmost respect and consideration." She wisely suppressed useless or too frequent visits to relatives.

She prudently urged that the Sisters should render to public officials the honour due them, never to take part in their difficulties, or the divisions which might arise amongst them; she gave the same advice regarding school inspectors. "They are", she said, "the representatives of authority, and we ought to obey them as long as they demand of us nothing contrary to our Rule, or the glory of God. To the local Superiors, Mother Sacred Heart earnestly recommended the

care of the Sisters' health, and when she perceived that the food was not sufficiently nourishing, she urged a change of diet; she insisted on this for the Sisters in the Mountains of Forcz, where they had for meat only a little rancid bacon. "Nothing contrary to poverty", the prudent Mother would say, "but our young Sisters are not as strong as the senior members of the Community. The classes are increasing, therefore the labour is greater, and they must be able to meet these new conditions." Occasionally, she came to a convent at meal time, when her keen glance soon perceived the quality of the food prepared for the Sisters; nothing escaped her notice. If they had only bread and potatoes, she would say: "This is not nourishing enough for those who have to work hard." In the words of St. Basil the Great, she would say: "You are the workmen of Christ; take all that is necessary, that you may do your work courageously and well, as befitting His servants. Let us not seek repose during life's short day, let us await life's evening, when the Master shall come to pay the labourer his hire." In a similar case, the wise and holy Madame Barat gave this advice to her daughters: "For the love of Jesus, eat and sleep well, as you are charged with the care of a great number of children, and must have the strength necessary for the discharge of your duties to this little world." The wisdom of the Saints bears the seal of goodness, extending to both soul and body, and Mother Sacred Heart manifested this wisdom, in her spiritual conversations, during her visits to her Communities. What a privilege for those who were so fortunate as to hear her give instructions, when the

Sisters were free to group themselves, like children, around her! Their hearts were inflamed by her ardent words, which penetrated like darts of fire.

At one time she recommended humility, abjection, hatred of self; at another time she unmasked and pointed out the thousand little miseries and subtleties of self-love, which conceal themselves, sometimes, even under the religious habit, and recalled the words of the Divine Spouse in the Canticles: "Catch these little foxes which destroy the vines." Very often she insisted on mutual support, wishing them to treat each other with great esteem and consideration, which might be shown by words, by discreet silence, by the voice, by the expression of the face, and by gestures. Religious houses should be, at it were, embalmed by the sweet perfume of charity. Her discourses, though unstudied, were full of truth and unction. Her sympathetic words engraved themselves deeply in their hearts, they were never forgotten, and often governed their whole afterlife.

She conjured Superiors to exercise the greatest care and the utmost delicacy in the choice of subjects. "Be not anxious for dowries", she would constantly repeat, "but look simply for Divine vocations." "Those who wish to have children of silver can never have those of gold." Indeed, wealth could not entice her, nor did it have any weight with her. If a young girl appeared to take advantage of it, the humble Mother would not hesitate to say to her: "My child, you can easily enter another community; you would be better elsewhere than here, we are poor." If, on the contrary, another absolutely deprived of dowry, appeared to

her truly humble, upright and docile, endowed with common sense, and disposed to give her whole heart to God, she was very happy to receive her. "There is here", she would pleasantly say, "the material with which to purchase Heaven, and pay the dowry of the souls that our Lord Jesus Christ has chosen for His Spouses. I would much rather receive the riches of God than the wealth of man; they are more generous, they are given without measure."

Her courage equalled her wisdom and her goodness. The journeys through the Mountains of Forez were painful and laborious, as it was necessary to go long distances on foot, because of the rugged peaks and bad roads. "Have courage", the good Mother would say to the Sister who accompanied her, "God counts all our steps." She would rise very early in the morning, sometimes at two or three o'clock, in order to hear holy Mass at the town whither they were going. She reanimated the spirits of those around her, and in the midst of the greatest privations and fatigues, her gaiety was unalterable. One day, a lady of high rank came to take her in her carriage, with lackeys before and behind. "Today", she said, laughingly, to her companion, "we are treated as princesses, and tomorrow we shall be treated as peasants." The next day they found themselves, indeed, in a poor cart, drawn by oxen. "This", she said, "is more suitable for the Sisters of St. Joseph."

Meeting a local Superior of great simplicity, conducting a child to her mother, who lived some distance away, Mother Sacred Heart was requested to undertake the task, which she did with the greatest goodwill.

During the journey the little one said not a word, and scarcely dared to raise her eyes towards the Reverend Mother when she received a caress, some fruit, or some sweets. The instant the child perceived the steeple of the village church her timidity disappeared, and joy shone in her eyes. "This is my town", she cried, "see, there is our house!" A woman, who was waiting, came towards the carriage, the child threw herself into her arms, exclaiming: "Mother, go quickly and get some milk for those Sisters who have been so good to me", at the same time enumerating all the acts of kindness that had been bestowed upon her. The carriage stopped only a moment, but long enough for mother and child to bring milk from their cottage, to quench the thirst of the travellers. "What gratitude", said Mother Sacred Heart, with emotion; "it is a lesson for us! After a benefit received from our dear Lord we should, like this good child, hasten to acknowledge the gift as coming from the hands of His Divine Providence."

In her visits to the different houses of the Congregation, she insisted strongly on the teaching of the Catechism, "that little book which", says an eminent ecclesiastic, "has left nothing unanswered as regards soul or body." When speaking on this subject, the Mother General frequently reminded the young Sisters of the instructions which they had received from Sister Louis Joseph, who had been Directrix of the Novitiate. Meditation and teaching the Catechism were her greatest delight, and she often said she would be perfectly happy if obedience sent her to teach the Catechism to poor country children. Consequently,

she neglected nothing to educate the young Sisters, who would in the future be called upon to fulfil this holy ministry. "How happy you will be", she said, "when called to some small, isolated village, where you will be surrounded by little neglected children, created, however, to the image and likeness of God. Your lot is, indeed, an enviable one. Such was that of the great Gerson, who, after having directed one of the first universities in the world for nearly thirty years, retired to Lyons, in the Convent of the Celestins, and there spent the last years of his life catechising little children."

"Our souls, enclosed in the prison of our bodies", writes the Author of *The Imitation*, have need of food and light, hence God has given us the Holy Eucharist for our nourishment, and His Divine Word as a light to guide our steps." Sister Louis Joseph's delight was to be near the Tabernacle, and the Holy Scriptures had for her an irresistible attraction; she had them in her hands day and night, she knew them almost by heart, and her happiness was to speak of them, and the mysteries of holy religion. Her explanations and development, even of the elevated truths, were so beautiful, so clear, and so precise, and gave so much charm to her conversations and conferences that one would wish to listen to her always. Her observance of Rule was perfect, all religious virtues shone in her with unusual brightness, and were finally crowned by eight months of admirable patience upon a bed of pain. Always occupied with others, she forgot herself, and when spoken to regarding her sufferings, she would answer: "It is true I suffer much, but what is it in

comparison with the reward?" In her eyes, sufferings were better than actions. Meditating on the mystery of the Cross, God had made her understand their value. As, in the order of nature, suffering makes the man, so, in the order of grace, it makes the saint. Thus, in her trials, Sister Louis Joseph never uttered the least word of complaint or murmuring, and always welcomed, with so sweet a smile, those who approached her, that she seemed almost insensible to her pains. She had but one fear, that of offending her Divine Spouse; the least appearance of sin filled her heart with sadness. The night which preceded her happy death was passed in the most lively transports of love; she exclaimed, from time to time: "Oh, my Jesus! when shall I see Thee face to face? As the hart pants after the living waters, my soul sighs after Thee, my God! O Mary, my good Mother, tomorrow I shall see you and shall see you always!" At six in the morning she received with angelic fervour, her Eucharistic God, for Whom she had longed with so much ardour during the night; two hours afterwards, she followed Him to Heaven, bearing with her the regrets of the whole Community, leaving behind her the odour of her sanctity, and the precious instructions she had given the Sisters. After such a life and such a death, it was not astonishing that Mother Sacred Heart loved to speak of Sister Louis Joseph, in those visits in which she frequently met Sisters whom she had instructed.

Her first visitation accomplished, the Superior-General returned to the Mother House, happy to be again with her daughters, and to have witnessed the order, regularity, union, charity, and spirit of faith

which reigned in the religious Communities she had visited. Her affection, her zeal, and her devotion towards her pious and dear Congregation was increased. Some time after, in 1840, she addressed a circular letter to inform the Superiors of some important and unexpected changes taking place in the ecclesiastical administration, which specially affected the Congregation. She writes: "Mgr. de Bonald, our new Archbishop, transferred from Puy to Lyons, appears to take a lively interest in our community, the cradle of which has been blessed in his former episcopal city, by one of his venerable predecessors, Mgr. Henry de Maupas, our Founder. We have already received more than one proof of his kindness and solicitude in our behalf. One of his first cares was to give us a spiritual father; Father Cholleton has retired to a religious community, thus crowning, by his humility and absolute renouncement, a life of zeal and devotedness. The care of directing us has passed from his hands to those of Father de Grange, formerly parish priest of St. Louis and St. Etienne, and now Vicar-General. We have to thank Monseigneur for such a choice, and bless God, Who inspired him. It is proper, my dear daughters, that each Community address a few lines to our new father to thank him for assuming the charge of our Congregation, and to assure him of our entire submission to his direction, and our willingness to follow his wise counsel."

Thenceforward, as we have said, Father Grange, in union with the Superior-General, devoted himself to the well-being of the Congregation of St. Joseph. They imparted increased activity to the studies of

the Religious who were destined for the instruction and education of youth. It is necessary, they said, that the Sisters should be able to assiduously fulfil the task before them. The Novitiate was the special object of their solicitude. To facilitate and strengthen their academical work, the probation of postulants was prolonged to ten months, and at the end of two years' novitiate, the novices were subjected to a minute examination of the studies they had prepared.

Another circular was sent to all the Communities of the Congregation. "Our Superior-General", wrote the Reverend Mother, "desires that in each house of the Congregation there shall be a library, containing, as well as religious books, some classical works. He also wishes the Superiors to send their Novices to the Mother House two or three months before the time of their profession, and recommends that, before their admission, they should submit to an examination on all branches of their studies." Thus, instruction closely accompanied and followed the religious formation. "We should be able to give a reason for the faith that is in us", says Montaigne. Another philosopher remarks "It is necessary that science should be perfumed by religion, to prevent it from being corrupted." An American scholar has said: "Learning for the wicked is an instrument of evil, and very often, in their hands, the light they receive is transformed into fire, with which they burn themselves; the education of both Religious and laymen, carries with it the well-being of society." Under so wise and so enlightened direction, the Institute of St. Joseph increased every day, subjects arriving from all parts. At the sight of this

blessed fruitfulness, Mother Sacred Heart believed that the moment had come to put in practice these words of the Prophet Isaias: "Enlarge the place of thy tents, and stretch out the skin of thy tabernacle; spare not; lengthen thy cords, and strengthen their stature, for thou shalt pass unto the right hand and unto the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and shall inhabit the desolate cities." At the news that they were about to build, several of the Sisters, especially the seniors, became disquieted, knowing the modest income of the house. These fears were not without foundation, and were shared even by Father Plantier, then Chaplain of St. Joseph's, and later Bishop of Nimes, and until his death one of the most faithful friends and sincere admirers of Mother Sacred Heart. She led him one day, to the site of the new building, and submitted to him the plan. Astonished and surprised at the boldness of the enterprise, he cried out: "What! Reverend Mother, do you not fear to become bankrupt?" "Oh! no, Father", she answered, laughing, "I rely on Providence, and confidently hope that He will not fail me; you know that St. Joseph is constituted our Proeurator, this is his affair." Everyone who manifested the same doubts received this reply, so full of confidence and faith in Divine Providence.

In the year 1842 they began the construction of the Novitiate. To obtain the blessing of Heaven, Mother Sacred Heart wrote to all the Communities: "I recommend to your fervent prayers an important affair which concerns the interests of all our dear Congregation. We are making a novena for this intention; be kind

enough, my dear Sisters, to aid us by uniting your supplications with ours." Not satisfied with prayer alone, the Sisters and Postulants were even willing to help this holy work by manual labour. They carried stone to the places indicated by the workmen. One of the Sisters, in writing to a companion, said: "Oh! how many bricks we carried during our novitiate! Very often Reverend Mother helped us to carry baskets of earth, stone, and other materials. She was always present to encourage us by her example, which alone sufficed; words were not needed.

In her intercourse with the workmen, Mother Sacred Heart had the secret of gaining their good will. She looked upon them as suffering members of Jesus Christ, and imitators of his laborious life. She informed herself of what interested them most, their wives, their children, their country, and lessened their fatigues by a sympathy which came straight from the heart. When the heat was great, or when the work increased, she saw they were provided with necessary refreshments. None could resist the good Mother's kindness, all were full of respect and veneration for her, and willing to do whatever she wished. On Good Friday she said to them: "Today we must make the adoration of the Cross; you are all Christians, I know, and you are not ashamed of it; for that reason, I am sure you will have no difficulty in attending at our pious ceremony. Come with us." They not only attended, but were moved to tears; when the Sisters went to kiss the Cross they said, to each other; "Let us go and do as they do", and immediately followed the Sisters, to render their homage to Jesus crucified.

Fearing accidents, the prudent Mother said prayers every day, with the Community, for the protection of the workmen. But God sent them a great trial. Just when they thought all danger was past, the vaults of the cellar fell in, and buried several unfortunates under the rubbish. The whole Community hastened to the place of the accident, and worked with all their strength and energy. Those who could not work went to the Chapel to pray, and others to the pharmacy, to prepare bandages and remedies for the injured. Two of the men were suffocated under the accumulated ruins, and several were injured. That was a day of mourning for the Community, especially for Mother Sacred Heart, who did all in her power to relieve their sufferings, and repair as far as possible the consequences of this great misfortune.

In the midst of all these occupations, the indefatigable Superior did not forget the needs of a house which the venerable Mother St. John had purchased at Vernaison, as a place of rest for the Sisters who had become invalided through age, work and infirmity. Father Lacordiere has said: "Repose for the aged labourer is at once a right and a dignity. That peace which crowns their years reveals another charm of virtue which, in the aged Religious, is more manifest than in others." Mother Sacred Heart would have been willing to transform into a palace the house purchased by Mother St. John, but the apartments and garden were small, badly arranged, and inconvenient. On one side extended vast and beautiful grounds, belonging to M. Barillot, which she desired to purchase. In many ways, the Ecclesiastical Sup-

eriors were also interested in the foundation of Vernaison. Writing to her Religious, Mother Sacred Heart said, "I recommend to your charity the requests which our Superiors make in favour of our establishment at Vernaison. Several of our houses have subscribed; you will do your part with the same zeal; do not forget our infirm and aged; Vernaison should be for them the immediate preparation for Heaven." This appeal was heard, and, in 1842, she was enabled to purchase the grounds from M. Barillot, and make the necessary alterations in the house. Providence seemed to co-operate in the necessity of her daughters.

One day she needed four hundred francs, and the purse was empty. A poor man presented himself at the gate and asked for a sou. "Wait", said the good Mother, to a young Sister, "here are four, take them to him, and say to St. Joseph it is in his name I give them, and that I beg of him to send me the four hundred francs I need this evening." In the afternoon, the Portress came to tell the Superior that a person from a distance came to settle an account. The Sister who, in the morning, had given the alms to the poor man, was sent to attend to the business; she returned with four hundred francs, which she gave joyfully to the Superior, saying: "Here is the money you asked from St. Joseph this morning."

The Abbe de Rance, the Reformer of La Trappe, was advised to spend some time in solitude, that he might have leisure to cast a retrospective glance over his past life, to take a breath, as it were, before setting out upon the great journey from which no one ever returns. With the leisure accorded to the old and

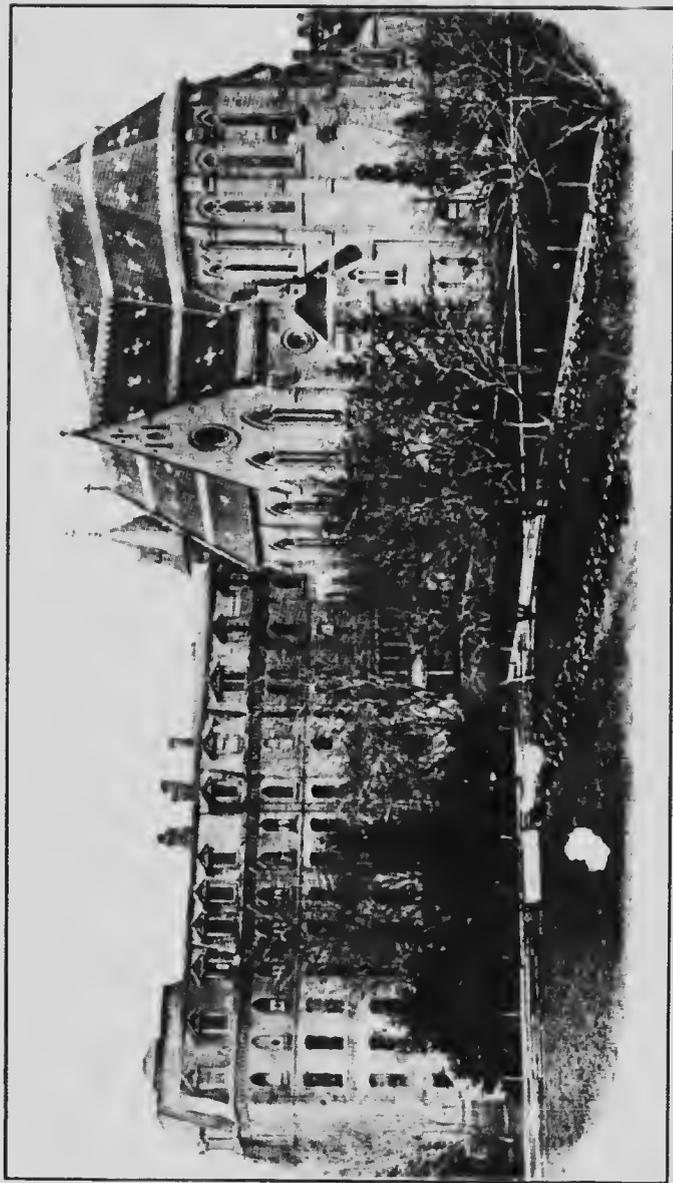
toil-worn, and the care bestowed upon their infirmities, Vernaison offered to the Religious of St. Joseph the advantage of being able to review their lives before entering upon that eternity towards which they were gliding as the waters of the river to the ocean. "No lot is more enviable", says St. Gregory of Nazianzen, "than that of him who has entirely closed his doors to the world, who hears the sounds from without but as far-off echoes of sighs and sufferings. Rising above the circumstances of this fading life, he reflects, in the mirror of his soul, the divine realities; he mounts, each day, step by step, the ladder of light, he converses with angels, his feet upon earth, his heart in Heaven. I love this dear solitude, which is the place of my repose, and I would change it only for the Church's first-born, the martyrs, whose names are inscribed in Heaven, within the gates of the Eternal Mansions." Thus spoke the holy Doctor, of the last dear solitude to which he had retired, after the labours, the trials and sorrows of life. It was to prepare the same happiness for their cherished daughters that the two venerable Superiors, Mother St. John and Mother Sacred Heart, founded and beautified, with so much solicitude, the retreat at Vernaison.

## CHAPTER XII

### HER VISITATIONS

WHILE Mother Sacred Heart was actively employed in enlarging the Mother House and Vernaison, the venerable Mother St. John, foundress of both houses, was nearing the close of her saintly career. Full of years and merits, she was ripe for the harvest; a sheaf, as it were, bending under the weight of its own rich fruitfulness. Mother Sacred Heart loved to speak of her to the Sisters; it seemed to soften her grief to share it with others. In a circular letter to some of the Houses she wrote: "I regret to tell you that the illness of Mother St. John occasions us the greatest uneasiness." Later she wrote: "The state of our Venerable Mother St. John alarms us, although she is somewhat better. Let us continue to ask of our Lord the prolongation of a life dear to us by many titles."

Unfortunately, this improvement did not last long, and Mother Sacred Heart wrote to her daughters: "The health of our venerated and well-beloved Mother St. John causes us grave fears, since age renders her unable to fight against her illness. What remains to us is to hope in God, and redouble our prayers for her preservation. You know how justly she is entitled to our filial love, as she has been, so to speak, the maker of our Congregation. Her long administration has been remarkable both for the wisdom of her acts and the success of her works. There is scarcely one



MOTHER HOUSE, TORONTO, ONT

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among us whom she has not received to her holy engagements, and her goodness, her great perfection, her admirable observance, have made her, and still make her at the age of eighty-four, a model for all. Should not these memories excite in us an ardent desire for the restoration of her health? With what fervour should we not unite in prayer to God that He should leave to us, for our imitation, our gratitude, and our love, one so full of experience, virtues and merits." This letter was dated March 11th, 1843.

For several months the venerable invalid continued in a languishing state, during which each of her daughters considered it a privilege to attend to her needs, and to receive her parting words of advice.

As death drew near, the resignation and joy of Mother St. John's soul ceased not for an instant to illumine her countenance. She spoke with childlike confidence of her last hour, and had no thought but of fulfilling the Will of God. Her beautiful soul restrained her desire to see the end of her exile. "Have I much more time to live?" she asked, a few moments before expiring. At the answer that her chains would soon be broken, an ineffable smile of happiness radiated her features. Her death was like the repose of St. John, the well-beloved disciple, a tranquil sleep upon the breast of her Divine Master. To her, whose earnest desire had been to die upon a scaffold, surrounded by executioners, God gave the inexpressible consolation of dying upon a bed, surrounded by her beloved children. The soul of this wise virgin, whose lamp was lighted by faith and resplendent with the brightness of her good works, was admitted to the nuptials of

her holy Spouse, Whom she had loved and served for nearly eighty-five years.

Mother Sacred Heart wrote to her daughters: "Our Reverend Mother St. John is no more; after sixty-three and a half years of religious profession God has called her to Himself, on the morning of Nov 22, 1843, aged 84 years and 8 months. Her last moments were as beautiful as her life had always been. Patience and sweetness accompanied her to the end. She died the death of the just, full of years and merits. Her obsequies took place on the 23rd, with a religious pomp worthy of her who was its object. All the Sisters, who were able, came to take part in the ceremonies. It was very sweet to see them, in the name of the whole Congregation pay a last tribute of regret and love to her whom we had so long venerated as the most perfect of Religious, the most prudent of Superiors and the most tender of Mothers. Let us remember in our prayers the soul of our beloved Mother, and may the ardour of our supplications in her behalf correspond to the benefits we have received from her, and the rich heritage of religious traditions she has bequeathed to us."

God had endowed Mother St. John with rare goodness, exquisite tact, sound judgment, and above all, good common sense, which Bossuet calls the master of the human life. Brought up in a conservative manner, she possessed in a high degree greatness of soul, nobility of thought, strength of character, and the patriarchal simplicity of olden times. The perfume of her virtues has been carefully preserved, even to the most remote extremities of those regions where

her Community has been established. Among the members of the saintly and heroic colony of the Sisters of St. Joseph in America the memory of their Foundress is religiously cherished. Letters have come from this far off country bearing the impress of their profound veneration, which, like fragrant balsam, embalmed their narrations.

The flourishing colony of the Second Aquitaine, ever recognized in Mother St. John the living traditions of their Institute. Mother St. Joseph, the Foundress of the Sisters in Bordeaux, meeting Mother St. John at Aix, in Savoy, and remarking a slight difference in the form and size of their guimpes, hastened to cut one exactly the same as that worn by the good Mother, which pattern has been carefully preserved at the Mother House at Bordeaux. This incident gives us an idea of the respect shown for the holy habit, as well as the spirit of Mother St. John and Mother St. Joseph.

The Community at Lyons have the good fortune to possess a faithful likeness of their Foundress, which they owe to the talent of the Honorable Madame de Veriau, benefactress of the Sisters of St. Joseph at Grand Lemps. During a visit of gratitude which Mother St. John paid her in 1836, she, profiting by her rare artistic genius, sketched the Superior while they were conversing together. Mother St. John perceiving this, would have retired but propriety prevented her doing so. She afterwards showed much displeasure when, on visiting the mission houses, she found copies of this portrait, which had been, as it were, stolen from her, but thanks to this amiable stratagem the Sisters

of St. Joseph can now contemplate the features of the venerable Mother.

Her power with God was many times manifested during life and after death. In 1838 a postulant was attacked by brain fever so violent that it required several persons to hold her. She was brought to the gates of the tomb without being able to receive the last Sacraments. In this extremity Mother St. John approached and said to her: "In the name of God, my child, calm yourself", and taking some holy water she made the sign of the Cross upon the closed eye-lids of the sick girl. At that instant the fever left her, she regained her reason and was perfectly conscious for more than an hour, during which she received the last Sacraments in a holy manner. Everyone attributed this precious favour to the virtue of Mother St. John.

After the death of the venerable Mother, a young Religious, while occupied, through obedience, in writing some details of her life, was grieved to hear that her uncle, whom she loved as a second father, had been attacked by a frightful epidemic and was in danger of death. "Good Mother St. John", she cried with faith and simplicity, "I am working for you; if you are in Heaven obtain for me the life of my dear uncle." In a short time, contrary to all expectations, the sick man recovered. All glory and thanks to God and to her who interceded so efficaciously for her dear daughter!

Three months after her death a devoted Religious made an offering to the Curé of Ars for the repose of her soul. The holy priest refused it saying, without

hesitation. "Your Reverend Mother does not need it, she is already in glory; I know it." If these words were not the effect of a special revelation, they expressed at least the high idea the Curé had of the sanctity of the venerable Mother.

Two Religious of St. Joseph visiting in Lyons desired to go and pray at Mother St. John's grave, but were unable to find it in the midst of the vast necropolis of Loyasse. Fatigued and desolate after an hour of fruitless search they threw themselves upon their knees, praying their Mother with tears to show them where she rested. "My Sisters, I am here", said a sweet voice, which was at once recognized and understood by the Sisters, who found themselves, not knowing it, near the grave for which they were searching. What must have been their fervour in the midst of their sorrow and what consolation to know that they had one more intercessor in heaven!

A month after the death of Mother St. John a new sorrow saddened the heart of Mother Sacred Heart. Mother Theodosia, the Mistress of Novices, fell dangerously ill. Prayers were immediately solicited from all the Congregation. "We recommend to your piety", writes the Mother-General, "our dear Mother Theodosia, whose sufferings cause us the greatest uneasiness. We beg you to unite in a novena we are about to make for her in honour of the Blessed Virgin." Mother Theodosia possessed the art of influencing minds and hearts. Serious and firm by nature, clear-sighted and unerring in judgment, at the same time gentle and kind in manner, she was loved and feared by all her Novices. With these rare qualities, she had the

advantage of a fascinating appearance, and though apparently of a somewhat cold exterior, she was really warm hearted and sympathetic. As the Sisters grew to appreciate all the goodness of her character, they learned to love her more and to fear her less. "Her penetration was such that she seemed to read our hearts", said one of her Novices. "Before we had spoken to her she had unveiled our thoughts and the motives of our actions, thus sparing us the difficulty of a painful avowal." Self-love could practise no deception that Mother Theodosia was not able to expose. She followed it into its most secret recesses, and waged untiring war against it, sometimes by timely remarks, sometimes by simple reflections.

Mother Theodosia desired to see in her novices a solid and energetic virtue, able to fight without mercy the jealousies, and what she called the littlenesses of women; and the novices far from fearing her judicious criticisms, invited them by making known to her their whole souls.

Mother Sacred Heart, who confided to her all that concerned the welfare of the Novitiate, supplicated our Lord to spare her to the Congregation, and did everything in her power to restore her to health, but with no avail. The fruit was ripe for heaven and Jesus willed to gather it. She died on the 19th of December, 1843, and at the age of 36 years went to join Mother St. John in heaven. The Superior-General was deeply moved at her death, and said to the Mother-Assistant, Mother Marie-Louise: "We can never replace her. I can but repeat, 'My God, Thou hast given and Thou hast taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord'.

Let us pray and beg prayers for this saintly Religious. The thought of heaven and the happiness these holy souls enjoy can alone soften our grief. Oh! let us force ourselves to imitate their virtues, that we too may die in the arms of God."

While mourning the loss of her cherished daughters, Mother Sacred Heart felt these precious deaths as a warning of the flight of time, and the importance of sanctifying herself and her Community. In the midst of profound sorrow, this great soul did not allow herself to be discouraged; on the contrary she redoubled her efforts to imitate them, according to the recommendation of the Apostles: "Remember your Prelates who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

Mother Sacred Heart now thought it well to revisit the different houses under her government. The building of the Novitiate and the improvements at Vernaison being completed she prepared to go to Corsica, where the Sisters of St. Joseph had a large Colony.

This foundation, as we have said, dated from 1824. About this time, Cardinal Fesch, Archbishop of Lyons, having retired to Rome after the downfall of his nephew, Napoleon 1st. requested Mother St. John to send Sisters of St. Joseph to found religious schools at Ajaccio, his native city. With the approbation of Mgr. de Pins, Administrator of the Diocese of Lyons, she hastened to respond to the pious desire of the exiled Cardinal, and on September 17th. 1824, five Sisters embarked for Corsica, Sisters St. Louis, St. Regis. St. Clare. St. Xavier and Alexander, the first

Religious of France after their re-establishment to cross the sea and found a House of their order outside their mother country. After the difficulties, perplexities and sufferings inseparable from all beginnings, the little colony received a visit from their recently appointed spiritual father, the Abbe Barret, a Missionary from the Chartreuse, and Chaplain of the Mother House of St. Joseph. The choice was a most happy one, as the Abbe Barret not only possessed an enlightened mind, great ability and learning, and a rare gift of wisdom, but united to these qualities great humility, strength of will and well tried devotedness. He reanimated the courage of the little Community, reunited and strengthened the ties which bound them to the Mother House and the Ecclesiastical Superior of Lyons, and conducted for the Sisters a retreat which produced much fruit. Not content with regulating the present, the Abbe desired to provide for the future. He gave in writing advice and rules of conduct to be read every month, and during the days of recollection; these are religiously preserved in the annals of the Community of Ajaccio. In this city were established two houses under the direction of the Sisters of St. Joseph, one a school and the other a foundling asylum, established in 1826 by the Count de Lentivy, Prefect of the Department. As Abbe Barret provided that each house should have a Superior elected by the votes of the professed Sisters, Sister St. Regis was chosen as Superior of the Community in charge of the schools, and Sister Calixtus of that in charge of the Asylum. He confirmed both elections, and named Sister St. Regis principal Superior of Corsica. Her life was afterwards

written by Reverend Father Crozet, a zealous and learned priest, who was for a long period Director and Superior of the Sisters on the Island.

This choice secured the future of the Religious Colony. Mother St. Regis governed the Community until her death in 1847. "Never was soul", says Father Crozet, "more filled with faith and confidence in God, with the love of her divine Spouse, or with charity towards her neighbour. She was simple and pure in her intentions, upright in all her actions, constant in striving for religious perfection. Her charity, generosity and zeal covered the Island with Christian works, and gave to the colony of St. Joseph, in Corsica, a development which soon enabled them to count two hundred Religious and fifteen establishments. Between 1835 and 1837, Mother St. Regis went to Rome with Cardinal Fesch, to confer on matters concerning the religious institutions on the Island.

Fathers Valois and Crozet, priests of the Chartreuse, continued the good work which Abbe Barret had begun for the Sisters in Corsica. The precious traditions left by Mother St. Regis were carefully preserved, and her rare virtues faithfully copied by Mother St. Calixtus, who was called upon to succeed her. Directed and formed by these two saintly Mothers, the Sisters of St. Joseph in Corsica are by their regularity and fervour, a glory to their Institute.

While Mother St. Regis was Superior, Mother Sacred Heart made a visitation to this portion of her spiritual family. As she was the first Superior-General to visit Corsica, this was an event, not only for the Sisters, but also for the entire Island. The Mother General

left in March of the year 1844, accompanied by her Secretary, Sister M. Bernardine, and two novices. From Marsailles Mother Sacred Heart wrote to the Sisters at the Mother House "Do not be uneasy, the travellers are well. In the early morning we went to recommend our journey to Our Lady de la Garde. The Sisters of the Chartreuse came in a crowd to distract me while I was praying at the shrine. I have remembered each and everyone, especially my beloved sick. Keep me informed of all that concerns them, and tell them how much I love them. Although far from you, I am often with you, in our holy meeting place, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. When we reach Ajaccio, I will give you news. We leave tomorrow morning. Once more adieu!"

The journey was most favourable. Sister Bernardine wrote from Ajaccio: "We reached here without any accident. Reverend Mother said often: 'They are praying for us while we are on the sea, so we have nothing to fear'. But I assure you that in spite of it all, I was afraid, and when I saw nothing but sky and water, I trembled. Our Mother was calm and serene. Seated upon the deck, she contemplated in silence the greatness of the Almighty. I became reassured little by little and was ravished by the beauty of the sea; its great voice spoke eloquently of God. I had no need to seek a subject for meditation. The scene was solemnly magnificent; the sunset was of incomparable beauty.

"The two novices and myself were the first to feel seasick, and we went to our berths. The elements seemed to respect Reverend Mother who quietly con-

tinued her meditation. 'Doubtless Madame, this is not the first time you have travelled by sea', said the Captain, 'you bear the fatigues so well'. They conversed for some time but finally Reverend Mother succumbed and the Captain brought her to us with the most delicate care. We were so ill, we could scarcely come to her aid. Meanwhile the waves rolled heavily. 'Thus life passes', said our Mother; 'We rejoice and we suffer, and all the while we are quickly nearing eternity'. At last a voice cried: 'There is the port!' You cannot imagine how glad we were to hear the news.

"As our good Mother did not wish our arrival to be announced, we reached the door of the convent unexpected. 'Where do you come from, Sisters, so early in the morning?' said the portress. 'From Lyons,' answered Reverend Mother who loved to take people by surprise. 'Whom shall I announce?' 'Our Reverend Mother' said I, 'and I beg you to make haste, as we are much fatigued'. Swiftly the portress ascended the stairs, and found Mother Regis, who was with the Chaplain: at the sick-bed of a Sister. 'Mother', she cried aloud, 'Reverend Mother is in the parlour!' Mother St. Regis believed her to be jesting, and answered seriously: 'Sister, is it recreation that you amuse yourself thus?' The Portress insisted. 'Go and see', said the Chaplain. Mother St. Regis had scarcely opened the door when she cried out 'Our Reverend Mother, Our Reverend Mother!' and threw herself into her arms. Sister Calixtus, hearing this, laid aside her signal and books, and hastening from her class room embraced Reverend Mother with gratification. Soon

all the Sisters arrived, and there was great rejoicing. 'Is it true', they said, 'is it really true, we have you with us?'

Although taken by surprise the Sisters of Ajaccio desired to give an entertainment in honour of their visitor. They passed the evening composing a charming little dialogue appropriate to the circumstances. They prepared recitations, songs, etc., and the next day, the children, as though they had practised a long time, expressed in a pleasing and perfect manner their happiness in having Reverend Mother visit their school. Nothing was wanting at the feast; love had organized it, and nothing is so rich, so inventive, or so active as the heart, when actuated by love. The Sisters of St. Joseph in Ajaccio have always been distinguished for this beautiful characteristic, which seemed to dominate all others.

The first days of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart were devoted to visits necessary under such circumstances. Mgr. Casanelli gave her a gracious welcome. "There is", he said, "in your Superior so much virtue, so much tact, that I cannot refuse anything she asks." His Excellency came several times to the convent to converse with her regarding matters which concerned the Congregation and the religious houses on the Island. He invited her to dine at his house, with the Bishop, but she refused, saying that she owed good example to her Sisters, and that her holy Rule, the wisdom of which no one appreciated more than His Excellency, would not permit her to accept an honour of which she deemed herself unworthy.

The civic authorities of Ajaccio, and many other

persons, begged to be presented "to the Mother of all the Sisters", as they called her. The parlour could not accomodate all who came. In the midst of this concourse of people, the zealous Mother, not forgetting her duties to the Sisters, held frequent conferences with the assembled Community. To give herself, to be spent for her children, to draw them, by her earnest words, to the practice of religious virtues and the observance of her holy Rules, was her only ambition. The pupils, too, were the objects of a large share of Mother Sacred Heart's zeal during her stay. She gave them a series of useful instructions, diversified by many little amusing stories, which they remembered for a long time.

The Superior of Ajaccio, knowing that Mother Sacred Heart's unexpected visits would cause embarrassment in some of the houses, and wishing to prevent this, sent a few hasty lines to the Superior of the Community at Cortez, telling her that some ladies would arrive by carriage at eleven o'clock at night. "I know them", she said, "and wish you to show them hospitality." "Mother St. Regis knows well that I cannot receive seculars", cried the Superior of Cortez at this unexpected news. "Where can we lodge them? They must go to the hotel." Consequently no preparations were made to receive the strangers. About midnight Mother Sacred Heart arrived, accompanied by Mother St. Regis, Sister Bernardine and a novice destined for Bastia. They rapped long at the gate, but no one came to open it. The travellers were obliged to re-enter the carriage, which fortunately, had not gone. Reverend Mother wrote from Bastia, to the Superior of Cortez, a note which concluded thus: "I have experienced for

myself that robbers cannot enter your house. I thought that a mother could always make herself heard by her children. Will you come to meet us here?" The poor Superior hastened to comply with the request, and arrived at Bastia filled with confusion, giving many humble excuses, mingled with complaints of having been deceived by Mother St. Regis. This incident made recreation for the rest of the journey.

Mother Sacred Heart passed three or four days at Bastia, where, as at Ajaccio, each Sister opened her heart and mind to her, and received in return the advice and encouragement she needed, and those precious counsels of perfection for which the religious soul always thirsts. Here also she was deeply interested in the children and their studies. She made herself acquainted with all the details of the house, verified and regulated the accounts, and, leaving the Community of Bastia full of fervour, joy and gratitude, returned again to Cortez, where this time the gates were opened with the greatest promptitude, the Sisters being most enthusiastic in making her welcome to their convent, an event long to be remembered. There, as in the other houses, they rejoiced at her coming, looking upon it as a special blessing, and for long years afterwards the Sisters of Cortez loved to speak of this visit, and of all the good it effected.

On the feast of St. Joseph, Mother Sacred Heart returned to Ajaccio to assist at the profession of two novices, who had finished their retreat and were to pronounce their vows on that day. Needless to speak of the ineffable joy the new spouses experienced in being presented to profession by the Mother General

of their Congregation. The Bishop of Ajaccio presided at the ceremony, which added much to the solemnity of the occasion.

On March 25th., the Reverend Mother, taking with her Sister Bernardine and Sister St. Calixtus, embarked in a small boat which was to take them to Sartine and Bonafacio. The voyage was stormy and dangerous. The waves, rising high, threatened to engulf the ship. Sister Bernardine, thinking herself lost, held on to Mother Sacred Heart, and threw her arms about her crying: "If I am lost, at least, I will die near you." Then in her distress, she addressed St. Joseph. "Great Saint"; she cried, "if you let our Mother perish, the whole Community will be displeased with you." Meanwhile Mother Sacred Heart, calm and full of confidence in Divine Providence, prayed and encouraged everyone. Working only for God, seeking God in all things, and feeling as safe on sea as on land, she inspired others with the same sentiments. Finally, after some hours of anxiety and danger, they reached the Port of Propriano.

The Superior of Sartine, who expected the visit of the Mother-General, sent three men with horses to conduct the travellers across the Mountains intervening between the Port and Sartine. Mounting a horse was but the affair of a minute for Reverend Mother, who had been accustomed to them in the world; for Sister Bernardine and Sister Calixtus it was more difficult. They mounted a low wall which was near by, and descended upon the horses amid general laughter. Afterwards Reverend Mother said teasingly: "When Sister Calixtus mounts a horse, she descends." Reach-

ing Sartine after several hours ride, the weary travellers were received with eager joy. Mother Sacred Heart passed a part of Holy Week at Sartine, profoundly edified by the manner in which they performed the ceremonies during those days. On her return from Sartine, she was met by the good Father Crozet, Chaplain of the Sisters of St. Joseph, who came with a carriage as far as the mountains would permit. Her return to Ajaccio was another feast. In the midst of these continued visits and occupations, the Mother-General did not forget her daughters at Lyons; she entreated them to write her often and complained if they lost the least opportunity of sending news to her. "Do you not know how much I love you" she wrote to Mother Louise. "Why are your letters so rare? When I embrace you again it will be with so much force that I will punish you, and it will not be long before I inflict this penance. I leave Ajaccio this week. I shall stop at Avignon long enough to see my dear nephew, my little Jesuit. My sister Adele would not be satisfied if I did not see her son Claudius. I am rejoicing in the thought that instead of going from you I am now approaching. Say something good to all my dear children of the Chartreuse; pray that the sea may be favourable to us, and that its waves may soon throw us into your arms."

In April the Reverend Mother re-embarked for the Continent, leaving the colonies of St. Joseph happy.

Her departure was like that of St. Paul from the shore of Miletus; it was accompanied by prayers, benedictions and sobs. The journey was accomplished without danger or sea sickness. On arriving at Mar-

seilles, they went eagerly to thank Our Lady de la Garde, and this pious duty fulfilled, hastened to Lyons, where they were awaited with the most lively impatience. "Never", said one of the Religious, "shall I forget that home-coming; it was an epoch in my life." When Mother Sacred Heart arrived at the Mother House after her long absence, such eagerness and excitement prevailed among the Sisters that the workmen engaged in making repairs thought there was a fire and came down from the scaffolding in haste to enquire where it was. Happily, it existed only in the hearts of the Sisters. It was a fire generated by the purest and most filial love, a rare fire, enkindled but seldom upon our cold and dark earth, a fire which possessed something of the warmth and brightness of Heaven. The Mother House re-echoed with sounds of joy and songs of thanksgiving.

Religious sentiments can alone give birth to those family reunions. The author of *the Imitation* says: "How agreeable and consoling it is to see brethren zealous, pious, regular and well disciplined."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE TROUBLES OF 1848

RETURNING from her second visitation, Mother Sacred Heart made preparations for the general retreat. "The time of our annual retreat," she wrote to her daughters, "is always for us a source of abundant graces. In recommending you to make it, I only encourage and strengthen the resolutions you have already taken." At the end of this retreat, which opened on the 16th, and closed on the 23rd they proceeded to elect counsellors for the Mother House. I beg of you, dear Sisters, to make your own private prayer before God as it interests the whole community." Prayers were said in the different communities and the following were elected: Mother Marie Louise, (who remained assistant) Mother Maria Misericordia of Novitiate and Mother Amelia.

The Superior General profited by the retreat to recall to the attention of the Sisters some instructions previously given by the same Superior. Cardinal de Bonald, regarding the distribution of prizes at the end of the scholastic year, had made plays which necessitated the changing of communities, and desired that these exercises should be kept within the proper limits. During the holy time of retreat, Mother Sacred Heart devoted herself entirely to her Sisters. It is said that when she was listening to a Sister one would think she had nothing else to do, so completely did she give her attention to the one



ST. JOSEPH BUFFALO, N. Y.



with whom she was conversing. To a Sister who had humbly avowed her weakness and misery she said: "Of what good is the Divine mercy if it is not for the miserable? Entertain for God thoughts worthy of His goodness. You have committed a fault I admit, but God is none the less your Father. Do you think that He would be astonished to see a leaf shaken and blown to the ground by a gust of wind? You think He is hard and angry because you have erred, but see! He looks upon you with eyes of sorrow and mercy, waiting, as the best of Fathers, for the moment when you will throw yourself at His feet to implore His pardon." Exhorting another Religious to frequent Communion, she said: "Say to our Lord: 'It is not because I am worthy that I come, but because I cannot live without You'. Our Lord does not love the false humility which separates you from Him. When we have our Lord, we are very strong and very rich. Whether He hides Himself or seems to sleep, as He did in Peter's boat. He always watches over His poor children. When He excused His executioners, will He not excuse our weakness? Have courage and confidence. What a blasphemy to say: 'The consolations of God are not for me'! Ask pardon, from the bottom of your heart, of this good Master, Who wishes to pardon you, and give Himself to you. Go to Him, in spite of your miseries, or rather because of them. He says: 'Come to me all you who are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you'."

To another of her daughters, the good Mother said: "Never fear our Blessed Lord, even when you have committed some infidelity. A word of repentance, a

word of confidence, will make Him forget all. Could He be less merciful than we, poor and wicked creatures as we are? Yet we are so quickly touched by the simplicity and confidence of those who come to us. Not to go to Holy Communion because we are weak, is to avoid medicine because we are ill. We do our souls a great wrong, and we make the devil rejoice; we grieve the Heart of our Good Master, Who is our Friend, our Physician, and our Consoler in trouble." She wished all to go to our Saviour as to a devoted friend. "When you are a cross to others and to yourself, take refuge in the Heart of Jesus, with confidence and humility; do not leave Him, He loves to the end; when the world abandons us He will not forsake us, He is a Friend in our joys, and above all in our adversities. He prefers a house of mourning to one of pleasure. There is no hand as gentle as His to dry our tears, to touch, to heal our wounds", says St. Augustine. Listening to these counsels and exhortations of the venerable Mother, we cannot refrain from saying with the Holy Spirit that "the mouth of the just is a source of life."

In the course of the retreat, Mother Sacred Heart held conferences with the Superiors of the local houses, in which she gave advice, and warned them of abuses that should be avoided. She recommended, above all, the practice of religious poverty: "Let each one", she said, "weigh well the obligations of this vow, and take a firm resolution to retrench all that is contrary to its perfection. Let us strive to have an absolute detachment from the things of earth. Admit nothing superfluous, and you will not have too natural an

affection for things which are allowed. 'Terrestrial affections prevent the movements of grace in our souls'. 'God', says *The Imitation*, 'wishes our hearts to be empty, that He may fill them with His gifts'. Conform yourselves to these principles of poverty, that your detachment may be complete and your abandonment absolute."

She strongly insisted upon the necessity of giving good example and upholding authority, condemned too frequent journeys and prolonged visits of Sisters to their families, conjuring the Superiors to avoid, and make the Sisters avoid, all irregularity in this respect. "We have remarked", she concluded, "that the transgression of this point of Rule injures the religious spirit, and lessens esteem for our holy vocation." She insisted upon the importance and necessity of faithful observance of Rule, and of watching carefully over children: "Never leave them alone, whether at recreation, in the dormitories, or elsewhere." She related, on this subject, an accident which happened at St. Etienne, in the house of Mi-Careme: Two children were left in the care of a Sister, while the Community went to the parish Mass. As they amused themselves quietly in a room, the Sister thought she could leave them alone, and occupy herself elsewhere. The children wanted to warm some soup, and for this reason set fire to a quantity of paper. When the flames spread, they became frightened, ran away and hid themselves. The fire communicated itself to the surroundings, and soon the whole room was blazing. The neighbours hastened to put it out, and if it had not been for their timely succour, great damage would have been done to Mi-

Careme, and the adjacent buildings. Thus the clear-sighted Superior placed before the Superiors their duties, and called their attention to abuses which had crept in, encouraged them in the practice of the one and helped them to correct the other.

The exercises of the annual retreat being concluded, the pious Superior-General retired to one of the houses, and gave herself up without reserve to the inspiration of grace, in communion with God and her own soul, in silence and reflection. No one knew better than she how to apply to herself those words of St. Bernard: "Be not as a channel, through which the water flows, but as a basin, which replenishes itself first and then gives of its plenitude. We can give only that which we have." Coming from these retreats, she seemed like the labourer who, after some moments of repose, taken at midday, returns to his work with new ardour.

Among the practices of Christian devotion, there are none more salutary than retreats. They are mineral waters to souls, spiritual baths, in which they regain their strength. During these periods of recollection, the mind rests peacefully and calmly in silence, the heart dilates, opens itself to the outpourings of grace, and breathes an air embalmed with the perfume of Heaven; they find nourishment in abundance, which renews, fortifies and strengthens them. In these retreats Mother Sacred Heart was in the hands of God an instrument of grace. She read the minds of her Sisters, her heart was a refuge for all, her hand was ever ready to raise up, to caress, and to heal those under her care; she had remedies for all miseries, and a balm for all sorrows. After this laborious but fruitful

work, Heaven accorded to the Reverend Mother the favour of resting for a brief space and becoming a child in her turn. Providence sent her mother to visit her, as a recompense for her devoted goodness to His children. Madame Tezenas, aged eighty-four, came to Lyons, accompanied by Madame Vialleton. "I am nearing the end of life's journey", she said, "and I wish, before I die, to embrace my Virginia, to see her convent once more, and the members of her Community, to whose prayers I wish to recommend myself." Happy to become acquainted with this heroic Christian, the Religious eagerly surrounded her, filled with veneration and filial love; thus presenting a feast of beauty, a picture of patriarchal life, which caused Madame Tezenas much joy. In the midst of their rejoicing, the Abbe Cognet, Grand Plenipotentiary of the Cathedral, and former preceptor of the Tezenas children, made his appearance, having learned that their mother, for whom he had the greatest regard and veneration, was at the Chartreuse. He recognized the venerable octogenarian, who greeted him as a son she had not seen for many years. They spoke of the past, but more of heaven, which was so near, and where there would be no more separations. There were none of the infirmities of old age in Madame Tezenas. Among worldlings all are old, even the young; among the holy all are young, even the aged. The atmosphere of eternity, which makes itself felt, effaces the lines of care from their brows, and rejuvenates them. Notwithstanding the pleasure of the visit, it was earthly, and like all earthly joys, soon came to an end. This was a new sacrifice for Mother Sacred Heart to offer

to God, but the Sisters shared the sorrow of this parting with so much affectionate sincerity that it softened her grief.

The zealous Superior did not limit herself to working for the sanctification and perfection of the Congregation; each year saw her undertake new enterprises. In 1839, she established, at St. Etienne, a house of refuge, where many young persons found protection. The same year, under the direction of the Sisters of St. Joseph schools were opened at St. Foy, l'Argentine, Longes, Montchal, Theize, Unieux, Lorette and Curzay. At Lyons, in the parish of d'Aincy, they took charge of a hospital for incurables, where much good was accomplished. In 1840 were founded religious houses of the Sisters of St. Joseph, at Changy, at Julien, d'Odde, and at Montand, near St. Etienne. About this time they also made foundations in Corsica, Bastia, and Sartine. In the year 1841 were erected convents of St. Joseph at St. Appolinaire, at Dieme, at Pollionay, and, at Lyons, an asylum on Jarante Street. At Roanne also, they opened an orphanage, which today shelters a large number of children. At Briant, in the Province of Saone and Loire, schools were opened; and houses were established in Corte, in Corsica, about the same time. In 1842, they counted the houses of Pommiers, d'Albigny, St. Nizier upon Charlieu, de Vandranges, de Genelard, de Gibles, de Bonifacio. in Corsica, and de Chatel St. Denys, in Switzerland. The year following, in 1843, St. Jean la Vetre, Lavieu, St. Martin-d'Estreaux, and Bedarieux begged the Sisters of St. Joseph to take charge of their schools. At Lyons, in 1844, a hospital for incurables and the

Asylum of St. Polycarp were erected, and confided to the Sisters of St. Joseph. Meze, in the Province of l'Heneault, placed them at the head of an hospital and a large educational establishment. They took charge, in 1845, of the schools of St. Bonnet, Le Troney, De Boisset, Les Montrond, and afterwards of a providence for the aged, and one for children, at St. Polycarp, in the City of Lyons.

This city, understanding that the care and education of children was the natural heritage of the daughters of him who guarded the infancy of Jesus, and also that it was impossible to confide to them the direction of their innumerable schools, desired that the Sisters would at least furnish them with teachers. Consequently, normal schools for girls, from the Provinces of Rhone and of Loire, were established at the Mother House of St. Joseph, sheltered under the same roof, and receiving, as much as possible, the same spirit and direction. This example, given to all France, and the appreciation shown the Sisters of St. Joseph, was worthy of the City of Mary, and highly gratifying to the Mother General, training souls to labour for the salvation of others being her favourite work. "If we cannot", she said, "take charge of all the schools, we can train teachers to assist in this important work", and she rejoiced to have such an opportunity placed at her disposal.

In 1846-47 she founded successively the religious establishments of Grezieux la Varenne, de Lucenay, de Pouelly-le-Monial, St. Clement, Dom Martin, Belle Roche, and others in La Touraine. Blessing God for the growth of her religious family, the Mother General

seconded Divine Providence by giving increasing care to these new foundations. She visited these places, speaking to the administrators and men of business with so much tact, dignity and goodness that she gained their confidence and obtained all she desired. The travelling necessitated by these new establishments was sanctified, as we have already mentioned, by prayer, recitation of the Holy Office, union with God, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in every place where it was possible.

The Revolution of 1848 suspended the progress of the Congregation of St. Joseph, placed in peril the Mother House, and the houses of Lyons and St. Etienne. Revolutions, it has been said, are the schools of saints; they enlighten, purify, detach from earth, and draw souls towards Heaven. It is usually in times of trouble that the noblest characteristics of souls are called forth. Revolutions obtain these results, like the tempest, which though purifying the air, ravages the earth, or as war, which, makes heroes of men, by surrounding them with dangers and covering them with wounds. At the rumbling of the storm, which was heard from one end of France to the other, Mother Sacred Heart said to her daughters: "If we are threatened with suffering, if the tumult from without penetrates our dwellings, let us take refuge in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. close the doors securely and rest in peace. We are on the eve of great events; it is an uprising of evil; let us not cease to pray; never has the Church or society had so much need of the protection of Jesus."

Not content with urging her daughters to pray, the

wise Mother took all the precautions demanded by prudence, aided by the Abbe Plantier, Chaplain of the Mother House, who assured her that he would keep her informed of everything. She concealed the sacred vessels and religious objects belonging to the Chapel just in time, for the next morning all the Communities of Croix-Rousse were visited by a band of insurgents. The House of Providence of St. Bruno, the house of Providence of Madame Meveier, and that of the Passage de-l'Enfance, with its looms and silks, by which they gained their daily subsistence, were consigned to the flames. The Mother House of St. Joseph had its turn. During the visit, a Sister found herself near a young man whom she had formerly prepared for First Communion: "Why, Francis, is it you"? she said, "and in such company!" "Oh! Sister, I am not now at your school", he answered, "I am not so fortunate; I am forced to follow those men, I do not know where we are going."

The first visit was within bounds, but in the evening, at nine o'clock, redoubled blows were heard at the gate. The streets were filled with insurgents: "Open to us", they shouted, amidst revolutionary songs and threats. Scarcely were the gates rolled back when the crowd rushed in, some armed with weapons and others carrying lighted torches, crying out: "Where are the workmen you have hidden here?" The Community took refuge in the Chapel, while the Superior, accompanied by a few Sisters, followed the insurgents, as the mother-bird guards her nest and little ones, when threatened by the cruel hunter. Not finding the men for whom they were searching, the crowd retired,

saying: "Tomorrow, at this time, we shall set fire to your Convent." The Sisters spent the night in prayer, and God did not permit the threat to be accomplished.

Meanwhile, the parents of the Sisters, informed of their danger, hastened to rescue them. Mother Sacred Heart said to her Sisters: "If any of you wish to return to your family, for a few days, until the danger is past, follow your inspiration." She provided them with means necessary for their forced departure. This separation caused her much anguish of heart. The Sisters prayed her to go to her father's house: "My dear children", she replied, "my place is here, my life is in the hands of God, He will dispose of me according to His holy Will."

The religious houses of St. Etienne were spared no more than those of Lyons. At the Providence of Ste. Marie, and the Asylum of Good Help, there remained but four walls after the pillage and fire. In one of those houses a Religious ran to the Chapel to save the Blessed Sacrament. Not daring to touch the sacred vessels, she threw a linen cloth about them and concealed them in her pocket. Not till night did she, with great difficulty, reach the nearest priest, to entrust to him the precious treasure that she had carried with her during the day. The house of Mi-Careme was providentially spared. Mother Euphrasia, during the pillage and burning of the other Convents, desired to save some articles of value, by placing them at the house of Madame Tezenas, but was prevented by the mob, who threatened that, instead of one house, they would destroy both.

Madame Tezenas received into her house her Jesuit

grandson, accompanied by four other Fathers, who came on foot in secular costume from Vals, near Puy. The same day her grand-daughter, a Religious of St. Joseph, and another nun, came from Vallleury, where Mother Sacred Heart had sent them, hoping they would there find safety, but, sharing the fate of other communities, and experiencing the fury of the revolutionists, the sisters were obliged to seek refuge with their family. Their father, the Honourable M. Vialleton, having his children in his arms, cried out: "The Republic has, at least, done this much good, it has given me back my children."

The heart of the Mother General was pierced with grief when she learned of the dispersion of her daughters, of the pillage and devastation of the Communities of St. Etienne and those in the vicinity. Her tears flowed in abundance, day and night, but she suffered with the submission and resignation of the holy man Job. This trial seriously affected her health, and she never completely recovered from its effects. At the Mother House the Sisters lived like poor working-women, supporting themselves by sewing for the stores of the city. By rigorous economy and privations they managed to supply themselves with the necessaries of life. In the midst of this distress and sorrow Mother Sacred Heart wrote a circular letter to her daughters, to encourage and strengthen them: "The events which have transpired", she said to them, "have, without doubt, caused you uneasiness and trouble. Permit me to address you some words, to calm, enlighten and strengthen you. Recognized by the State, and protected by its laws, the existence of our dear Con-

gregation was never before threatened. No decree of the Government, no measure of the Commissioners has ever interfered with our liberty; until a definite order is received, all fears and rumours to the contrary must be regarded as reports without foundation, or at least premature. On this subject, give credit only to positive information and official facts. I exhort you to guard, as much as possible, the religious habit; nothing, in our political situation, is so menaced, we run great risks in wearing it. If, in the meantime, while travelling or going out, prudence bids you assume a secular dress, you are authorized to do so. Several things seem to foretell peace for the future, still, it is uncertain. Pray God to dispose all as we desire, beseech Him to grant us that liberty which is so much lauded, in order that we may continue to live tranquilly and perform those works of charity which are in keeping with our holy vocation. This is a time to repeat the cry of St. Teresa: 'To prayer, my dear Sisters, to prayer!'

On the 22nd of May, 1848, she again wrote to the Congregation, to announce that the general retreat would be impossible. She added: "For some time the tribulations and burden of the Mother House have been great, but they have not been without consolation. A large number of our houses are eager to come to our aid, I pray them to accept my most lively gratitude, united with that of the entire Congregation. Meanwhile, the postulants, who have been obliged to seek refuge in their families, are returning one by one to the fold, where they have passed so many happy days. Their joy is heartily shared by their Mother and Mistresses."

On September 1st, 1848, the Mother General announced to her Sisters that the second general retreat would not take place that year, that some postulants would be admitted to take the habit, but no novice would be professed. "We know", she said, "that several young persons, who feel called to the religious life, and who have chosen our Congregation, have not the courage needed to present themselves, on account of the trials to which we have been subjected. Some people believe that we will not admit postulants to the Novitiate; undeceive them, for we will continue to give the habit, though the professions will be postponed.

"A diploma from the State may be necessary for you, my dear Sisters, in order to continue the important work of teaching. It is necessary that all the teachers should devote as much time as possible to study. The local Superiors are requested to send to the Novitiate those among their Sisters who may reasonably hope, by applying themselves, to obtain a diploma, in the event of such a demand being made to religious corporations." A little later she repeats this advice: "In our preceding circular we told you that a certificate might be necessary for the exercise of your duties as teachers; today, it is more than probable that it will be exacted. We entreat anew the local Superiors to give all the time necessary to their subjects who may hope to obtain a certificate, but no Sister shall present herself for the examination at the Academy without submitting to the decision of the Mother House. Do all with wisdom and prudence, for the greater glory of God, and the honour of our holy Institute. It pleases us", she said, "to renew our expressions of gratitude

to all the houses who have succoured us in our distress; we rely still on your devotedness and generosity." Pupils of the Normal School, after the example of the postulan's, came to take their course of studies at the Mother House.

On the 10th of April, 1849, the Superior-General wrote to her Sisters: "You will learn with pleasure, I am sure, that our first general retreat will take place this year, at the time fixed by our customs; it will open on Ascension Thursday. Superiors are especially invited to be present at it. At the close of these holy exercises, we shall proceed to elect a Mother-General and four Counsellors. It is unnecessary, my dear Sisters, to ask for your fervent prayers for the blessing of Heaven on these elections, the importance of which is well known to you."

Mother Sacred Heart was re-elected unanimously; Mothers Marie Louise, Aglai and Emilia were re-elected as Counsellors, and Mother Anastasia was appointed Assistant. The entire Congregation rejoiced, and blessed God at this retreat, which secured stability, discipline, union, peace and happiness. It seemed like a new life, after the cruel trials through which they had passed. Hope sprang anew in their hearts, and holy joy inundated their souls.

The summer of the year 1849 was full of hope. The Feast of the Sacred Heart was celebrated with great fervour. They were preparing for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, when Father Plantier entered hastily, removed the ostensorium, and carried away the Sacred Species, with the sacred vessels. At the same moment, the cannon was heard, balls whistled

through the casements, and announced an insurrection at Croix-Rousse. This was a new shock from their country, whose soil had been rendered so volcanic by the Revolution. Barricades were erected at the gates of the convent, and a room was transferred into a field hospital. The Sisters prepared lint and bandages for the wounded, on whom Mother Sacred Heart lavished the most tender care. Rising above this scene of crime and bloodshed, and with a spirit as free as if she had not suffered mortal anguish, the good Mother inspired all with courage. At last Father Plantier announced that the riot was quelled, and order again prevailed. They learned, some days after, that Prince Louis Napoleon had been appointed President of the Republic. The tempest was calmed, and the wounded, full of gratitude for the care which they had received from the Sisters, were removed from the convent.

As a consequence of so many trials and terrible ordeals, Mother Sacred Heart fell ill. She wished to be taken to the general infirmary, but, foreseeing that she would be opposed in this, she called the infirmarian during an exercise of the Community, and begged to be received among those under her care. The infirmarian was about to reply in the negative. "Make haste", interrupted the humble Mother; "it is necessary that I should be there before the coming of the Community." At this moment Mother Marie Louise unexpectedly made her appearance, and, using the authority which the Rule gives the Assistant in such cases, obliged Mother Sacred Heart to return to her own room. "We must give the example in all things", she said to

the Assistant, "why, then, such exemptions for me?" Community life, which a saint has said is the tomb of self-love, was her delight, but obedience was better than sacrifice and she yielded to her Assistant, who firmly maintained her decision.

At this time the Mother General had several nephews at the boarding-school of the Missionaries of Chartreuse, situated near the Convent. One of these children, having been deprived of his holidays at New Year's, his aunt, much astonished, desired to have an explanation of his fault. "My dear Aunt", he replied, "a pupil, suspected of having a forbidden book, entreated me to keep it for him, that he might thus escape punishment, but hardly had I received the book when they searched my apartment, and I was punished for the guilty one, whom I did not wish to expose; I did not know even the title of the book", and he wept bitterly, while giving this account, which was evidently sincere. Long after, he said: "The words of my aunt, on that occasion, made a most profound impression on my mind; I shall never forget them. her wisdom was equal to her goodness."

One day she saw a pupil of the college lifted up on the wall, by one of his companions, to steal the apricots from the convent garden. Suddenly, he heard a voice cry out: "God sees you." The little plunderer stopped, but seeing no one, he again reached forth his hand for the fruit. The voice cried more loudly: "God sees you. He has counted the apricots which you have taken." This time the thoughtless boy was seized with fear, and threw away all he had stolen. Relating this episode, the good Mother added:

“If we were penetrated with this thought, ‘God sees us’, we would carefully avoid all faults. The presence of God is the light of souls, it dissipates the shades of evil and error, as the sun dissipates the darkness of night; it creates saints, and adorns them with virtue, as the sun gives life to the plants, and colour and perfume to the flowers.”

“Walk in my presence”, said God, “and you will be perfect.” Moses, that great servant and special friend of the Lord, as he is called by the author of *The Imitation*, kept himself in the presence of the Invisible as if he really saw Him. The face of Jehovah shines without ceasing, and is reflected in these ancient figures, and it is to these rays that they owe their grandeur and their beauty.

## CHAPTER XIV

### NEW FOUNDATIONS

MESSENGERS and depositaries of truth and charity, religious congregations are endowed, to the highest degree, with that expansion and radiance which characterize light and heat; they spread with marvellous facility. Hardly had peace been re-established in France when the Congregation of St Joseph undertook a course of foundations. In 1849 Mother Sacred Heart established the Community of Chambilly, in the Department of Saone and Loire; in 1850, those of Chessay-les-Mines, Morance, Sain-Bel, Lorigneux, and Neulise. At Barcelonnette, they erected a hospice for old men, and at Ajaccio the Sisters of St. Joseph were asked to take charge of the household management of the Seminary. At Lyons they established an orphanage in the parish of St. Jean, now Doree Street. The establishments of Limonest, Ardillots, and a new orphanage at Lyons, Trois-Passages Street, in the parish of St. François, were erected in 1851. The same year they organized, at Lyons, a public nursery, where the Sisters kept and cared for little children, to lighten the labour of the poor mothers.

In 1852 the Sisters of St. Joseph were called to Paris. In the presence of this rapid growth, the Superior-General found it necessary to enlarge the Mother House, and purchased, for this purpose, a piece of ground in the neighbourhood. This acquisition

excited new fears, which were carried to His Eminence, the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons, but the Mother General, with her great confidence in Divine Providence, and her continual recourse to our Lord, Whom she never failed to consult before every undertaking, triumphed over all obstacles. "Through the holy courage of Mother Sacred Heart", said Mgr. Plantier, "her calm and patient endurance, her unshaken confidence in God, success crowned her efforts, in spite of irritating and depressing difficulties. Divine Providence seemed to approve and bless this extension of the Order, by rapidly multiplying the foundations of the Institute."

In 1853, Guillotiere asked the Sisters of St. Joseph for an orphanage, and St. Rambert-sur-Loire for a hospital, and at the same time were founded the houses of Magneux, Dompierre, Montbellet, and Magnet, with an orphanage, a day school, and, later, a boarding school at Vernaison.

Added to the duties and responsibilities inseparable from her office, was the loss of her two Secretaries, Sisters Bernardine and Marie Antoinette, who were very dear and devoted to her. The latter was from St. Etienne, and, from childhood, had been the friend of Mother Sacred Heart. This tender soul had an excessive fear of death. "Be calm, dear Sister", the Reverend Mother would say to her, "St. Joseph is always near his daughters at that solemn moment; you have nothing to fear." St. Joseph, indeed, spared her the terrors of death; she was removed from earth quite suddenly, and her lovely spirit swiftly took its flight to Heaven on the 4th of February, 1853. This

was a sad trial for the heart of her friend and Superior.

In the midst of this sorrow, Mother Sacred Heart worked courageously, and without relaxation, for the prosperity of her spiritual family. For some time she had felt the need of procuring a home in the country, where the novices and postulants might have the benefit of fresh air. She grieved to see them obliged to take their walks through the city streets. Learning that the Grand Seminary was for sale, she recommended the matter to St. Joseph. This property was very suitable, being within easy reach of the Mother House. "But how will you be able to pay for it?" said Mgr. Plantier, to Reverend Mother, one day. "That is St. Joseph's affair", she replied; "it is for his Congregation; he knows it is needed." All details in connection with the purchase, were conducted with rapidity, and concluded with the greatest ability. This hallowed spot was full of religious souvenirs. How many Missionaries were there prepared for their heroic apostolate! How many pastors, shepherds, and fishers of men were there formed for their divine mission! A mulberry tree, large enough to shelter under its branches more than a hundred persons, had for many years been a favourite place of seclusion for the seminarists, during the time of their spiritual reading and community prayers; it was holy ground. The Community of St. Joseph entered there with feelings of respect and veneration.

But this life is a valley of tears; if it gives some drops of joy, they are followed by torrents of sadness. She who was the joy and delight of the Community, was soon to mourn the loss of her mother, whose end was fast approaching. The death of that noble Chris-

tian was worthy of her life. Her ninety-four years, full of merit and good works, served as so many steps to raise her towards Heaven. She recited the Office of the Blessed Virgin until her last days. When receiving the Holy Viaticum, she was plunged in an ecstasy of love. She often repeated these words: "My children, prostrate yourselves, Jesus is here", then, joining her hands, she continued the most affectionate colloquies with our Lord. Around her bed were ranged her children and grandchildren, of whom one was a Religious of the Society of Jesus, and three were Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph. "My children", she said to them, "be always good Christians, and love one another." Seeing their tears falling, she added: "Weep not, death is gain; I shall die on Saturday." At midnight, her grandson, the Jesuit, again brought her the Blessed Sacrament.

The next day she wished, like the ancient patriarchs, to bless her children. Mother Sacred Heart, who had been absent for a moment, approached the bed of her venerable mother, saying: "Is there no blessing for me, dear mother?" The dying mother inclined her hand to her, saying: "You, my Virginia, you who have been my consolation, with all my heart I bless you." All were bathed in tears. Her son Felix, perceiving the cord of the Third Order of St. Francis, which his saintly mother wore, took it respectfully, and kept it as a relic. When Friday night came, the invalid asked the hour from time to time, and when they told her that midnight was striking, she exclaimed: "At last, the day has come that shall unite me to my God", and her transports of love were redoubled. They noticed

that she was sinking, and began to recite the prayers for the dying, during which Madame Vailleton gave her the crucifix to kiss. "Only a few moments of suffering, then Heaven, forever; courage, good Mother" said this generous daughter, the inheritrix of her faith and virtues. In the midst of these holy colloquies between mother and daughter, colloquies worthy of the angels, Madame Tezenas du Monteel, aged ninety-four years, passed calmly from earth to Heaven, on the 12th of March, 1853, on Saturday, the day dedicated to Mary, the day which she had desired, and which God appeared to have made known to her. Happy those who die thus, in the embrace of their Lord!

The death of Madame Tezenas was at once a source of mourning and of edification to the town of St. Etienne. A journal of the city, speaking of the general sorrow shown by the people of St. Etienne at the death of Madame Tezenas of Monteel, said: "We are pleased to state that the sentiments of admiration caused by a death so holy were as unanimous as those of regret at her loss. In order to appreciate the extent of this loss to the new generation, it would be necessary to know fully the good she accomplished, the poor she helped, the sick she assisted, the unfortunate she consoled, but modesty has thrown over this precious life a veil, which we have only partly raised. The saints write their memoirs only in the book of eternity. We must, in the name of the town of St. Etienne, which Madame Tezenas so long edified, render a solemn public homage to the charity of that pious and venerable woman. In the presence of numberless miseries which she relieved, we shall only remark that she succeeded

her mother-in-law, in 1784, as President of the Society of the Ladies of Mercy, and for sixty-nine years she filled these offices. God alone could value, at its true worth, the good she did for the poor of our city. She was one of the most influential, most generous, and most active of the Providentesses of St. Mary of Good Help, of the Refuge, and of all other charitable institutions.

"As it would take too long to enumerate here all the merits of Madame Tezenas, and to count, one by one, the flowers with which she formed her immortal crown, we say but a word regarding that exquisite amiability which characterized her. Always earnest and prompt to act, having a kind word for all, knowing how to speak to the purpose, and, especially, to listen with attention, something which has become most difficult and, therefore most meritorious, in our society of talkers, she recalls to us, with regret, that society of the past century, so polite, so eminently French, that has been destroyed through politics. Her death was worthy of her life. These ninety-four years, which she used as so many steps to bring her nearer to Heaven, have been crowned by a most Christian and sublime end. It remains but for us to say, with all our citizens who venerate and mourn today this saint: "Happy the children to whom are bequeathed like traditions of virtue and honour."

Mother Sacred Heart remained some days at St. Etienne, after the death of her Mother, in order to regulate the affairs of the family. She was an angel of consolation to all. She also profited by this time to visit the Communities of St. Etienne and surrounding

places. On returning to Lyons, she devoted herself, as usual, to the interests and good of the Congregation, with a courage which nothing could daunt.

Mother Sacred Heart had deplored the poor accommodation and poverty of the Chapel at the Novitiate, and was filled with the desire of offering to her Lord a dwelling more worthy of Him. Her Mother's death having put her in possession of a fortune, she resolved to consecrate it to that cherished project. Some persons having remarked to her that it might be prudent to reserve something for the future, she replied: "God will see to that, He will take care of me."

To the architect, Mr. Bresson, she said: "For our house, simplicity, but for the Chapel, which is the habitation of God, there is nothing too beautiful." Everything used for the divine service, the ornaments, the sacred vessels and vestments could not be too magnificent, in her estimation. It is to her that the Mother House owes its sacred treasures and the rich decorations of its altars, which, according to Mgr. Plantier, are the pride of her Sacristy. The building of the Chapel having been the ambition of her life, she hastened to have it begun. The blessing of the cornerstone took place at the end of the year 1853. Cardinal de Bonald himself officiated, he was accompanied by Father Granger, Vicar-General of His Eminence, and a large number of the clergy. The building, and the paintings which decorate it, were not completed until Christmas, 1856.

At midnight the first Mass was celebrated, and the Community made their formal entry. The Chapel is a jewel of art; the following is a description given

by a Religious, of the artistic construction and decoration of the arched roof, which rests on great glided bases, as in the Italian basilicas: "Three designs, one over the other, divide this arch. The first design, almost a metre and a half in height, consists of nine pictures, in rich frames; in the centre is that of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ; Mary and Joseph, prostrate in admiration, adore the Infant God on His bed of straw; high in the clouds, four bright angels contemplate, with wonder and delight, the Word Made Flesh, for the restoration of fallen humanity, and a miraculous Star throws its beams of light on the Manger, which served as a cradle for the King of Kings. To the right and left of this central picture were seen St. Pothern and St. Irenæus, illustrious founders and martyrs of the ancient church of Lyons; they are standing, clothed in pontifical robes. St. Irenæus holds in one hand a book, and in the other a palm of martyrdom. St. Pothern bears a cross, and a picture representing the Blessed Virgin with the Infant Jesus. Farther away to the left, we see St. Joseph, awakened by the celestial Messenger; the holy Patriarch is taking his rest on the ground, in his workshop, his elbow resting on a block of wood, and his hand supporting his head. The angel hovering in the air is bending over, and touching the shoulder of the Guardian of Jesus. Opposite, to the right, is the flight into Egypt: Mary, seated on the humble beast, holds the Infant Jesus in her arms, pressing Him to her heart; Joseph, full of solicitude for his double Treasure, guides them with extreme tenderness. After these, to the left and right, are St. Francis de Sales, second Patron of the



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Congregation of St. Joseph, and the seraphic St. Teresa, the model of Religious. The Bishop of Geneva is standing wearing rochet and cape; in one hand is his book to Philothea, and with the other he points towards Heaven. The seraphic Teresa is standing in ecstasy, with the mysterious sorrow in her side. The arms of the Holy Father, and those of Cardinal de Bonald, Archbishop of Lyons, complete the first design.

"The second design, about two feet in height, is, properly speaking, only a frieze: the City of Jerusalem to the left, and Rome to the right, representing the Old and the New Law. From each of these cities come out six lambs, which go towards the centre to meet the Divine Lamb, immolated for us, and Which bears over Its head an aureola, surmounted by a cross and a wounded heart, from which flows a stream of crimson blood, falling into a golden chalice; this is the River of Life, to which souls come to quench their thirst.

"The third design occupies more than two-thirds of the apse. It is here that the talent of the artist shines with greatest lustre. In the centre is Christ, the most sublime and affecting figure in that work of celestial inspiration; above the figure of Christ, the Eternal Father appears, full of majesty and mildness, with hands extended over the august Victim, Who pays the ransom for the human race; between the Father and the Son, at the summit of the Cross, hovers the Holy Ghost, as if to say, 'love crowns all'. An aureola of seraphim, with wings of flame, surround the Blessed Trinity; at the foot of the Cross are four persons standing, to the right, the Mother of the Saviour

and Mary Magdalene, to the left St. John and Mary Salome; in height, these reach to the knees of the Saviour, dividing the seraphic aureola, their position being in conformity with the description given by the Gospel; higher, under the arms of Christ, advancing and dividing equally the seraphic numbers, are two angels, with outspread wings, floating tunics, eyes bathed with tears, and each carrying a golden chalice, the one for collecting the precious Blood, and the other for the mysterious Water which flowed from the side of Jesus. 'You shall draw the Water of Salvation from the Saviour's fountains', said Isaiah. Nothing could be more affecting; it is Calvary, with its scene of divine sorrow and ineffable mercy; it is the Sinai of the New Law, where fear is replaced by love, and the thunders crash by the sweet words: 'Father, forgive them: they know not what they do'. The greatest mark of love that can be given is to die for those we love.

"Near Calvary, to the right, between two palm trees, are Adam and Eve, on their knees, in an attitude of repentance; before them, St. John the Baptist points out the Lamb of God, recalling the promise which was made to them of the gentle Redeemer; to the left of Calvary, another group, also surrounded by palm trees, represents Abel, with one knee on the ground, holding in his arms a slaughtered lamb, himself an image of the great sacrifice of Calvary, of the Blood which speaks better than his, as expressed by St. Paul: 'The sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel'. Abraham, also on his knees, and armed with a sword, is ready to offer in sacrifice his only son, as, later, in the same place, the Eternal Father

will sacrifice His Son for love of us; on the point of slaying the victim, he listens, and hears the voice which arrests his hand; a lamb replaces Isaac. The grand and beautiful figure of Melchisedech, with his double majesty of king and pontiff, admirably completes this symbolic group. In offering to the Eternal Father the bread and wine, he prefigures the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is the representation, continuation and application of that of Calvary. This beautiful picture is on a delicate groundwork of gold. A vine, with its green foliage, gracefully interlaces its leafy vines with the branches of the palm trees. Through this double foliage can be seen innocent doves with golden plumage, fluttering about.

The summit of the arch is azure, strewn with stars; above, a tympanum, with two designs, is represented. In the first are the four Evangelists, with their symbols; in the second the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in glory, surrounded by a circle, the emblem of eternity, and seated on a throne of glittering whiteness, resplendent with jewels, and surrounded by celestial spirits, bowing low before them, swinging gilt censers, from which ascend clouds of perfume. 'He who humbles himself shall be exalted'. 'Because I was humble and lowly, I was pleasing to the Most High'. 'The immolated lamb has become the Lord of the earth.' 'He is worthy to receive power, divinity, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and benediction through ages and ages.' Behold all that recalls the exaltation of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

"The paintings of the side chapels represent the

Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, and the death of St. Joseph; the venerable Patriarch is supported by Jesus, and Mary kneels at his feet, sorrowful. All harmonize admirably in these beautiful paintings, as instructive and sublime in their dogmatical and religious signification as they are perfect in their relation to art. It is a synthesis of Christianity, an epic of divine Charity."

Rejoicing to have a beautiful dwelling for her Beloved, Mother Sacred Heart's faith, confidence and love increased, and, like Moses, she was ever before the 'Tabernacle of her Lord. "It was always in the Tabernacle", says the Author of *The Imitation*, "that Moses sought light in his difficulties and doubts. Prayer was his only resource against the malice and snares of men. He received there the divine responses, and returned instructed in many things, relative to the present and the future." Such was the secret of Moses for conducting the people of God, and it was also that of Mother Sacred Heart, for directing her Congregation.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN TIME OF PLAGUE

WHILST Mother Sacred Heart was, with so much taste, preparing a dwelling for Him Who has said: "Come to Me all you who suffer and are heavily laden", cholera was spreading desolation throughout France. On the 26th of August, 1854, Mother Sacred Heart wrote to her daughters: "In our last circular we had the pleasure of announcing to you that our general retreat would open on the 15th of next September, but, owing to the ravages of the cholera, the Archbishop, for prudent reasons, judges it better that it should not take place. If the plague afflicts the town in which you live, we count, dear daughters, on your devoted care of the stricken ones. May your zeal be as great as the wants of the unfortunate victims; fear nothing for yourselves, the Lord will be there to support you, His angels will watch over you, and all your labours will be counted by Him Who recompenses even a glass of water." The Sisters obeyed the voice of their Superior, and were an-tiring in their efforts to relieve the plague-stricken.

In several towns, temporary hospitals were erected, and placed in charge of the Sisters, who braved every-thing to succour the sick and dying. God protected them, as their saintly Mother had promised, for, though constantly exposed to the contagion, not one of those generous souls contracted the dread disease. During this trial, Mother Sacred Heart said to the Sisters who

surrounded her: "From time to time, God makes His people feel the weight of His anger, in order to bring back those who are going astray. You lament the cause of the affliction which is ravaging France; let us endeavour to draw from it a lesson for ourselves, and regard it as a warning from God, to remind us of our duty to Him. Let us seek to appease His anger by prayer, and, above all, by great fidelity to holy Rule, and the exact performance of duty. At the same time pray for the conversion of sinners, that they may become truly penitent, and when called to appear before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge, may receive a favourable sentence.

"Here below, one sorrow is often followed by another, and their swords frequently cross in our souls." "The life of man upon earth is a continual warfare", cried Holy Job, who had learned this by cruel experience. This faithful servant of God had passed through every species of trial, for the devil, the great artificer of temptation, had injured him in his property, his family, and his person. Thus God permits, from time to time, His chosen ones to be afflicted, that He may test their fidelity, as He did that of this holy Patriarch.

"The Saints", writes the pious author of *The Imitation*, "I have passed through many tribulations, and by means of these have advanced in the way of perfection." Similarly, in the life of Mother Sacred Heart, trials had not been wanting. To that of the cholera, which menaced several of her houses, was added a cross which threatened to destroy the unity of her spiritual family. Father Granger, who was now aged and much afflicted with deafness, had resigned his office as

Ecclesiastical Superior of the Congregation, and had been replaced by the Abbe Plantier, who was afterwards confessor at the Mother House for fourteen years. The choice of a priest so distinguished was regarded as a favour from Heaven by Mother Sacred Heart, and by the Sisters, with the exception of a few who were prejudiced against the new Confessor. Accustomed to Father Granger, and more at ease with him, several Sisters entreated him, with tears, not to leave them. Affected by this demonstration, the good old priest was prevailed upon to withdraw his resignation, and request the Cardinal-Archbishop to reinstate him in his former position in the Congregation. His Eminence counting as he said upon the virtue of Father Plantier, consented to this unexpected change, which was to be, unknown to him, a source of serious trouble.

The Community was deeply grieved but a small minority of the Congregation rejoiced, though they had separated themselves from their Sisters and Superior. "As a spark enkindles a fire, so it is oftentimes a small thing which casts us down and troubles us", says *The Imitation*. The good Mother General had the sorrow of seeing her Community divided, and to injure the harmony of her Community was to touch her heart and her life. "What has become", she cried in her grief, "of that union and concord of which we were so proud?" A multitude of secret sorrows assailed her soul; her days passed painfully, and were followed by sorrowful nights. She was often found in tears before the Tabernacle, addressing to our Lord the same prayer He had used to His Heavenly Father: "Oh! My Father, grant that they may be one, in spirit and in

heart." Beyond this, Mother Sacred Heart bore her cross in silence, hiding it under the veil of humility, resignation and patience. She showed no displeasure to those who caused her trouble by their unreasonable conduct, but, on the contrary, rendered good for evil. Having one day received a letter which was most inconsiderate, she called her Secretary, and giving her the summary of the reply she was to make, added: "I wish this letter to be more affectionate than the others."

St. Francis de Sales says: "We catch more flies with honey than with vinegar, and when we have gained the heart we have gained all." Another time, having received a most mortifying anonymous letter, she smilingly said: "Philosophers have paid for having injurious words said to them, but I, more fortunate than they, receive them for nothing", and thenceforth she redoubled her goodness towards the guilty one, whose name had been disclosed to her. According to the words of the great Apostle, she triumphed over evil by good; her soul, calm and serene, never allowed itself to be dejected or discouraged, while her zeal became stronger and more fruitful. "Superiors without crosses", says Fendou, "are sterile in bringing forth children of grace; their sorrows, patiently borne, acquire an infinite merit, which communicates grace to all their actions." "The best Superiors are those who suffer most", says a master of the spiritual life. These ascetic truths were verified in Mother Sacred Heart's own life.

From 1854 to 1857 she made a large number of new foundations. The Sisters were called to take

charge of the domestic affairs of the Marists' college at St. Chamond. At Chevagnes, in the Department of l'Allier, near Moulins, they confined their work to teaching, and visiting the sick. At Tarare, M. Martin, a manufacturer of note, desired to have the Sisters in his vast silk factories, to direct the four or five hundred women employed therein. They brought down the blessing of God upon this establishment, and greatly contributed to its prosperity. Mother Alphonse, afterwards Superior General, was the Angel Guardian of this family of working women. In the Province of the Loire, in the Towns of Saint Genest-Malifaux, of Saint Molin Molette, of Souzernon, near St. Germain Laval, the Sisters were called to the direction of schools. Bessage, in Gard, Herepian, in Herault, addressed to them the same appeal, with a confidence which was amply justified. The Lyceum of Bastia applied for Sisters to care for orphans, and, in the same Island, the Town of Fozzano confided to them their schools. They were also established at Evieux, Frontenac, Arthur, and Tour-de-Salvagny, and took charge of a hospital at Marthes.

This increase of numbers greatly rejoiced the heart of the Mother General, but her strength was exhausted. The physicians advised absolute rest. On the other hand, work and anxiety made their demands, and the generous Superior, consumed with the desire of giving herself to the service of others, hearkened to the voice of devotedness rather than to that of her medical advisers. Obligated to yield to the repeated importunities of her daughters, she allowed herself to be taken to the watering-place of Bourbon Lancy. Meet-

ing there the father of two of her Sisters, the good old man never missed an occasion of seeing her to speak of his children, and recommend them to her whom he regarded as their Mother. He said to his wife, "The Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph is an exceptional person; I consider her a saint, and a great saint, but, above all, a most amiable saint, who makes piety sweet, attractive and easy; I compare her to St. Chantal. Oh! how persuasive she is, how well she teaches us to support the trials of life, and to make our Lord loved by all." "Seeing that I was in sorrow, believe me, that good Mother condescended to share my grief; I see that the sole motive of her acting thus was charity, and for her condescension, she did more for me than I could have become a long sermon. With such a Mother, I no longer any anxiety regarding our children." "I will say of the amiable Superior of St. Joseph that she possessed in a remarkable degree that gracious manner which we call charming.

Mother Sacred Heart was ordered to spend the season at the bath. At her treatment, which took place early in the year, her time was devoted to prayer and meditation. Her occupations were daily, and her delight, we may say, to be near our Divine Lord; but when she had her ordinary recreation, she, by her example, set all at their ease and made them love to be so. The following year, the good Mother went to the baths of Evain, accompanied by her Mother Superior, Marie Louise, and a young Sister who had just arrived from her parents in Switzerland, and who was to travel with them as far as Geneva. Here Mother Sacred Heart made adieu

to the Sister and was at the wharf to take the boat for Evain before she remembered that she had not given the Novice means to defray her expenses. She immediately recommended her to St. Joseph, and sent a messenger at once to repair her forgetfulness. Before the messenger arrived, the Sister had purchased her ticket. In her embarrassment she also had recourse to St. Joseph, and, at the same moment, a gentleman who knew her family gave her the necessary sum. Both Mother and Daughter had unbounded confidence in St. Joseph, and it was not astonishing that he had graciously heard them.

Following the example of the great St. Teresa, Mother Sacred Heart recommended all her affairs to St. Joseph. A neighbouring Community wished, under various pretexts, to make the Superior-General give up a part of the Mother House in exchange for a terrace, which was by no means suitable for the Sisters. She refused with gentle firmness; hence arose a strife very painful to her, as a superior authority had advised her to yield; but she had recourse to her usual Protector and the business terminated as she desired. We may remember that she had appointed St. Joseph as Procurator of her Congregation, the duties of which office the good Saint discharged with great credit to himself and satisfaction to his clients, never failing to come to the aid of the Mother General in all her difficulties.

Mother Sacred Heart, having in some measure recovered her health and strength, presided at the next retreat, when another Counsellor, Mother St. Peter, was given her, to lessen her labours, which had been considerably increased, owing to the continual growth

of the Community. She now undertook to visit the Communities in the north and west of France. The colonies of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Touraine and La Vendee, which were first founded at St. Aubin, were re-established, with that of Corsica, in 1824.

The Countess of Rochejacquelin, whose zeal and munificence had generously contributed to found the Sisters of St. Joseph in Savoy and America, laboured still more zealously to establish them in the midst of those people who held her in veneration. In those countries watered by the blood of her forefathers, whose faith and heroism had rendered them forever celebrated, she was the providence of the Sisters of St. Joseph, a true mother to the Sisters of Touraine and La Vendee. At a later period, when Mother Sacred Heart visited these Communities, she had an opportunity of expressing her deep gratitude to this kind benefactress.

She left Lyons accompanied by Mother Felicita of Usee, in Touraine, who was visiting the Mother House, also Mother of the Heart of Mary, from the Novitiate, and a young Sister destined for a House to be opened in the West. It was a great pleasure for the good Superior of Usee to travel with Mother Sacred Heart. Twenty years before, a holy Religious had said to her: "Reverend Mother St. John is near her end, but God is preparing an excellent Superior-General for us, though I shall not live to see it; I beg our dear Lord that she may govern the Congregation a long time, for she will be animated with the spirit of God, and will accomplish much good. You shall know her yourself, and you will realize the truth of what I now say."

The journey in company with the Reverend Mother was, for the Superior of Usee, the literal fulfilment of these prophetic words of her holy friend, foretold so many years before.

The cold was very severe, and in order to protect the health of the Mother General, who had but recently recovered from her illness, first class tickets were procured. As soon as Mother Sacred Heart perceived this, she reprimanded Mother Felicita, saying: "Are not the poor satisfied with third class tickets? Where is our vow of poverty?" "Mother," replied the Superior of Usee, "we shall always have enough poor to take third class tickets, but we shall not always have you with us. In all that regards this journey through Touraine, with which I am well acquainted, permit me to be at once your guide and Superior." "Yes", replied Reverend Mother, "but not an extravagant Superior." The travellers, having the advantage of being the only persons in the compartment, performed all the spiritual exercises as if with the Community. At the hour for meditation the landscape and the beauties of nature passed unperceived: God alone was sufficient. The time for recreation was spent in amiable conversation, or in gazing on the beautiful scenery. Arrived at Usee, Mother Felicita gave up the keys of the house to her Superior saying: "You are at home now, dear Mother: command us as you please, we shall be happy to obey."

The Countess of Rochejacquelin accorded a gracious reception to Reverend Mother Sacred Heart, invited her to visit at her Chateau in Usee, and conversed with her for a long time, on matters concerning the

welfare of the Community. The Countess was charmed by the wisdom and eminent piety of her guest. "I found in her", said this noble lady, "another St. Chantal." During the week, the Countess threw open her private Chapel to the Sisters and Villagers, and for the parish Mass on Sundays she placed her carriage at Mother Sacred Heart's disposal. The latter, embarrassed at so much honour, left in the early morning, accompanied by a Sister, but the carriage soon overtook them, and they were obliged to take their places with the Countess.

On the way they perceived an old castle. "Perhaps this belongs to the Marquis of Vole au Sac", said Reverend Mother, smiling. "The Marquis of Vole au Sac?", repeated the astonished Countess: "I know all the nobility of Touraine, but I assure you, that name is unknown to me." The good Mother answered: "You have told me, Madame, the story of the miller who first enriched himself by stealing your grain, afterwards by pillaging your estates during the Revolution, and who finished by claiming a title of nobility. It seems to me, supposing that castle to be the residence of the new noble, he might well be called the Marquis of Vole au Sac." Everyone laughed: and since then, when relating the history of her miller, the Countess always gave him the title which Mother Sacred Heart bestowed upon him.

Divine charity filled the heart of the good Mother, and was bestowed even upon birds and animals. One day, walking in the garden, she noticed some grapes covered with a white cloth. Asking the reason, she was told it was to prevent the birds from eating them. Immediately, lifting the cloth, she said: "Come, come

little birds, eat the Sisters' grapes!" The Scripture says, the Lord opens His hand, and fills every living being with His benedictions. Her contemporary, Madame Barat, foundress of the Sacred Heart Congregation, was accustomed to sweep away the snow, that the sparrows might find the bread which she had thrown to them. These holy souls had something of the goodness of Providence, Who watches over all.

At Ligre, near Usee, the Superior-General decided to make a foundation. "Where will you get a Superior?" asked, in all simplicity, a Sister of the Community of Usee. "Here, and it will be you", replied Mother Sacred Heart. Nothing was further from the thoughts of the humble Sister, who believed it to be only a jest, and who was much astonished when she received her letter of obedience. Mother Felicita, to encourage her Daughter, went with Mother Sacred Heart, to preside at her installation. The presence and wise advice of these two Superiors strengthened the new Community, which was begun with the greatest regularity. Returning to Ligre, the Mother General went to Huismes, to make her usual visitation, and from this place she left Touraine, to visit the Community of Vendee, accompanied still by the Superior of Usee, as her faithful companion.

On arriving at Roche de Brand, she found the people assembled, under the leadership of the Mayor, who with a torch in his hand approached the Superior-General, begging her to light the bonfire prepared in her honour. She hesitated: "Would it not be better", she said, "to keep the wood for the poor?" "No one is poor in our country", he replied, "and everyone

wishes to welcome the Mother General of our good Sisters." The amiable guest complied with his wish, and soon the flames leaped in the air, accompanied by a thousand joyous acclamations, announcing her arrival to the whole country. Afterwards she had to visit all the people of note in the country, and these visits she made in such a manner as to charm everyone. Worn out with it all, she said to her daughters: "The place for a Religious is with her Community, and that of a Mother near her Children."

At Curzay she had the consolation of finding the Community living in great peace and humility; and as humility, or self-denial, unites one to God, according to the words of Thomas a Kempis, "My child, give up self and you shall find Me", the Religious of Curzay were truly filled with the love of God. Mother Sacred Heart remarked especially amongst them a Lay Sister who was regarded as a saint. Her union with God was uninterrupted, her blind obedience reminded one of the ancient fathers of the desert. She followed exactly the counsel of St. Teresa to her Religious: "Be always ready to communicate and to die." As she was old, infirm, and worn out by her devotedness and work, she was, at her request, recalled to the Mother House, where she passed the remainder of her life in prayer for the Congregation. When the Mother General had any favours to ask from our Lord, she sent this saintly Sister to the Chapel.

From Curzay, the visitors went to the Community of Maulevrier. The Sisters wished the Superior to go with a carriage to meet Mother Sacred Heart, but she, having learned this, and desiring to spare the Superior

the fatigue of the journey. In such cold weather, hastened her departure, and arrived at the Convent late at night, very much exhausted and benumbed with cold. As the door bell had been removed for repairs, it was with difficulty that they made themselves heard. The driver, taking pity on the travellers, left his carriage, and succeeded in awakening the Community.

The next day was devoted by the good Mother to her spiritual Children. She listened, advised and consoled; indulgent without weakness, penetrating without sharpness, she saw all at a glance, and knew what advice was necessary for each one. "That child shall early ascend to Calvary and descend very late", she said, one day, of a postulant whom they had presented to her: the future realized this prediction in a most striking manner. She did not allow herself to judge by appearances, however suspicious they might be. Her penetration divined all, and she spoke with so much justice, that she was able to bend the strongest wills and overcome the most united opposition. Loving her daughters with tenderness, she remembered their faces and their names in spite of time, absence or distance; each was known and treated as if she were the only one under her care. "After thirteen years' absence", said a Sister, "she was able to recall the exact dates of my reception and profession."

"We must not fear", said she, "what the ancient monastic constitutions called 'the holy work of the hands'. The body is a servant, but, by inclination, extremely unruly and idle. Instruct children to love work, order and economy, keep them in great simplicity,

and do not place them above their station in life, by giving them a costume which they could not wear in their own homes." Although she loved embroidery, she always gave the preference to that which was essential; she insisted that children be taught to make their underwear, darn their stockings, mend and make, as much as possible, their own clothing. "We have remarked in our Reverend Mother", said a Sister who knew her, "a great love for manual labour; she had constantly some work in her hands, even when engaged in conversation with strangers." These wise admonitions and examples suited, in a special manner, the patriarehal inhabitants of La Vendee, that strong race, "that race of giants", as they were called by Napoleon I, or as Rohrbacher said: 'that race of Martyrs, who were without vanity, luxury, or modern frivolity."

The Superior-General visited also St. Aubin and Gaubretiere, where she was received amid the ringing of bells. "What festival are they celebrating here?" she asked. "It is that of year arrival", they answered. "But it is not thus", she said, "that they should receive a Religious of St. Joesph." They replied by surrounding her, as children surround their mother. If such was her reception by the people, what must have been that of her children? During the three days that she remained with them, they were constantly with her, listening with pleasure to her conversation. Her fidelity in the observance of the holy Rule, her exactitude in performing everything at the appointed time, her attitude in the church, where she seemed to see God only, her care to avoid all that might

flatter nature, deeply edified them: "All for grace, nothing for nature", was one of her favourite maxims. Her ardent love for God was so pure, so elevated, that she wished for neither the enjoyments, the consolations, nor the rewards of love. "To seek divine sweetness", said she, "is not solid love, but to humble oneself, to suffer, to die to self, to wish to be known only to God, this is true love; as the bee gathers honey from thorns, courageous souls find consolation in crosses."

The Sisters at Gaubretiere received, with holy avidity, her counsels of perfection, so well confirmed by example. She examined their house, the buildings, the accounts and the classes, with the greatest care, and she neglected nothing that could contribute to the spiritual or temporal welfare of that Community. The good Religious of Gaubretiere were unable to express their gratitude, but in their hearts they treasured carefully the remembrance of her maternal care.

From Gaubretiere, Mother Sacred Heart went to Nantes, to take the train for Touraine. As there was no house of the Congregation there, she and her travelling companions went to a hotel near the station, that they might have no difficulty in leaving early the next day. Here occurred a ludicrous incident which excited in them great fear and consternation. Towards midnight, the favourite hour for crime, one of the Sisters suddenly heard plaintive cries and groans, as of a person in agony from the blows of an assassin. She arose, called her companion, and together they listened to the cries, which every moment became more plaintive and frequent. In fright, they lighted

a candle, closed and locked the door, and opened the window, ready to call for help. The next morning, the hostess made excuses to them, saying: "We forgot to tell you that a baker has his bakehouse near your room; working and kneading the bread was the sound which seemed to you like the cries of a man being murdered." This explanation calmed the good Sisters, but their night's rest was lost. "Poor children", said the Reverend Mother, who had heard nothing, "you were wrong to torture yourselves thus, you should have asked your sentinels to take care of you." "Had you sentinels, Reverend Mother", they inquired. "Oh! yes, I had my Guardian Angel and St. Joseph, therefore I slept well."

Returning to Usee, the travellers rested from their fatigues. On one of those days, the Sisters, profiting by the momentary absence of the humble Mother Felicita, related to the Superior-General how she had earned the Cross of Honour. "At the time of the great inundations of the Loire, Touraine was not spared. The Indre, which flowed near the Convent of Usee, appeared like an ocean, a number of houses floating on its surface, and we were called upon to succour the unfortunate people. One day our Mother heard that several families, living in the same house, were not only without bread, but had been obliged to take refuge on the roof of the building, which the rising waters threatened with ruin. Their cries of distress and despair resounded in the distance. Our Mother got some food, and hastened to their aid, but to reach these unfortunate people it was necessary to brave the fury of the waves, which carried everything away

before them. A crowd of men had assembled. 'What are you doing?', she asked them; 'why do you not try to save these poor people?' They declared that to risk crossing would be to deliver oneself to certain death; it would be the height of imprudence. The next moment she perceived a little boat, which she approached, crying out: 'Who will come with me and help me to row?' Everyone was cold with fear, and no one offered. 'Sister', said our generous Mother to the Religious who accompanied her, 'let us fear nothing, God will be with us; let us try to save these unfortunates.'

"Saying this, they entered the frail boat, and the Superior began to row, when a good-hearted man presented himself and offered to assist her. The little boat returned for him, and they set out on their perilous journey. The crowd on shore trembled; every moment they expected to see the little craft engulfed in the waters. Twenty times it disappeared in the midst of the frightful deluge, and each time, from the shore, resounded cries of grief. Meanwhile the three untrained sailors rowed with all their strength to reach the unfortunate people. At last, after great efforts, and unheard-of dangers, they arrived at the house of distress. The sight was heart-rending, and the cries of the poor people would touch the hardest heart. When the boat was close enough to the house, Mother told them to let down a rope, and lower themselves, one after the other, into the boat. They obeyed, and in a few moments the boat was so full that they feared it would capsize. 'That is enough', said our Mother, 'let the others wait, we shall return in a short

time.' They set out again, their peril increased; the overladen boat tossed to and fro in the midst of the waves; the least shock, the least overbalancing, was a threat of death. Our intrepid Mother, by her self-possession, inspired everyone with courage, and raised their spirits; she prayed, and excited them to confidence in God. The way seemed very long, but by almost superhuman efforts they at last reached the shore. She at once set out again to brave the furious waves, with the same courage, to encounter the same dangers, and the second heroic act succeeded as the first. God blessed our Mother and all those whom she saved; she took care of them, and provided for them as long as the flood lasted. This is the way our Mother earned the Cross of Honour."

Mother Felicita entering at the termination of this narrative, the Mother General said, as she pressed her to her heart: "Your coming is most opportune; have you ever worn your Cross of Honour?" "Only once", replied Mother Felicita, smiling; "a railroad clerk refused to give me a second class ticket, although I showed him my pass; I then displayed the Cross on my guimpe, and immediately he granted my request. Since then I have not worn it." "You do not value earthly recompenses", said Mother Sacred Heart, proud of her Daughter. "You are right; others, much greater, are reserved for you: all earthly favours are as nothing compared with the happiness and glory of the next world."

The Mother General left Vendee and Touraine, her heart filled with consolation, blessing God for the good which He deigned to work through her Sisters. The

warm reception which she had received from the people of the West showed her how much the Sisters of St. Joseph were loved and revered: she attributed it to the virtues of her dear Children and sentiments similar to those of the *Magnificat* filled her soul.

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ACADEMY OF SAINT JOSEPH, IN THE PINES, BRENTWOOD, N. Y.

## CHAPTER XVI

### PROGRESS OF THE INSTITUTE

ON LEAVING the regions in the west of France, the Mother General went to Paris, where the Sisters of the house of Carmes were awaiting her with holy impatience. Paris is the Metropolis of all that is wonderful, and as it was the first time that Mother Sacred Heart had visited the Capital, it would seem natural that her birth and education would dispose her to view its beauties with pleasure, but neither its worldly grandeur nor its marvels of art attracted her; her thoughts were of another world. To the eager and kind efforts they made to show her its treasures she replied: "These do not satisfy me, I must reserve myself for things that are dearer to my heart; in Paris, I belong to my Sisters." Here we see the tenderness of the Mother revealed, to whom nothing was as important as her spiritual family, to them she entirely devoted her time, neglecting no detail which concerned the well-being of the Community. Listening to her instructions and her conversations, her daughters profited by this visit to reanimate and renew themselves in the spirit of their holy vocation, their fervour equalling their joy.

Before leaving Paris, Mother Sacred Heart accepted willingly an invitation to visit the principal churches. She preferred the Church of Our Lady of Victories to all others, and prayed there a long time for her dear Congregation. The same day she wrote to her

Assistant, Mother Marie Louise: "I am in Paris; were I curious, I should have an opportunity of seeing many things both beautiful and rare, but to these I prefer my beloved Community. Though in the midst of my children here, I do not forget those in Lyons; in my visits to the principal Churches I have prayed for you all, recommending you in a special manner to Our Lady of Victories. Paris is the rendezvous of the universe; its tumult only increases my love for the silence and calm of the religious life, but the Will of God is my guide. If my visits can do good to our Sisters, and are agreeable to our Lord, I shall be satisfied; yet I do not conceal from you that I shall be pleased to be at the end of my journey, for I can say with the Apostle: 'I desire to see you again, when God so wills it'."

From Paris, the Superior-General travelled towards Amiens, to visit the Community of St. Riquier, where the Sisters of St. Joseph have charge of the infirmary and household affairs of the Seminary. At Amiens she asked hospitality from Father Basinet, Canon of Reims, the Author of *Spiritual Conferences for Religious Communities*, a work much esteemed. This pious and learned clergyman, who knew by reputation the Superior-General of the Sisters of St. Joseph, entertained great respect for her, and was much pleased to receive her in his house. "We are entertaining a saint", he said to his servant; "she will draw down on us the benediction of Heaven." Such a reputation disturbed the humility of Mother Sacred Heart.

After having visited the celebrated Cathedral of Amiens, she left for St. Riquier, where, according to

her custom, she devoted herself day and night to the good of the Community. The Sisters were deeply grateful for the interest she manifested by coming such a distance to see them. "Ah! love has wings", says the pious Author of *The Imitation*; "it runs, it flies, it feels neither fatigue nor burden, it is not necessary to speak to it of difficulties; it surmounts them without pain."

The Superior of the Seminary wished to give her the pleasure of a trip to Boulogne. "You are too near the ocean", he said, "to refuse your travelling companion the pleasure of seeing it." He knew that the Saints were as much inclined to give pleasure to others as they were accustomed to deny themselves. He therefore asked the favour for her companion, which would have been refused for herself.

After the visit to Riquier, the Mother General left Picardy without delay, to return to Lyons, leaving behind her treasured memories of her virtues, her wise counsel and good example. About this time occurred the death of several Sisters. In 1858 the Community lost Sister St. Genevieve, of whom it was written: "She edified all at the Mother House by a long life spent in the practice of virtue. We shall faithfully preserve the affecting remembrance of her charity towards her companions, of her union with our Lord, which rendered her indifferent to self, of her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, of her obedience, which resembled that of a child, of her perfect regularity. In spite of her infirmities, which almost crushed her with their weight, this dear Mother never failed to assist at morning prayers until the day she rested on

her bed of death." "You have lost a Saint", exclaimed Mgr. Plantier to the Superior-General. "I had great veneration for that soul, so simple, yet so full of the spirit of God."

The same year, the Congregation mourned the death of Sister Louis Henry, Superior of Tour-du-Pin, of the Department of Isere. "Heaven was jealous of the treasure we possessed in her person", said Mother Sacred Heart; "she lived like the angels, united to God, estranged from earth." Her heart overflowed with charity, and though extremely mortified in things concerning herself, she was never severe towards others. Her spiritual children, with one voice, bless and proclaim her virtues. "She concealed under a cold and commonplace exterior, a heroic soul, and a most loving heart: we have lost a loved one who, we feel, can never be replaced. One had to reside at the Convent of Tour-du-Pin to know that she was Superior: she had no special room for herself; her bed was in the dormitory nearest to the door. At the end of the list marking the distribution of employments, one might read: 'Sister Louis Henry, at such an hour, for such and such a charge.' This was usually one of the most humble in the house. She bore her trials and contradictions with the resignation of the greatest saints. Besides her good example, our fervent Mother addressed to us instructions and exhortations, touching, persuasive and salutary; her conferences on the duties of a religious teacher were admirable. Those who lived with her breathed an odour of sanctity. Reverend Mother said: 'The Congregation has suffered an irreparable loss', and we fully realize the truth of her words".

We have said that sorrows and trials neither lessened the zeal nor exhausted the spiritual strength of the Saints, so Mother Sacred Heart, though feeling acutely the loss of this Sister, now occupied herself very earnestly in a matter which was of sovereign importance to the Congregation. This was the revision of the Rules, and their approbation by Our Holy Father, the Pope. Since she had been at the head of the Institute, this, with the construction of the Chapel, was her great ambition, and it increased with the growth of the Congregation. "This approbation", says a wise author, "confers on the religious constitutions so honoured a greater authority, a higher sanction, a more sacred character, secures inviolability and shelters them from interference; it is also a guarantee of unity. The rules thus protected will be the same wherever they have permission to establish a house; they need not fear that the local authorities can change their regulations. The Church, in approving an order, gives it a participation in all the attributes and prerogatives which render it a society, one, immutable, independent and universal."

Desirous to obtain for her dear Congregation such great and precious advantages, Mother Sacred Heart made application to Rome. Several questions had already been brought forward and discussed, but the Constitutions, in order to be approved, needed to undergo several modifications. This work was entrusted to a capable ecclesiastic, revised by the First Superior, and approved by His Eminence, the Cardinal de Bonald. On this subject, the Superior-General wrote to her Congregation, on the 24th of July, 1858:

"The dates of our retreats are as follows: The first from September 8th to the 15th, the second from October 8th to the 15th; this last, to which I invite, particularly, all the Superiors of the Congregation, will be of special importance, as our very venerable Cardinal de Bonald will then promulgate the new edition of our holy Rules."

About this time she was obliged again to enlarge the Mother House, as the former additions, though they had at that time appeared too ample, were now found insufficient. This happy necessity called into requisition the admirable forethought and superior wisdom which Mgr. Plantier called "the boldness of the Reverend Mother." On this occasion, however, he had neither blame nor complaint, but, in extending its proportions to meet the increasing wants of the Community, Mother Sacred Heart took care that its primitive simplicity was maintained. It was the little grain of mustard seed which became a great tree. The new additions made to the Mother House were, on one side, the Novitiate, and on the other, the Normal School. The old buildings were transformed into large dormitories, and, for the general use of the Community a bakehouse, kitchen, laundry and pharmacy were added. The infirmary was situated near the Chapel, that the sick might be able to be present at the divine service, and at the various religious exercises of the Community. Both buildings contained everything necessary, but nothing luxurious or superfluous.

In 1859 and 1860 new foundations were made in Dareize, in Sourceix, near Arbresle, in Eure, in the Department of Drome, and at Bourg-Argental, in

Ardeche. From 1861 to 1867 were erected institutions for deaf mutes, schools at Chalain-le-Comtal, near Montbrison, at Talandiere, near St. Etienne, at St. Genisles-Ollieres, at Sully, in the Department of Saone and Loire, at Bevenais and at Colombe, in Isere, at Alata, in Corsica, at St. Just d'Avray, and St. Priest-la-Roche. At St. Jean Bonnefond they opened a hospital. Here they had schools also which had existed since 1820. Mother Sacred Heart assisted at each foundation, or sent someone as her delegate, to encourage, direct, and, by prudence, prevent difficulties. "We govern those at a distance, but we administer those near", said the Emperor Napoleon I.

Some time before her death, the venerable Mother wrote: "I have learned Geography by visiting my Communities of the north, south and centre of France." Like the Good Shepherd, she could say: "I know my sheep and my sheep know me." "I shall always remember", said a Sister who travelled with her, "the visits which I made with Reverend Mother Sacred Heart. It was in the month of August, under a burning sun: though the heat was very trying to her sanguine temperament, she suffered without complaint or relaxation. Her limbs were so swollen that I wondered how she could keep on the journey. Once, during that time, quite exhausted, she turned towards me and said: 'Sister, I have such an attack of headache that it is impossible for me to go further; let us rest a little while'. She seated herself, leaned against a tree, and slept a few moments; then, awakening suddenly, she cried: 'Heaven is for rest, let us continue our way.' In one of these journeys, at daybreak, she saw a

young girl sleeping on the damp grass, and exclaimed: 'What! at this early hour! How did this child come to be here?' Drawing near, she asked: 'Are you ill, my child?' From the answers, she recognized a woman of ill repute. 'She has a soul to save', said Reverend Mother, and taking the girl, she obtained for her suitable lodgings."

One day a Superior, whom she was visiting, made known to her that she was in extreme want. Reverend Mother listened with her accustomed mildness, then, drawing from her purse some money which had been given to her, she said: "Let us share together, my dear Sister. I have very little, but this will enable you to supply the pressing needs of your house; in the meantime God will come to our aid." The poor Superior withdrew, her heart deeply affected, and her eyes bathed in tears. She afterwards affirmed that God came to her aid, according to the words of Mother Sacred Heart, and that she had never again to ask assistance. The charity of her Superior-General had sweetened the present and the future. The good Mother General loved to listen to the sorrows and trials of her daughters.

Mother St. Louis, one of the venerable Sisters of the Congregation, thus relates the destitution she experienced, while founding her house at St. Didier-sur-Rochefort, Province of Loire: "We had absolutely nothing; there were three of us, and we had but one spoon and one fork, so that we were obliged, during meals, to pass them from one to another successively. I dared not make known our distress, but we often experienced the protection and bounty of God. My

God, I cried, you have said, 'Ask and you shall receive', I ask for a broom. A moment after, someone knocked at the door, and there was a woman with two brooms. 'I am poor', she said, 'and cannot make you presents, but will you please accept these?' I thanked God, and affectionately embraced our benefactress. At another time", continued Mother St. Louis, "we had no bellows. A Sister, being weary from trying to kindle a fire, said, with a little temper: 'I am losing my time for nothing; I wish Providence would send a bellows merchant to our Mountains.' 'Religious of little faith', I said to her, 'you doubt the goodness and power of God! Lord', I added, 'convince her!' The same evening a peddler came to offer a bellows to the discouraged Sister."

This venerable Mother St. Louis addressed herself to God upon every occasion, as a little child to its mother. Towards the end of her life, God permitted that this faithful servant should be afflicted with a cancer. She suffered a long time in silence, contenting herself, when the pain was most acute, with making the sign of the cross with holy water, and asking our Lord for patience. Overcome at length by the malady, she made it known to the Reverend Mother, who obliged her to see a doctor. "I am in the decline of life", she said to the physician, "I am awaiting my death. God wishes to purify me in this world, may His holy name be forever blessed." When the pain was intolerable, she prayed the Sisters who surrounded her to sing some hymns, to remind her of Heaven. Once she exclaimed: "O my Jesus! It is only in Heaven that harmony is perfect. Oh, how beautiful!

Oh, how beautiful!" And her soul, full of faith and love, went to hear the celestial harmony of the Angels, on September 13th, 1857. Her age was seventy-four years and six months.

The care and affection that the Mother General manifested towards her daughters extended even to their relatives. Having heard that a relative of one of the Sisters, attending the Veterinary School, had been sent to prison for some thoughtless act, she interceded for him, gave security, and obtained his release. If she knew anyone to be in pain, weariness or embarrassment, she hastened to offer assistance. On one occasion, she burdened herself with the care of a whole family, who had met with misfortune. She procured a position for the father, provided for the education of the daughters, and lodged the little children and their mother in the Sisters' country house. With her, obedience and charity went hand in hand. She begged permission from Ecclesiastical Superiors to give to this unfortunate family some rents which she received from the mines, of which her brother paid the dividends: at the expiration of each term, she humbly asked a renewal of the permission. She was a child in obedience, and a mother in charity.

Regarding her own family, she was extremely guarded, keeping an account of the expenses incurred during their occasional visits, and scrupulously obtaining authorization from the Superiors of the Congregation. The Assistant remonstrated with her, saying: "The Community is only too happy to entertain your mother and sister; it would pain them if they knew of your extreme exactitude." "I am a Religious", she

replied, "and I know the obligations of my vows."

Everything for her personal use was marked by the most rigorous poverty; grace had conquered all natural likes and dislikes, tastes and habits acquired from education. Self-denial is the ornament of the Saints. Unable to give, she desired to wear only the poorest things; she refused to use an eiderdown coverlet, which had been placed on her bed when she was ill, saying: "Take it away, a Religious has no need of such vanities." She acted in the same manner on another occasion, when a piece of carpet was placed beside her bed. "What will it profit us to have quitted the world, if we live like this?", she exclaimed. "Do you wish me to introduce such customs into the Community? Do you forget that simplicity is the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph? Ah! our good old Religious did not have these luxuries. We are poor, we must like the poor." A young postulant who loved her Novice Mistress very much was about to wax the floor of her room, but was prevented by the Superior-General, who exclaimed: "What! wax the floor of your Mistress's room?" and taking a pitcher of water she threw it over the floor, thus undoing the work of the simple postulant, who received the lesson in the right spirit, promising, henceforth, to practise the simplicity and poverty becoming to a Sister of St. Joseph.

She who exacted these virtues from herself and her Religious had too much wisdom to require them from everyone; time, persons, and places were considered. It should be the same in devotion, as the wise Author of *The Imitation* has said, and with greater reason than in things of less importance. On this account, Rev-

erend Mother Sacred Heart, who would not have the rooms waxed which were used by the Community, tolerated this luxury in the parlours for the reception of visitors and the relatives of the pupils. God permitted that she should be severely blamed for this concession by some of her Religious. She received their remonstrances with humility and gratitude, but seeing nothing contrary to her vow of poverty, or to their customs, she asked the Cardinal Archbishop, during one of his visits to the Mother House, to examine the drawing-room and parlours, being resolved to retrench all that was unnecessary. His Eminence, after examining the rooms, said: "I approve of all, continue as you are now doing; one must not receive persons of the world as if they were Religious."

Thus, St. Basil the Great, the oracle of the Eastern Church, who lived such a life of prayer, mortification and abstinence, had a sumptuous table, as related by his friend, St. Gregory, for the governors, generals, and great ones of the world, who came to consult him or ask his aid. The venerable Superior-General of St. Joseph, after the example of great saints, knew when to unite suitable luxuries with a life of austerity. The world that honoured the wisdom of St. Basil, by showing him confidence and religious respect, could also appreciate the merits and virtues of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart. We have already quoted the words of a man of the highest society of the city of Lyons, who called her the "Queen of Mothers". The Notary of the Congregation, Honourable M. Berlotty, was pleased to speak of her as "an exceptional woman." Thus she was regarded in the south of France, where

she made a visitation in 1859, accompanied by Mother Emilie. Arriving at Nimes, after having deposited their luggage in the hotel, they went at once to see Mgr. Plantier, who thus addressed them: "All that I have is at your disposal, you shall not stay at the hotel, but at my palace; it must not be said", added His Lordship, "that she from whom I received so many kindnesses should lodge elsewhere than with me." The next day he presented her to the Vicar-General, saying: "Here is the superior of a great and numerous family, whom I esteem and revere very much, one who was not afraid to choose me for her director, when I was but a young abbe." The Archbishop, in his hospitality, made her visit a real feast. For her part, Mother Sacred Heart was happy in being able to receive again the counsels of him who had assisted her by his spiritual advice for over fifteen years. This interview resembled that of St. Olympiade and St. John Chrysostom.

On leaving Nimes, the Reverend Mother went to Bessege, and visited the other Communities of the South: Bedarieux, Herepiar, Saint Pons, Salleles, Montperoux and Meze. Everywhere she received a most filial welcome, and as in Corsica, her visitation was a continual triumph, similar to that accorded by the illustrious and hospitable Archbishop of Nimes. The religious Communities of St. Joseph in the south of France, by their regularity and virtues, their devotion and good works, afforded great consolation to the heart of the Superior-General. Blessing God, and justly proud of her daughters, this excellent Mother poured into their hearts treasures of wisdom and

tenderness. The words which Mother de Chaugy wrote of St. Chantal could be applied to her: "That age but made her qualities of mind and heart shine forth with greater lustre." In her last days, her mildness was so extraordinary, so complete, and so charming that it seemed as if that divine quality of goodness and sweetness influenced the great strength of her nature, and the active ardour of her zeal; thus illuminating her wisdom and virtue with greater brightness, as the setting sun lights up the mountains with purple and gold. But the reflection of the Cross and of intense suffering had yet to brighten that gold, and tint that purple with a softer light, to give them that final perfection which would afterwards be crowned with the splendours of Heaven.

## CHAPTER XVII

### NEW AFFLICTIONS

MOTHER Sacred Heart saw each year some of her daughters removed by death, and this long and ever growing procession of souls, journeying towards their heavenly home, opened and prepared the way for her who had been their spiritual Mother. On October 7th, 1860, death took from her side one of her Counsellors, Mother Anastasia, aged fifty seven. In apprising the Congregation of this loss, the Reverend Mother spoke as follows regarding the death of her beloved co-labourer: "Her death has been for us, and for the Novitiate, a blow, the more painful because unexpected. Suffering for some time, she went to the Community of Belleville, to take a little rest; we hoped the change of air would restore her health, but an attack of fever snatched her from us. You know, my dear daughters, the edifying life of her for whom we now weep. The uprightness of her soul was such that she could not suspect evil, though very apparent to others, and charity was her virtue of predilection; she could say with the Apostle St. Paul. 'Who is weak and I am not weak?'

"It was particularly to the young postulants confided to her care that she exercised her great charity; the poorest, the most neglected by their family, were her privileged ones. Her goodness suggested a thousand devices for encouraging and cheering them;

the suffering were as a loadstone to attract her. You understand, my dear daughters, how this perfection augments our grief, in losing its possessor; it is a great sacrifice which our Lord demands from me, the giving up of my dear companion in the prime of her life. But what services she may still render us! The Divine Spouse chooses for Himself the souls of the elite; let us adore His designs, and hasten to merit this eternal rest in our turn."

The dear departed one was replaced in the Council by Mother Mary Josephine, the Directrix of the Normal School. Two months afterwards another bereavement pained the heart of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart. "Sister St. Gervais left our Mother House for her eternal home on January 20th, 1841", the Mother General wrote to her daughters. "She was all her life a model and a lover of holy poverty, and her charity excused and concealed the failings of her neighbour. Though feeble and suffering, she was an example of punctuality, desiring neither exemption nor dispensation, and her fidelity in fulfilling her duties and keeping her holy Rule was interrupted only by death. By reflection and prayer, her soul was constantly united to God, and her countenance reflected the peace of Heaven. Her last illness was a continuation, not an interruption, of her loving aspirations to her celestial Spouse. The night preceding her happy death, she repeated incessantly: 'My God, that I may die with love of Thee!' Having received the adorable Body of her Saviour in the morning, she sweetly expired whilst making her thanksgiving. Let us strive to imitate her virtues, that we may meet death as she did, in the peace of the Lord."

These beautiful deaths, though a source of joy to the Mother General, made deep wounds in her loving heart. "Let us be resigned, and thank God", she said, "for these departed angels, whom we so much regret, and let us expiate our faults by the bitterness of the cross." These trials were followed by others still greater. Sorrow's two-edged sword again pierced her tender soul, which God was moulding to the image of His Saints. The crown of adversity must not be wanting to her, "that crown", says an author, "which gives value to all the others, and without which the most beautiful life is incomplete." Bossuet says: "Nothing perfects like adversity added to virtue." One of the greatest trials of generous souls is to meet with opposition from those whom they revere.

We have said that the cross coming from Superiors is, for the saints, the consummation of their perfection. The venerable Mother St. John had borne that cross towards the end of her great and noble life, and her daughter followed her on that dolorous way. Mother Sacred Heart had a profound veneration for her Superiors, and in her obedience, docility and simplicity she gave an example of heroic virtue. Nevertheless, by the permission of God, Whose wisdom is beyond our feeble comprehension, the confidence of her Superiors gave place to indifference, and was soon followed by coldness, mortifying words, and painful humiliations. The poor Mother examined herself in vain to discover the cause of this change. Not finding it in herself, she had recourse to prayer, pouring forth her soul into the Heart of Him Whom she called her only Support. A soft light illumined her soul, showing her that

she could do nothing but resign herself to suffer, that it would be as God pleased, when the prejudices of her Superiors should be removed; her justification was in His hands, and His divine Wisdom allowed this seeming disgrace as an excellent means of detaching her from the consideration and esteem of creatures; in fine, that it was good for her "to adhere only to Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." She submitted and gave herself up to holy abandonment. "Lord", she exclaimed, like her Divine Master, "I commit all into Thy hands." This cross was succeeded by others.

The Superior-General learned that one of the Mission Houses was in the hands of creditors, who threatened the rigour of the law. Without delay, she hastened there, and soon made herself mistress of the state of affairs. The local Superior had not proved a skilful manager, everything being on too extravagant a scale. The boarding school, to please people of the world, had been too expensive; in a word, the imprudent administration of the local Superior had caused the trouble. To increase her difficulties, a second, and also a third house were found in the same state; the Reverend Mother was face to face with a deficit of three hundred thousand francs, and had in her possession only some small savings destined for the final expenses of the chapel of the Mother House. As the Author of *The Imitation* says: "The cross comes from above, below, and every side."

In her distress, the pious Mother, according to her custom, had recourse first to God, then by the advice of His Eminence, Cardinal de Bonald, she addressed to her Community the following letter: "Many amongst

you, my dear daughters, must know that an enormous burden has been added to the heavy one already borne by the Mother House. Some of our Communities, having contracted debts beyond their means, are unable to meet their payments. For the honour of our Congregation and our religion, we must assume this responsibility. We would wish to be dispensed from making this appeal to your generosity, though your devotedness is well known to us, but the debt is so heavy that we must call upon you for assistance. On other occasions we have had opportunities of judging of your goodwill; we know that you will hasten to our aid, according to the extent of your means. We are members of the same body, and the members suffer, sympathize or rejoice together." His Eminence, Cardinal de Bonald, added these words to the Reverend Mother's letter: "We call the attention of our dear Sisters of St. Joseph to the needs of the Mother House, and we hope that they will lighten the cross that now presses upon the Mother General."

The Congregation united in imposing privations upon themselves, in order to respond to her appeal. Deeply affected, and full of gratitude, Mother Sacred Heart wrote again to thank the Sisters, and pray them to continue the work they had commenced.

Some time after, on December 31st, 1861, on the advent of the New Year, having made known to the Congregation the number and names of her spiritual children whom the Lord had called to Himself, during the course of the year which was just closing, the Mother General added: "Before these cherished graves, which enclose such treasures of virtues, merits and

hopes, let us lift up our hearts towards Heaven, where, free from the vexations of life, our departed loved ones shall soon enjoy the ineffable delights which God has promised to those who love Him. Henceforth, they shall know neither suffering nor death. Death has been conquered, and in Heaven there shall be no more tears; the sighs of the exile shall no longer be heard. God is with His saints; they had their trials in this world, but now they rejoice and are consoled; they are beyond all fear, they rest and live forever with our Lord, in the Kingdom of His Father. It is well for our dear departed now that they appreciated the advantages of a life entirely consecrated to the glory of God, and passed in immolation and sacrifice. For the opprobrium suffered for His sake, He will give glory; for the tears shed for Him, joy; for the lowest place, accepted for His sake, a throne in His eternal Kingdom. There will shine the fruits of obedience, penance will rejoice at its works, and humble submission will be gloriously crowned. They see now the vanity of all that is not God, the futility of all that passes with time. As the author of *The Imitation* expresses it: 'The mortified flesh rejoices more than if it had been nourished on delicacies. The plain habits shall shine, and the rich apparel shall lose its brightness. The poor little cell shall be judged greater than palaces of brightest gold. Contempt of riches and holy poverty shall be heavier in the balance than all the treasures of earth. A pious prayer shall have given more consolation and joy than the most splendid banquet. They shall rejoice more for silence well kept than for long conversations, that they had

preferred a life of pain and labour to the pleasures of the world.' Glorifying, as formerly the Prophet did, in the tribulations they had endured, our dear departed ask themselves, in the effusion of their joy and gratitude, how it is possible that, for the light sacrifice, the suffering of a moment, God now makes them drink of the torrents of His delights, and deigns to admit them to His infinite and eternal glory.

"May their felicity excite our emulation, my very dear daughters! As they are today, we shall soon be. Their death warns us of the flight of time. We are already well advanced on the road which leads from the cradle to the tomb; how rapidly life passes! Ours shall pass; however long it may be, it shall vanish like a dream. Our infancy, our first joys and sorrows, all shall seem as yesterday, and, behold, we are touching eternity! Thus, day by day, we are accomplishing our term. Let us look then to Heaven and eternity, and live for the life beyond. Let us perform each action as though it were the last. 'In order to sanctify each day', said a holy Religious, 'let us regard it as that of our death.'

"May the New Year be a holy one, my dear daughters, and may it glide away in the practice of all religious virtues. May your souls, like a river overflowing with heavenly waters, be inundated with love of God, sweetness, peace, and charity towards others! Spouses of the Lamb immolated for us, may our Congregation be always most dear to you! It is in its bosom that God has supplied us with such numberless graces, and in it we have become Spouses of His Son. It teaches us the means of sanctifying our souls; it

watches over and protects us, like a citadel, against the dangers of the world; it nourishes us like a mother, with spiritual milk; it enriches us with divine treasures; it fortifies and sustains our weakness by the power of prayers in common. There are children who sometimes wound the heart of their mother; let us be the joy, the consolation and the pride of ours; let us be her pride by our humility, her riches by our poverty, her beauty by our purity, her strength by our union, and her joy by our fervour. Let us apply to ourselves this recommendation of the Holy Spirit: 'My son, observe faithfully the law of thy mother, and chain thy heart to her recommendations'."

Thus she profited not only by these anniversaries, but by everything that happened in the course of her life, in order to arouse in herself and in her daughters a great desire for the grand work of their sanctification. In a pilgrimage which she made to the tomb of St. Francis Regis, she learned that a possessed person had been brought there. The Sister who accompanied Reverend Mother Sacred Heart wished to see this person, and begged her Superior to accompany her, not daring to face alone this formidable object of her curiosity. The good Mother yielded to the repeated entreaties of her daughter. They found the person in a terribly agitated condition, so much so, that the frightened Sister drew her Superior by the habit, imploring her to return. Mother Sacred Heart resisted, and perceiving that the creature made some remarks, said: "Tell me what pleases you most in religious communities?" At this question, the possessed girl turned round towards the Superior with such maddened

fury that her companion, beside herself with fear, cried out: "Save us, Mother, save us; let us escape." Mother Sacred Heart remained calm and serene, repeating her question, adding, however: "I ask you in the name of God." "That does not concern you", replied the possessed, "go away with your Sister, who is dying of fear." "But I am not afraid", returned Mother Sacred Heart. "In the name of God, I again ask you to answer this question: what pleases you most in religious communities?" After some imprecations, oaths, and frightful contortions, she replied: "Oh! well, what pleases me most in religious houses is the frequenting of parlours, particular friendships, and contempt for authority." It was evident that the demon made this avowal in spite of himself, for the girl suffered frightfully while uttering it.

The Mother General departed with the resolution to avoid, and to have others avoid with more care than ever, what pleased the enemy of perfection. She never went to the parlour except through strict necessity; it was for her a daily mortification. Polite and amiable towards all, she knew how to sustain reasonable conversation, and how to curtail it when useless, without in the least wounding the feelings of anyone. She ignored particular friendships, and her large heart, generous and tender, was like that of the Apostle, all to all. Each of her daughters seemed to be loved by her as a child is loved by a natural mother, and nothing could be sweeter or more touching than to see her surrounded by her spiritual family; all hearts were at ease, sincere and happy, their mother was their delight and they were her joy, her glory and her crown.

None of her daughters could compare with her in respect, in veneration and in submission towards Superiors; she would not suffer the least word to their disadvantage. "If the action wounds or displeases you", she said, "regard the intention." And again she would say: "Force yourselves to see that our Superiors have graces and lights which we have not." In the midst of the wise lessons and holy example she gave, Mother Sacred Heart continued to travel the royal road of the cross. New sorrows wounded that heart already so afflicted. She loved her relatives tenderly, and God demanded a sacrifice of her. Death claimed her brother-in-law and her eldest brother, M. Jacques Joseph Tezenas. The first of these, for a long time Justice of the Peace at St. Etienne, died suddenly while returning from his country home. This was a severe stroke for his wife, this dear Adele, whose heart was one with Mary Virginia's. Madame Vailetton almost died from grief. The latter, M. Tezenas, was Mayor of St. Etienne, and enjoyed the respect and the confidence of the entire city; he succumbed to a long and painful illness. "You must die like a Tezenas", said his venerable sister to him. "This is my intention" he replied, and he died a faithful Christian, worthy of his father and mother, whose holy and admirable deaths we have already related. The pious Mother Sacred Heart recommended her dear departed to the fervent prayers of her Congregation.

Six months later, December 5th, 1862, God demanded from this heroic soul still another sacrifice, in the person of Father Babad, Missionary Priest of the Community of the Chartreux, and for twenty-five

years Chaplain at the Mother House of St. Joseph. "You know", she wrote to her daughters, "with what zeal and paternal devotion Father Babad exercised his holy ministry amongst us during a quarter of a century; you know his solicitude for the interests of our Congregation, and the important service he has rendered us. His energetic soul made him superior to all earthly events, his manly and austere virtue sustained him, or rather, elevated him above his confreres. We could address ourselves to him with confidence, certain of finding strength and good counsel. Let us be grateful, and offer to God our supplications for the speedy glorification of this dear soul, who will remain faithful to us beyond the tomb. His resignation was sublime at the hour of death, and nothing could be more beautiful than the calm serenity of his last moments. His prayer was incessant, and his heart constantly united to God. At the age of sixty-one years, he had accomplished his apostolic mission, and Heaven was open to receive him."

Under the weight of all this sorrow, towards the close of the year she again wrote to her daughters: "When the tomb has closed over our dear ones, when it has robbed us of the objects of our legitimate affections, our soul, saddened by the void which death has made around it, raises itself towards God, Who alone can compensate for its loss, console it in its isolation, and supply for those who are no more. 'Stay with us, Lord, it is late, and the day is now far spent.' Oh! my dear daughters, may this be our prayer each day, and may all the efforts of our good will tend to draw our dear Lord nearer to us. His

presence will render easy the most difficult sacrifices, and will change into joy the most poignant grief. Let us walk with Him in the journey of life; He will teach us that it is at the cost of privations, tribulations and sorrows that the happiness of Heaven is obtained. You know from experience that this life is but a valley of tears, and the earth upon which we tread is covered with briars and thorns. Let us walk with Jesus Christ. He is the faithful friend, Who remains with us when others abandon us, and Who will receive us at the end of our earthly pilgrimage. He will be our repose, as He is the only Treasure worthy of our hearts.

"I beseech you then, my dear daughters, out of the immense love that God has given me for your souls, to unite yourselves closely to God. Let us work seriously for our perfection, let us not defer it, let us not say that we shall wait to be relieved from our occupations, difficulties, or our present solicitude, because when these difficulties have been removed new ones will be presented to us, and our lives will glide away, barren and unfruitful. 'Stay with us, Lord, for it is late, and the day is now far spent.' Yes, my dearly beloved daughters, the day is on the decline; let us make haste to work for the heavenly Kingdom while we have light, because night will soon come upon us, and then we can no longer work. In the following words, Jesus Christ has deigned to teach us the secret of labouring with fruit: 'Dwell with Me, and I will dwell with you.' It is the earnest wish of my heart, my very dear daughters, that our Lord Jesus Christ may always dwell in you by His grace, and that you may dwell in Him by love.

"At this time, when a new year is offered to us as a gift of God, let us cast a glance on the year which has just passed away, let us see with what fidelity we have fulfilled our vows, and how we have accomplished the duties of each day, those duties which ought to compose our crown. Let us review the gifts which God has bestowed upon us since the commencement of our lives, and particularly since our entrance into Religion. What touching graces, what precious favours we have received from His goodness! Then, opening our souls to noble sentiments of gratitude and love, let us desire to be with Him alone, and say to Him: 'Stay with us, Lord, for it is late, and the day of our life is far spent'."

The beautiful soul of Mother Sacred Heart was approaching the Heavenly Jerusalem; it was in the crucible, where the gold, which was to adorn the eternal tabernacle, was to be purified. "In our declining years, life becomes more severe", says Father Lacordaire; "age and infirmities accumulate, griefs and losses become multiplied, and the state of loneliness seems to increase. Experience reveals the nothingness of creatures, the best of whom must suffer, and proves to us the deep but bitter truth of the words of Holy Writ: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." According to the words of the Apostle, the immensity of heavenly glory is the fruit of earthly sorrows and tribulations, since God, in order to enrich and complete the crown of His saints, or to perfect their sanctification, often permits their last days to be days of sorrow. It is the kiss of the crucifix, like that of a tender mother, bestowed upon cherished children. This kiss

of the cross is given us in a thousand ways, physical ailments, heartaches, mental anguish, temporal crosses, spiritual crosses, crosses from deception, temptation, those coming from our own nature, from creatures, from equals, from inferiors, and crosses from Superiors. The last are those which cause the greatest suffering, and, as we have already remarked, have often been placed upon the greatest saints. They were not spared Mother Sacred Heart. Treated as the Saints, like them she gave herself more and more, to holy abandonment, renewing it each morning by this prayer of Madame Elizabeth, surnamed the Angel of the Court of France: "What will this day happen to me, my God, I know not, but what I do know is, that nothing will happen but that Thou hast foreseen, regulated and ordained from all eternity; that is sufficient. O my God, that is sufficient!"

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A GRAVE ILLNESS

It was growing late, as Mother Sacred Heart had just reminded her daughters, and the sun of her life was going down. But as earth's beneficent orb, when sinking below the horizon, sends forth its most brilliant rays, so the virtues of Mother Sacred Heart shone towards the last with greater splendour. The close of her life was like the evening of a beautiful day. Since to live according to Rule is to live according to God, she became more faithful in its observance, and more vigilant in having it maintained. Her ardent zeal was accompanied by a gentleness more apparent; never was she heard to reprove hastily a failure or a fault, never was she known to admonish the Sisters in a moment of passion. She bore their weaknesses with admirable patience, and her indulgence for their mistakes, incapacity, and want of skill was surpassed only by her promptitude in repairing their errors and supplying their deficiencies. In their afflictions or temptations, her daughters always received from her sweet consolation and good advice, which had the effect of raising their hearts to God and fortifying their drooping courage. "Oh! how motherly was her direction", exclaims one of her children, "how sweet the peace she diffused around her. Indulgent towards others, she was severe with herself. To conquer nature was her motto and favourite practice. Her mortific-

ations extended to everything, but she took care to conceal it under the veil of simple moderation or care of health."

Not content with avoiding slight faults and imperfections, and causing them to be avoided by all, she increased her devotion, love and tenderness, towards the most holy Sacrament of the Altar. Her recollection before the tabernacle was so profound, that the needs of the body were frequently forgotten. For more than thirty years she had the happiness of communicating every morning. Routine never lessened her fervour, and to the end of her life she received her adorable Lord with as much piety as on the day of her First Communion. This divine Sacrament was to her ever ancient yet always new. Everything connected with the altar inspired her with the most profound respect. She saw that the ornaments were suitable and well kept. "Nothing is too beautiful", said she, "nothing too rich to be used in the service of God"; and one could give her no livelier pleasure than to aid her in beautifying the chapel. She watched with particular care over the order of the sacristy, often overseeing its arrangements in person. "Love lends itself and suffices for all." The multitude of her duties did not embarrass her, their weight did not overburden her, nor their details inconvenience her. The feast of Corpus Christi with its octave was her delight. With what happiness she prepared the repository, whence Jesus, her Well-Beloved, was to bless her Community. During those days of benediction her heart burned with love. She continually exclaimed "My God! my God! Thou art there! Thou art in the midst of us,

and continually! Let us intone a *Quid Retribuam*, a thanksgiving without end. What we cannot say with our voices let us say with our hearts: may our love never be withdrawn from that ardent Lover, Whose Heart is inseparably attached to ours!"

In addition to these spiritual riches, the octave of Corpus Christi contained the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and she had taken the name of her Spouse. From her childhood, by a special grace, she had practised this privileged devotion. Later, in her trials, fatigues and difficulties, it was always to the Heart of Jesus she went for refuge. The love of this Divine Heart illumined her whole life. It was the centre, the motive, the support of her whole existence; all her strength came from that Sacred source. One day she was called to the parlour to meet a visitor, from whom she was obliged to listen to accusations both unjust and mortifying. She responded only by a sweet smile. A local Superior who was present at the interview, said: "Tell me the secret of your wonderful self-control and calmness. I would like to be able to repress my feelings in such a manner. What means do you employ?" "I have recourse", said the Reverend Mother, "to the Heart of Jesus. When anything occurs such as you have just witnessed in the parlour, I take refuge in the Heart of Jesus. I pray constantly for the one who is injuring me, for were I to reply I would not be mistress of myself. I feel all that is within me rebel, and I am neither calm nor tranquil inwardly, hence my prayers are unceasing. Has He not promised to Blessed Margaret Mary that those who have confidence in Him shall obtain the graces they desire? The treasures of the

Sacred Heart are inexhaustible. Let us say often to Him: 'You know, O my Divine Jesus, that I wish for you alone; teach me to bear after your example the contradictions, contempt and troubles of this life.' United to Him the thorns become flowers, which will compose our heavenly crown." This was the secret of the patience and amiability of the servant of God. The solemnity of the feast of the Sacred Heart was for her a day of rapture. It was for the Community, also, a special feast, since they celebrated at the same time the feast of their cherished Mother.

The life of Mother Sacred Heart identified itself, so to speak, with the mysteries of our holy religion. At Christmas her heart dilated before the crib of the Infant Jesus, and her soul was plunged in the depths of that mystery of humility, charity and goodness. At the time of the Passion, her heart was bathed in sorrow and love. In remembrance of the humiliations and sufferings of her crucified Spouse, she never left the Chapel on Holy Thursday. As long as her health permitted, she spent the entire night in company with her Lord. During the last years of her life, she took a little rest at midnight, but daybreak found her back again at the foot of the repository. Easter was for her a real resurrection, and it was with a transport of joy she sang the *Alleluia* and the *Regina Cæli*, desiring the Community to participate in her spirit of gladness.

To this ardent love of our Lord, which animated Mother Sacred Heart, was closely united that of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. From infancy, she had the most filial affection for our Lady, and after the

example of her good parents, she daily recited the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception, with the *Memorare* of St. Bernard. When the festivals of this divine Mother drew near, she prepared for them in a special manner. To souls weak or tempted, troubled or discouraged, the great remedy she advised was devotion to the Blessed Virgin or to St. Joseph, of whom she was a devout client. She often said, with St. Teresa, that she obtained great graces through St. Joseph's intercession. When anyone recommended sinners to her prayers, she was accustomed to say: "This is St. Joseph's affair."

The work, *par excellence*, of our Divine Saviour in this world, is His holy Church, to which Mother Sacred Heart had the most ardent devotion. Like St. Teresa, she praised God fervently for being a child of the holy Church; she felt her needs and shared her sorrows.

In a circular letter to her Sisters, she said: "From all parts of the Catholic world prayers are constantly ascending to Heaven from our Holy Mother the Church. Let us continue, my dear Sisters, to join our prayers with this filial outburst of Christendom. Let us beseech our Lord to extend His powerful protection over her, to appease the fury of the winds, to quell the tempest that is everywhere stirred up against her, to watch over the bark of Peter, whose course is in the midst of perilous rocks and foaming billows. May he protect our Holy Pontiff, who, with superhuman courage, directs and defends the Church, and who, in his marvellous old age, manifests a strength and mental vigour which the world has never before witnessed."

The great soul of Mother Sacred Heart had a profound veneration for the Vicar of our Lord. She cherished in a high degree this Catholic sentiment, which Father Faber calls devotion to the Pope, and which is today one of the marks of true piety in the Church. After Jesus and Mary, the Saints were her friends of predilection. St. Joseph, patron and protector of the Congregation, was, in a special manner, her support in all her temporal wants. We remember with what joy she received, in 1842, the body of a young martyr, St. Placide, which was sent to her from Rome. She gave the holy relics a magnificent reception, and after a solemn procession they were placed with great pomp in the Convent Chapel.

Faithful in celebrating the festivals of the saints which our Holy Church presents periodically, and in reading the history of their lives, she modelled her life upon theirs, and her conversation, according to the Apostle, was continually in Heaven.

These devotions were the consolation of Mother Sacred Heart. They were as her country, her heaven, while waiting for that for which her soul sighed. Towards the end of the year 1863, she wrote to her Sisters: "We are not of this world, our life is only a journey, its terminus is Heaven. Here below all passes, we with the rest. Do we not see our friends, our relatives, our companions, leaving us, one by one? Many of them, who were full of zeal have succumbed in the midst of the journey. That our hearts may not be sad, my dear daughters, let us say with the Royal Prophet: 'I rejoiced at the things that were said to me. We shall go into the house of the Lord.' For

the just, death is repose. It is an exchange of the evils of life for the joys of eternity; it is as an exile returning to his country, a victor receiving the palm of immortality.

“‘The Just’, says the Holy Ghost, ‘germinate in the tomb and bloom for eternity.’ Let us, like the Saints, make great strides in the narrow way of perfection. Let us work courageously to cultivate the garden of our souls, which the Lord has given us, in order to have a rich harvest when we shall be called to present our sheaves. If we feel weary, if it seems to us that we cannot bear the burden of the day and the heat thereof, let us, like St. Augustine, lift up our eyes to Heaven, where Jesus, with His elect, awaits us, to be Himself our reward, to manifest Himself to us in His infinite glory, to dry our tears and to fill us with eternal delights. There shall we see accomplished the words of the great Apostle: ‘There is no proportion between the transient afflictions of this life and the immense weight of glory which they procure for us.’

“That our sentiments, my dear Sisters, may be purified, that our thoughts may be elevated, and our desires detached from earth, we must look towards Heaven. The goods of this earth must be worthless in our eyes. What does it matter whether our dwelling be costly or poor, whether we be placed on the heights or hidden in the valley, all that is necessary is that we reach Heaven! Let us sigh with the Royal Prophet, after that blessed abode, of the beauty of which he seemed to have had a glimpse when he exclaimed: ‘How lovely are Thy Tabernacles, O Lord God of Hosts; I have loved the beauty of Thy House and the

place where Thy glory dwelleth.' Let us not forget this in the midst of the trials and labours of this life. Let us say with the same Prophet: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand become useless, and may my tongue cleave to my palate, if thou hast not even the first place in my heart'."

This circular, so full of the last notes of the dying swan, which recalled the shortness of life, the decay of all things here below, and sang of Christian hope beyond the tomb, was soon followed by another death which confirmed and justified her words.

On March 6th, 1864, God took from the tender affection of Mother Sacred Heart, Mother Euphrasia, Superior of Mi-Careme, who had been her assistant when she was herself at St. Etienne, and who had served Our Lord in the religious life for more than forty years. It had been Mother Sacred Heart's desire to bring her to the Mother House, but this pleasure she denied herself for the good of the Community at Mi-Careme, of which Mother Euphrasia was for twenty-seven years not only Superior, but also the model and ornament. Mourning over the tomb of her who had been a cherished daughter and a dear friend, the Superior-General wrote to her Congregation: "The Holy Spirit teaches us that the heart of the just is a continual feast, because of the peace therein. This delightful peace was the spiritual treasure of our dear departed. Those who came in contact with her felt its influence. Full of tenderness for her sisters, of a calm and angelic piety, her appearance alone was sufficient to recall the presence of God, Who dwelt in this predestined soul. Giving only a secondary attention to the material interests

of the Community, she directed all her care to the maintenance of regular observance, and the spiritual needs of her Sisters. Her sweet and firm government convinced all hearts of her goodness and love. Upon her death bed she was calm and peaceful amidst the general grief of those who surrounded her. The peace of the elect beamed upon her countenance. She was already in Heaven by the ardour of her desires, ere she gave back to God her great and beautiful soul. Her memory is held in deep veneration by the Community of Mi-Careme."

Mother Sacred Heart went to St. Etienne to attend the funeral of her departed friend, and returning, left one of her Counsellors, in whom she placed particular confidence, to console the Sisters. God, Whose ways are not ours, permitted this act of charity to be followed by a series of trials and sufferings which wounded Reverend Mother to the heart, in that which was most precious to her, the peace and union of her beloved daughters.

In this affliction, the patience of Mother Sacred Heart was most edifying. It raised her, as it did Holy Job, above the storm of tribulation, and in the end triumphed and crowned the perfection of the saintly Mother. "Trials", says the Apostle St. James, "produce patience, and patience hath a perfect work." Great among her contemporaries, Mother Sacred Heart bore this cross without uttering the least complaint or allowing to escape her the slightest reflection upon human infirmity or the miseries of our nature, which we meet with even among Saints. But if her soul, transformed by Faith, was invincible, her bodily

strength was not. The crisis was not over when she was attacked by a hemorrhage so violent and dangerous that in the twinkling of an eye, she was brought to the gates of death. Later on, one of the Religious said, "Never shall I forget the great consternation and grief caused by this illness. Prayers, Novenas and Masses were offered at all the shrines dedicated to Mary. The many Communities of Lyons united in prayer to obtain the restoration to health of the dear invalid. It did not seem possible that the heart of Jesus could resist so many tears and supplications." Meanwhile a consultation of doctors had taken place, and their uneasiness was so evident that the last Sacraments were administered to the Venerable Mother. In this extremity, the Assistant, Mother Marie Louise, who had never left her bedside, threw herself on her knees and cried "Promise with me, Reverend Mother, to make a vow to Our Lady of La Salette, and if she cures you we will go together to show our gratitude to the Blessed Virgin." The good Superior-General smiled a sign of approbation. God heard their vows and prayers. On July 29th, 1864, the Venerable Mother had so far improved that she was able to write the Community to announce the nomination of Father Desgeorges as Ecclesiastical Superior of the Congregation, and to thank them for the prayers which had been offered for her recovery. After the example of the Saints she excused those who had been the cause of her sufferings, showing towards them only consideration, affection and goodness. "The poor Sisters", she said, "found themselves in the midst of great difficulty, and knew not what to do." One of

them falling dangerously ill, Mother Sacred Heart spent long hours at her bed of pain. She was prodigal of her attentions to another who had just returned from a journey, entering into so many little details and bestowing such tender care, that the Sister charged with helping her remarked. "You are too good, too upright, Reverend Mother." "Do you not know the Gospel?" replied Mother Sacred Heart. "Go then and do well all that I tell you." There was no resentment in this beautiful soul.

By order of the Physician, and to hasten her convalescence, the Superior-General was obliged to go to the country. She passed some days of necessary repose at Cluzel, near St. Etienne, which was the Country House of the Mi-Careme Community. Mother Emelie, who shared in the sorrows of her beloved Superior, was most happy to receive and care for her. The attentions lavished upon her by this cherished daughter and her pious Community proved as beneficial as they were sweet and sincere. Her strength increased at Cluzel, and she was soon able to undertake the journey to La Salette. She was accompanied by Mother Marie Louise, Mother Emelie and her Assistant. After the events and fatigues of a long and painful journey, the Mother General was glad to reach the end of her pilgrimage. "We were happy at La Salette", she wrote. "There we were near the Refuge of Sinners, the Consoler of the Afflicted. We felt the need of loving God, and of making Him loved by others. With what pleasure I visited those places sanetified by the Blessed Virgin. With redoubled ardour I recommended to her the wants of my Community, my

Sisters and all my family. With regret I left those blessed places which I propose to revisit at some future time, if my health and occupations permit.

On their return they remained at the Convent of Grand Lemps, which was the cradle of the religious vocation of Mother Emelie, and where she was afterwards Superior. The present Superior, Mother Augustine, shared Mother Emelie's sentiments of profound veneration and filial affection towards Reverend Mother Sacred Heart. Under her wise direction the Community was regular and fervent. Everything concurred to draw the hearts of Mother Sacred Heart and Mother Emelie towards this House, whose loving hospitality afforded them a sweet and peaceful rest. Full of joy and proud of their precious treasures, the Sisters wished them to prolong their visit, and as it was towards the end of the scholastic year, Mother Augustin begged the Reverend Mother to assist her in the distribution of prizes. Sharing the happy disposition of the Superior, Father Ballet assembled all the priests of the Canton, and invited Reverend Mother to preside on this occasion, which she did with her usual simplicity and distinction of manner.

The visit coming to a close, Mother Sacred Heart made haste to return to the Chartreux to resume her life of devotedness so long interrupted. In proportion as age, work, trials and sickness weakened her physical strength, that of her heart seemed to rejuvenate. Her increasing tenderness for her daughters, her ardent desire to see them united, were the sentiments she expressed in a circular letter, which she addressed to them on December 21, 1684, and which commenced by

those ineffably sweet words of our Lord: "My little children, a new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you." "Urged by His love of us", she continued, "the Son of God deigned to descend upon earth to sanctify it by His presence. We have seen Him—full of grace, gentleness and truth, living among men and sharing their earthly dwelling, going about doing good, and pouring out torrents of grace and love. At His words evil spirits cast themselves into the deep, the blind saw, the deaf heard, and the dead were raised to life. A heavenly doctrine flowed from His divine lips. He preached the love of God and the neighbour, the pardon of offences and fraternal union. He was so good, so tender, that He would not extinguish the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed. After washing the feet of His Apostle, He nourished them with His Sacred Body, and made known to them His last wishes: 'A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you.'

"Ah, my dear daughters, if we fulfil this Commandment, what sweetness do we not enjoy during life, what security at the hour of death! Our first love belongs to God; it is the one gift He desires. To obtain this He endured many humiliations and sacrifices. It is His will that we love one another, without exception, with a supernatural love, as He loved us, because of the love He bore His Father. These two loves are inseparable, one is the measure of the other. God will not accept the love of a heart that is closed against his brother; and the love of our fellow creatures, if it has not God for its principle and end, it is not a Christian virtue.

'The great Apostle places before us the qualities which are the virtues: 'Charity', he says, 'is patient, it is gentle, it bears all, it forgets its own interests, it is not envious.' Those only, my dear daughters, who love Our Lord Jesus Christ can thus love their neighbour. Let us be of those great and noble souls who, forgetting themselves, suffer with sweet reason, all, pardoning all. Let us fly from all shadows of envy, let thoughts of rivalry be completely effaced from our hearts. Let us imitate the Christians who are united to each other with a charity such that each one wishes for the happiness of the other. If it were his own, why we commend it to the practice that which will be our own, in our contribution we are all the same, for if we are all members of the same body, we shall all have part in the same heritage. Let us be united together to this world and to the next, let us give help to each other in all our needs. 'A brotherly help-ed brother is as a city', says the Holy Spirit. 'May your excellencies, my dear daughters, encourage one another, let your words edify, and may your souls be strengthened by affection. Thus shall you fulfil the words of the Psalmist: 'That it is sweet for brothers to live in union.' It is to this union that God gives His benediction and eternal life. The tenderness of your charity should make you remember, also, the beloved souls which God has taken from this world, and who have gone before us with the sign of faith. Jesus Christ will count the smallest prayer, and every Christian sign that you offer for them. Sweet is the hope of meeting again in

eternal life, for separation by death is not eternal. The earth is but our temporary abode as a fruitful seed which shall spring up to a new life. The tomb is but the furrow from which the wheat of the elect shoots forth toward heaven. Reunited, then, in the new Jerusalem, that charity which has bound us on earth shall receive at the realm of perfection, and our happiness will be augmented, even as that of all the elect. Therefore, my dear daughters, Jesus Christ will not say to you 'If you love Me keep my commandments.' But, because you have given this proof of your love, He will fulfil His magnificent promises: 'He that loveth Me shall be loved by My Father; and I will love him and will manifest Myself to Him.'

"This is my wish for you, my well beloved daughters, that my most fervent desire that you be always united in a holy affection, and that Our Lord Jesus Christ will find His ransomed ones, and will deign to manifest Himself to you."

Mother, my dear daughters, I am your Father and your Mother, and lovingly desire that you be united in a holy affection, and that Our Lord Jesus Christ will find His ransomed ones, and will deign to manifest Himself to you. We have seen that the good which has identified itself, during its course, with the mysterious life of the Holy Spirit. The setting of this sun of justice had its splendour in the soft rays of which it not fail to be reflected.

the last years of her who had always walked in its light. Like Jesus, she had loved unto the end; like Jesus, also, as she drew near the close of her career she constantly recommended charity and fraternal union. In all her actions Jesus was her model, and she was able to say with the Apostle: "It is not I who live, but Christ Who liveth in me."

It is said of the Saints, that the nearer they approached eternity, the greater became their indifference towards earthly things. The declining days of this servant of God also possessed this characteristic of predestination. Thus her circular letter upon holy love, by a natural and logical sequence, was followed by one upon poverty. On July 8th, 1865, writing to her daughters, she recalled the memory of the Sisters who had died during the year. "At the sight of these new tombs", she said, "I feel impelled, my very honored daughters, to converse with you, for a short time, upon voluntary poverty, which God has given us grace to embrace for the love of Him, so that valuing more and more our holy vocation, we may redouble our zeal in the practice of this precious virtue, to which we are bound by a special vow. You know, my dear daughters, that our Lord Jesus Christ came from Heaven to show us the way, by taking poverty for His portion here below. At His birth, He found no place among the habitations of men. A deserted stable served for His palace, and His Blessed Mother, who was as poor as she was holy, could only offer Him a manger for a cradle. Ere long, travelling unknown upon His own earth, He had not a place to lay His head, and worked with His royal hands

to gain His daily sustenance. He has known all degrees of misery, and could say with truth 'I am poor and in labours from My youth'."

After His example, the saints have exceedingly esteemed this divine virtue. Enamoured with love of Him, a great number have made it their joy to renounce all they had upon earth to possess God alone and acquire eternal wealth. Neither high stations nor the allurements of fortune had power to restrain them. Having sacrificed riches, they took possession of a poor cell, as if entering a mansion in Heaven. They feared not the want of necessaries in this life, knowing that God tenderly cares for His poor. His eyes are always upon them to see their needs. "I shall give bread to God's poor," saith the Lord.

Not only does God take care of those who are poor for His sake, but He defends them against their enemies. He protects them in all their ways. Thus teaches the Royal Prophet: "God shall save the souls of the poor, their names shall be honourable before Him." He goes still further, for wishing to be their treasure, He gives Himself to them instead of riches." "I am their heritage", He says by the Prophet Ezekiel. "Happy" cries out David, "are those of whom the Lord is God: nothing is wanting in them."

"It shall be thus for us also, my very honoured daughters, if we place our happiness in the poverty of Jesus Christ, if we understand well that the true riches of a Religious is found in the humility and nakedness of the Crib and of the Cross. He lived in privation. He suffered the abandonment and insults of men. Is it not proper that His spouses should suffer without

complaining? The pleasures, riches and joys of this world should be to us a burden, since Jesus Christ has despised them, and we should look with suspicion on all that we do not share with Him. The Church has always regarded evangelic poverty as the noblest use we can make of earthly goods.

"Courage, then, my dear daughters, look towards Heaven, which shall be your recompense. Let us generously detach ourselves from those things which leave the heart empty; let us pass through this world without placing our hopes therein, for it is not here that we accomplish our destiny. Each hour that passes bears away a portion of our life, drawing us gradually to the grave; death itself is true life, it is not the end, but the beginning. When we come to die, the world will appear to us then in its true aspect; then we shall esteem as precious treasures the sacrifices made for God. Our only regret will be that we were not more generous.

"Oh! that we could understand, my well beloved daughters, that happiness does not belong to this perishable life, that we shall find peace of heart only in perfect detachment from all that death shall soon snatch from us! Oh! that we could taste in all their plenitude the divine joys that Our Lord Jesus Christ reserves for us in exchange for our daily privations, those incomparable joys, which are the prelude, the beatitude promised to evangelical poverty! 'Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven! He who leaves father or mother for My sake will receive a hundredfold in this world, and hereafter life everlasting'."

Not content with giving good example and prudent advice, the pious Mother General was eager to procure for her Congregation all the spiritual advantages which could contribute to the sanctification of its members. She was happy to announce to them a signal favour she had obtained from Rome. "You will learn with pleasure", she wrote them, "That His Holiness, Pope Pius the IX, by a brief dated February 10th, 1865, has bestowed the indulgence called the Portiuncula upon all the Religious of our Congregation residing in France, who possess an oratory or Chapel, even where the Blessed Sacrament is not reserved. This precious indulgence has been given for seven years. It can be gained on August 1st, commencing with the first vespers, and on the following day, ending with sunset; on this day is also permitted exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. I do not doubt, my dear daughters, your eagerness to profit by every moment of this blessed time to visit our Lord and gain these indulgences. We should", she said, "remember the souls in Purgatory; let us endeavour to obtain the release of some loved one during these visits."

Death increased each year the number of those holy souls, so dear to the heart of their Saintly Mother. On January 7th, 1866, she had the grief of losing Sister St. Jerome, aged sixty-nine years. The day of that happy death, Mother Aglae, Mistress of Novices, related to the Sisters a circumstance in the life of the deceased: "She was so young, when leaving home to consecrate herself to God in the religious state, that her parents, not being able to accompany her, placed her in charge of the conductor. When the train reached Lyons,

this official apparently forgot his young *protégée*, who searched in vain for him. A young man, respectable in appearance, seeing her distress, approached and offered assistance. It was too late, he said, to go to the Convent, but he would show her to a good hotel, and in the morning would direct her to St. Joseph's. Without a shadow of distrust, the innocent child followed her guide, and on reaching the hotel allowed him to make arrangements for her.

"It was not long before she retired to rest, feeling weary from the effects of her long journey. She recommended herself to her faithful guardian, St. Joseph, little thinking that she was then in extreme need of his protection. The apartment she was assigned had accommodations for two, but the young girl thought nothing of this until, to her horror, she saw entering the door her supposed friend, who had conducted her to the hotel. Too terrified to move she beheld him lock the door, withdraw the key, and cross to the side of the room opposite hers, evidently to take possession for the night. How she poured out her young heart to St. Joseph, begging him to be near her in this distress, and in her simplicity reminding him of her mother's parting words: "I leave you to St. Joseph, he will accompany you to his house." The guardian of the helpless did not forsake his little client. Presently she realized that her enemy had fallen asleep, and going softly to the door, which opened of itself, she beheld just outside, a venerable old man, whose white hair fell upon his shoulders. He wore a long coat and held a lighted lamp in his hand. 'Imprudent child', he said, 'make haste, get your things and follow

me.' At the end of the hall he said: 'Go down these stairs and into that room below; there you will find the mistress of the hotel. Tell her to give you another room, and early in the morning ask her to accompany you to St. Joseph's Convent.'

"At this moment, her false friend came out of his room crying: 'Where are you gone'? and groped along the walls; for strange to say, although the kind old man's lamp burned brilliantly it showed no light to this sinful wretch. 'Make haste', repeated the child's venerable protector, 'and fear nothing.'

"She went into the room indicated, and finding the mistress, explained her situation. 'Poor child', said this lady, 'I understand all. That young man, to say the least, is very far from bearing a good reputation! I was indeed surprised to see you with him, but, being a stranger, I could only pity you.' She then conducted her guest to another room. 'Here', she said, 'you need fear nothing; you will be near me and in the morning I will take you myself to the Convent.'

"Before leaving the hotel, the grateful child asked to see the man who had so kindly protected her on the previous night. No one there had ever seen a person such as she described. Could the young postulant doubt that she had been visibly protected by St. Joseph, to whom her mother had entrusted her?"

Mother Aglae, who had guarded the secret during the life of Sister St. Jerome, believed it her duty to publish it after her death, that she might increase in her dear novices a filial confidence in St. Joseph.

On May 7th, 1866, God took from the Community Sister St. Xavier. "It would be necessary to write a

book", said Mother Sacred Heart, "in order to make known the virtues and the eminent qualities of this perfect Religious, who was for seventeen years Mistress of Novices, afterwards Visitor, and finally Superior of the Community of Sainte Veran. Skilful in gaining the minds and hearts of pupils and Sisters whom she directed, she ever gave the most admirable example of virtue."

After these sorrowful losses, the Superior-General wrote to her Community, on December 20th, 1866: "If the departure of those well beloved Sisters saddens our hearts, my dear daughters, our sorrow is softened by hope, which, by the goodness of God, will not deceive us. It is not dying but exchanging earthly life for one of everlasting bliss, where they now enjoy the recompense of their generosity and their sacrifices. If we could but hear their voices, with what persuasive accents would they not exhort us to the practice of solid virtue! What would they say to us of the things of this world, of the thousand things of which the demon makes use to prevent Religious from attaining that perfection which they seek in their journey towards eternity? Let us learn, my very dear daughters, the wisdom of their school; let us do violence to nature and mortify it by our spirit of fervour. What matters a little work and fatigue in this world? All things pass away, and time is very short. Listen and we shall hear the footsteps of our beloved Spouse, Who comes to meet us. May He find us watching and praying, with our lamps lighted so that we may enter with Him to the feast of eternal nuptials! Such are, my dear Sisters, the ardent wishes I place before the

Crib of our Divine Master. May He deign to bless you, to bless your works, your devotedness, so that the New Year may be for all a bountiful year, productive of a rich harvest for Heaven.

We see that each dispensation of Divine Providence served but to raise the affections of this holy Mother more and more towards eternity. Although she was still in this mortal body, one could say that her life in Heaven had already begun. Those of her Congregation who entered the Church Triumphant seemed to draw her to them. Earth was disappearing from her eyes, to her each day seemed shorter. This was the effect of her close communion with Heaven. "The more I think of Heaven", said St. Ignatius, "the smaller and more despicable earth appears." Age, infirmities, darkness, storms, trials, have not the power to prevent or diminish in any way this beautiful communion of the soul with God. "Love tends upwards", says the Author of *The Imitation*, "and allows nothing terrestrial to prevent it."

## CHAPTER XIX

### UNION WITH GOD

THE SOUL which, by love, rises towards God, is illuminated by a Heavenly light, and reflects its brightness upon all. She is in the firmament of souls as a star shedding a soft light; she is, again, a beautiful cloud which, on one hand receives the rays of the sun, and, on the other, sheds a gentle dew upon the world below. "Holy souls", says a grave and wise author, "are like living channels through which divine love and grace flow towards us, heavenly clouds which send forth celestial light." Such was the Venerable Mother Sacred Heart. Her old age, which had the soft glow of a beautiful sunset, shone with the sublimity of her soul, and the strength of her faith and charity. She was inflamed by divine love, and all around her were brightened by its rays. In spite of her many duties and advanced age, her faculties were still unimpaired. She took a lively interest in the Novitiate, the importance of which she fully realized. It occupied a great part of her thoughts during her last years. And, as in the time of her youth and vigour, she was happy in the midst of the postulants, her spiritual conversations, so full of grace and piety, captivating their hearts, and drawing them towards God. "A soul who has given herself to Jesus", she said to them, "and who wishes to become His Spouse, does not walk; she runs, she flies. The cross is no longer heavy, it is no longer

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cross, it is the boat of the traveller, the wing of the bird, the wheel of the chariot. It helps us to walk, it raises us to Heaven, it aids us in the race. There are, perhaps, some among you who, having left the world before knowing it, believe you have done much for God. Do not be so proud of your sacrifice. If you knew the slavery you have escaped, you would regret nothing, and would be happy in having left a state of miserable subjection to things of earth. Far from the shades of darkness, which overshadow so many others, you are in that circle of light which draws you nearer Heaven. Be then grateful and generous souls. Faults should not discourage you, she said, 'provided that you have energy, generosity and good will. A heart sincerely resolved to renounce and sacrifice self to seek God alone, is most necessary in a Postulant.'

After the example of St. Francis de Sales, who recommended a happy medium in the practice of virtue, she placed the ideal of Christian perfection neither too high, nor too low. She did not wish them to be either cold or gloomy but loving and cheerful, speaking a language frank, sincere and straightforward. At each reception, which was preceded by a retreat, she redoubled her counsels and exhortations to prepare her dear children for the dangers to which they would probably be exposed during the course of their lives. How many souls she strengthened, how many she assured of happiness! She seemed inspired by God, to give the proper advice to all who sought her direction.

One day a beautiful young girl attired in bridal robes came to the Convent in great haste and asked to see the Mother Superior. "I have just left my home,

Reverend Mother", she said, "and I want you to receive me as one of your daughters." She then quickly explained the circumstances. She had felt for a long time that God called her to serve Him in the religious state, but her parents opposed this, and urged her to marry, going even so far as to choose a husband for her and make all arrangements for the wedding.

On the day fixed, her friends had assembled, the bride was clad in nuptial robes, with wreath and veil, when, just as the carriage arrived to take her to the Mayor, she secretly left the house, and ran to the Convent. "Oh! do not refuse me Reverend Mother", she said. "I know that our Lord wants me for Himself, and I cannot consent to my parents' wishes."

"Write immediately to your parents", advised the prudent Reverend Mother; "you owe that to your friends whom you left in great anxiety; you must first relieve them of that. Later we shall see what can be done, and what the good God will inspire us to do. Write them to your family, and pray." Mother Sacred Heart subsequently managed this affair with so much tact, and pleaded so well the cause of God and the young girl, that the parents finally yielded, saying to her "It is impossible to resist you. We now realize that our child will be happier with you than with him for whom we had destined her. Take good care of her and make her a holy Religious since God wills it."

Another young person came to tell her that she had spoken to her parents of her desire to become a religious, but her father was obstinately opposed, and could not be approached upon the subject. "Recommend it to the good God", answered the Reverend

Mother, "I will unite my prayers with yours for your dear child's I shall see your father." Everything was arranged satisfactorily with the poor father, his consent was given, and he yielded in a most edifying manner. "My child", he said, "belonged to God before she belonged to me, she is going to Him, and I give her my blessing."

A postulant, fearing her weakness, and deeply penetrated with the sanctity and sublimity of the religious life, was tried by temptations to discouragement, which nothing could dispel. She reached such a point that she thought of returning to her family, despite the dangers which there surrounded her. Reverend Mother, aware of her state of mind, placed her weak and suffering child in the Sacred Heart, whence she herself had drawn treasures of compassion, indulgence and goodness, for the benefit of her neighbour. The words with which the venerable Superior was inspired were so wise, so motherly, and persuasive, that the postulant burst into tears of gratitude and love, and regained peace, courage, and a happiness she felt she could never lose. The confidence of the Sisters in the goodness of Mother Sacred Heart was so great that her assistance was sought day and night.

In her administration nothing was neglected. She thought of all, and kept an account of the smallest details. Each month she took what she called a day of rest, and said graciously to her Assistant, Mother Marie Louise: "Today I instal you as Mother Superior." This day of rest consisted in retiring to the privacy of her room, with one of her Secretaries, to verify the accounts of the house. A rare aptitude for business rendered her well suited for the management of tempor-

alities. On this account M. Berlotty particularly liked to transact business with her. "It is not necessary for me to advise her", he said; "she is thoroughly capable of organizing, administering and managing the affairs of her Order. With her all is soon made plain. If I had only to deal with Mere Tezenas, my work as Notary would be very simple."

The Saints, because they belong entirely to God, receive that measure of good things which St. Luke, the Evangelist, speaks of as being "Full, pressed down, and running over"; so much so, that it diffuses itself abundantly upon all those with whom they hold communication. "Piety is useful for all" said the Apostle St. Paul, "and it provides for the welfare of the present life as well as for that of the future." He Who sustains the weak, raises the fallen, cares for the sparrow, clothes the lily of the field, gives nourishment to all creatures, He also satisfies those who ardently desire Him, by His benevolence, His goodness and His love. Thus, as Mother Sacred Heart soared towards Heaven, she seemed to become more self-sacrificing, more useful to her neighbour, and to manifest a deeper interest in all that concerned her Congregation.

At this advanced period of the Venerable Mother's life, her family wished to procure her portrait, which they had desired for a long time, but in order to obtain this, they were obliged, as in the case of Mother Saint John, to resort to stratagem. In her humility she constantly refused the pressing solicitations, which they often made. Her nephew, M. Louis Vailleton, made use of many loving deceptions, and finally succeeded, not without trouble, in putting his venerable

aunt in front of a photographer. As soon as she perceived this, she cried out, "For once I am caught in a net." "My dear aunt", said her nephew, "pardon this little act of deception; if I had not done this, we should not have been able to preserve your cherished countenance. Today you have crowned the whole family with joy."

Reverend Mother Sacred Heart of Jesus did not possess what the world calls beauty, a fine appearance, nor any of those exterior advantages which are, at first sight, a source of attraction and admiration. Small of stature, of a rather stout build, with a face not remarkable for the regularity of its features, simple and unassuming in her whole appearance, she would have been able, in spite of her beautiful complexion, and her fine, well-shaped nose, to pass unremarked amongst the rest of her Sisters. However, there were other distinguishing characteristics. One would have guessed the Superior in any group of Sisters, and would have naturally pointed her out. Authority seemed to be her portion, and she exercised it with the simplicity, candour and obedience of a child. Her manner and carriage were full of dignity, her deep brown eyes manifested a charming goodness, her glance was quick, sharp and penetrating, her mouth had a pleasing expression, and her smile was irresistible, at times veiling a gentle sarcasm. Her high forehead denoted intellect, and her general appearance, frank, open and of exquisite affability, possessed an indefinable power of attraction. When one found oneself in her presence, she was instinctively inspired with the respect due her, and it would have been difficult to fail therein, so

much was it commanded in her whole exterior. A rare gift, which she possessed in a supreme degree, was that of sending away satisfied all who approached her. Her words and manner adapted themselves to those with whom she conversed. Not a shadow of pride marred this intercourse; she was, in a word, the type of amiability, refinement, and dignity. Sanctity concealed this ensemble of charming qualities which diffused themselves upon all with whom she came in contact. The true beauty of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart was, like that of the King's daughter, within. From her infancy the love of God inflamed and illumined her soul. Divine love is a fire whence radiates all virtue. From the first it supposes faith. "The just man lives by faith", says the Apostle St. Paul. "It was the true nourishment of our venerable Mother", writes a Sister. "Everything about her revealed to what a high degree she had received this sacred gift, and it shone above all in her communings with God. Her attitude in the Chapel attested how deeply the thought of God, present in the tabernacle, was engraven in her mind and heart. Cheerful and smiling, she would speak motherly words as far as the Chapel door, but having crossed the sacred threshold her whole being humbled itself in such profound recollection, that it impressed in a lively manner those who witnessed it. She could say with the Psalmist, that she loved the house of the Lord, and made it her delight to adorn it.

"As a proof of this she raised to the honour and glory of her divine Spouse, a magnificent chapel, or rather a real basilica, as it was called by His Eminence Cardinal de Bonald. We have seen that she spared

nothing, found nothing too difficult, no sacrifice too painful, no expense too great, to prepare a dwelling place for the Well-Beloved of our Hearts. When laying the foundations it gave her pleasure to see us devoting our recreations to the work. She joined us, encouraged us with her smiles, and often shared our pious labour.

"This deep and lively faith caused her to hold in veneration the holy word of God, and she insisted that we should treasure it with the greatest care. She took pleasure in having us repeat it during our recreations, and she had wonderful tact in providing opportunities for putting it into practice. With what solicitude she watched over our reading, desiring that it should always be drawn from the purest sources! Her attention was directed with equal vigilance to the subjects of meditation, and when reading these solid truths, stamped with that lively faith which enlightens the soul, she made the reader repeat them, thus drawing the attention of the Sisters to those words which were spirit and life. It was this same spirit of faith which inspired her holy exhortations at Chapter or at Conference. Though unstudied, they were filled with the wisdom of God; her words clear and decisive calmed the troubles of the soul. How grieved she was, when acts resulting from human frailty, and unworthy of our beautiful vocation, tarnished the purity of a devoted and consecrated heart! Faith strongly attached her to the Holy Mother Church. Following her example we hastened to espouse its sacred interests, by cherishing employments which afforded us a means of contributing to its welfare and glory. She devoted herself with

indefatigable zeal to founding a Normal School and Academy, solely for the purpose of furnishing us with the means whereby we might the more efficaciously spread abroad a greater respect and love for the Church, the Spouse of Jesus, the Garden of the Faith, the Mother of our souls. This spirit of faith, this love of the Church, Mother Sacred Heart endeavoured to impress upon her dear Novitiate, so that it became a cenacle whence they afterwards spread these religious truths. By this same spirit she lived constantly in the presence of God. Like Moses, she saw the Invisible One, and being unceasingly exposed to the rays of the Sun of Justice, she drew thence a splendour and brightness, which, radiating from her soul, illuminated and strengthened others. Hope was intimately united with faith in her heart. She was never seen to yield to discouragement, even in the most painful circumstances. Sustained by her confidence in God, she retained a calm and cheerful manner in the midst of the storms that surrounded her. She said with the Prophet Jeremiah "The Lord is with me like a powerful Warrior, I fear nothing." Consequently the numberless difficulties which confronted her in the government of a large Congregation did not disturb the sweet peace and interior joy of her soul. Often a prey to preoccupation of mind, she experienced no uneasiness nor allowed the slightest traces of anxiety or disquietude to appear."

Entrusting to God the care of her reputation, according to the advice of the Author of *The Imitation*, she endured the most painful calumnies, the most unjust reproaches, without allowing to escape a word which evinced the least sharpness, or the slightest

shadow of resentment. In the heart of Jesus she deposited all her vexations and afflictions. This was the source of her joy and serenity, her sweet and inexhaustible cheerfulness in the midst of contradictions and poignant grief. In her were accomplished the words of the Royal Prophet "I have hoped in Thee O Lord, and I have not been confounded", and those other words of the great Apostle of Nations "I can do all things in Him Who strengthened me." Her profound humility, which is ever the foundation and safeguard of virtue, united to this faith and confidence in God, drew the protection of Heaven upon Mother Sacred Heart in all her undertakings. "God protects and delivers the humble", says St. Thomas à Kempis. "He loves and comforts the humble, He inclines towards them, and showers His graces upon them, and after abasing them, raises them up in glory." Mother Sacred Heart understood thoroughly this means of pleasing our Lord. "Do you know", she writes to one of her daughters, "that a state of humility is more agreeable to God than the greatest actions or most brilliant achievements? By means of feeble instruments He can do great things. Leave all to this good Father, Who knows best what is necessary for us."

"Although endowed with distinguished qualities", said a saintly Religious, "our Reverend Mother never opened her heart to the poison of pride; she seemed to regard herself as the last of all. No one ever heard her pronounce a word in self praise. She maintained absolute silence concerning everything that might call forth the honour, applause and esteem of the world. When any one spoke of the great works she had

undertaken for the Congregation, the improvements she had so wisely made, she would modestly reply: "I have done nothing, the good God has arranged everything." If any reference was made to the honourable position of her family, she very adroitly changed the subject of the conversation, and introduced a more spiritual topic, without ever taking advantage of the general respect attached to the name she bore."

"I shall never forget", writes another Religious, "the clear and firm accusation of the least faults which humility prompted her to acknowledge every Friday. For seventeen years I have never been able to hear her without feeling my soul moved, and many a time, when I had the opportunity, I have cast myself at her feet to kiss them and to thank her for the great good that those acts of humility had done me. They put an end to my pride."

In this way her humility and simplicity drew hearts to her, and attracted them to God. One day, while passing through the parlour, she was seen by a young person who wished to enter Religion, but not in the Congregation of St. Joseph. The pleasing appearance, modest, simple and humble exterior of the Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph impressed her so forcibly that she said to herself: "I shall have no other Superior", and in fact some months afterwards she was fortunate in being numbered among the happy daughters of this amiable Mother.

The love and practice of holy poverty completed in Reverend Mother Sacred Heart the work of humility. A faithful imitator of her good Master, Who "had not where to lay His Head", she was detached from the

goods of earth. If she desired them, it was to ornament the Sanctuary, to decorate the sacred Altars, to relieve the poor, or to supply the wants of her children.

"Mother Sacred Heart was like a statue that one clothes with beauty and then divests of its splendour at will", says a Religious who had been very intimate with her. "Although neat and dignified in her appearance, she regarded with infinite scorn the slightest approach to affectation in dress. She often said to us that the heart of a Religious was very narrow when she placed it in the folds of a dress or a veil. What a pity for the Spouses of Jesus to adhere to such trifles! Everything around her, everything she used, bore the seal of religious poverty. It was her wish, as we have seen, to wear only old and patched clothing. She asked humbly, almost as a charity, for the necessary articles for her room. She carefully preserved all papers or letters on which only one side or a part had been written, to utilize them in preliminary or rough sketches. She managed the goods of the Community with a holy economy. Always industrious, she knitted, mended and sewed, while entertaining her companions with the most agreeable conversation."

She frequently discoursed on the advantages of holy poverty. "She often repeated to us", says the same Religious, "the following words: 'Let us not practise religious poverty by halves; let us have less of earth and more of Heaven, less of the creature and more of God.'" She begged the Fathers, during the retreats, to make her daughters understand well the vow of poverty, and the degrees by which the soul attains perfection, by means of holy privations. Several

times, she took energetic measures to recall some of the houses to a more perfect practice of this virtue, repeating these words of our Divine Lord: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Blessed are the pure of heart", was another of her favourite expressions. She esteemed, above all treasures, her title of Spouse of Jesus. Desiring, on one occasion, to make her spiritual daughters appreciate this eminent dignity, and to recommend the love of trials and sacrifices, by which the Divine Spouse purifies the soul and exercises its fidelity, she said: "Many young women in their homes suffer in silence for the sake of peace, and should we, Spouses of a God, crucified for love of us, wish to suffer nothing to belong entirely to Him? How shall we reconcile these things?"

"Our Reverend Mother was very exact about her appearance on the street", relates one of her daughters "and her custom of wearing her veil completely lowered at one time called forth, from a man of the world, a rather striking exclamation. Approaching her, he remarked, with a rather sympathetic air: "Poor creature, everybody breathes in the fresh air, and contemplates the glory of the light, and you are hidden from it all." The poor worldling evidently did not understand a life hidden in Jesus Christ, and could form no idea of the interior light which illuminated the soul of the former inmate of the castle of Montcel, now the Spouse of the Son of God. The air, which he shared with the animals, the light, which brightened the eye of the fallow deer as well as his own, were everything to him. If, instead of Mother Sacred Heart,

he had met the great Saint Paul, the vanquisher of the darkness of idolatry, the doctor of the world, and if the Apostle had repeated to him this divine maxim: "I am crucified and dead to the world, as the world is crucified and dead to me", doubtless the poor worldlings would have regarded him with a still greater expression of pity. But the Apostle, in this air of sympathy, would have seen the realization of his own words: "The animal nature of man understands nothing of the things of God." As a consequence of remarks of this nature, and after mature deliberation, Mother Sacred Heart thought it well to advise her daughters to only partially lower their veils.

"Nothing to nature, all to grace", she said with St. Jane Frances de Chantal, and reasoning thus she desired that this concession should be compensated for by redoubled mortification. In her manner of living she was never influenced by natural tastes or desire for comforts. The Will of God, the Rule, and the spirit of her holy vocation directed her entire conduct. She submitted joyfully to all the inconvenience of common life. If, occasionally, one wished her to take some relaxation, if in travelling or making a visitation, she was desired to fatigue herself less, she would reply: "We must suffer something, in order that God may bless the mission which we are to fulfil. When Our Lord travelled, He was not as well provided for as we are." If suffering cold, heat, or privation of any kind, she was never heard to complain. In one of her journeys, finding no bed in which to repose after the weariness of the day, she rejoiced, and said smilingly: "What good fortune has come to us!"

Although strict and austere with regard to herself, she was singularly kind and indulgent towards others. She loved children and they were attracted towards her. To all around her, she was sweet, cordial, ingenious in finding opportunities to please. We have related the delicate attentions and motherly care she lavished upon her Sisters. As she advanced in age, she became more affectionate, sympathetic and patient. At times, when she was obliged to appear severe, she still uttered sweet and encouraging words. She understood better how to love than to punish. Pardon was obtained before it was solicited, and one withdrew from her only with the desire of returning to her soon again.

Years did not in the least diminish her amiability. When she was twenty years of age, there was no joy at Montcel if she were not there. Fifty years afterwards she was the soul of recreation, wherever she was, with her daughters. Speaking of St. Chantal, Mother de Chaugy said: "If we wished to spend an enjoyable recreation, we had to have our good Mother present and when she was unable to assist, the greater part of our pleasure was lacking." According to this, Mother Sacred Heart bore an exact resemblance to St. Chantal, her loving countenance always wearing an expression of holy sweetness and joy. There was yet another remarkable likeness between Mother Sacred Heart and this illustrious woman. "There are Saints", says the historian of St. Chantal, "who give themselves up late in life to the practice of virtue, having dissipated their youthful days in a whirl of vanities and pleasures. There are others, who, like St. Teresa, consecrate themselves to God in their youth, but who hesitate afterward,

become lukewarm for a time, and then with new energy resume their flight towards Heaven. Finally, there are still others consecrated to God from the cradle, whose hearts from their infancy are inclined to those mysterious flights towards God, of which Holy Writ speaks." Saint Chantal, and her faithful imitator Mother Sacred Heart, were souls like these. They passed from a pious infancy to a still more pious youth, and from that to an admirable old age, which the Holy Spirit calls a crown of dignity and of justice.

The life of Mother Sacred Heart was an uninterrupted ascension towards God, and when death came, the valiant servant of Jesus was still working, still advancing. "The career of the just", says the Holy Spirit, "is like a brilliant lamp, whose light does not cease to grow until the judgment day."



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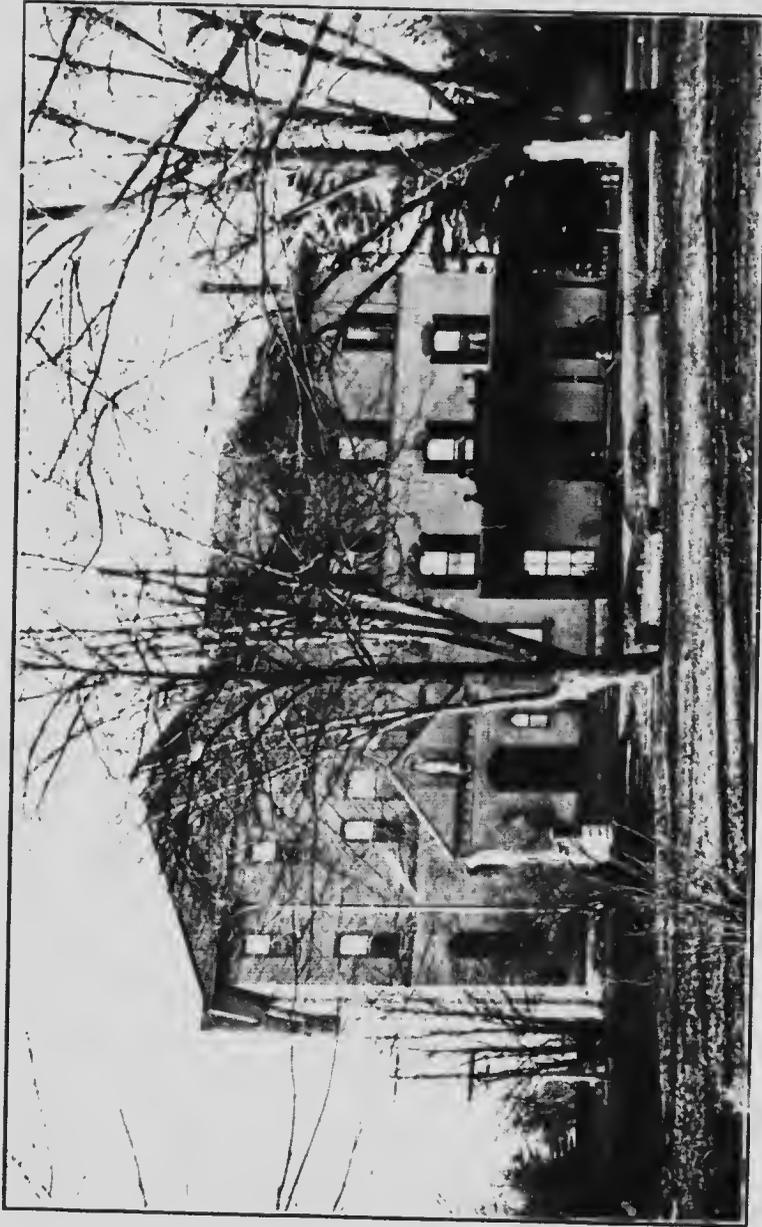
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## CHAPTER XX

### ILLNESS AND DEATH

THE PERSISTENCY with which the noble Tezenas family sought to obtain the likeness of the Reverend Mother Sacred Heart, seemed to convey a presentiment which the future justified all too soon. After the trials through which she had passed, the venerable Superior never fully recovered her former health and strength, and for some time had been growing weaker. An internal fever undermined her system, and caused a gradual decline; rest and medical aid had no longer the power to build up or renovate her physical forces. She could no longer speak or move without effort, and to this exhaustion was now added the loss of sleep and appetite. Meanwhile, her indomitable courage overcame everything, as she still followed exactly the exercises of the Community, and fulfilled the duties of her office. Some days before her death, when the Community was assembled in Chapter, she addressed to them one of those touching instructions so well calculated to inflame their hearts with the fire of divine love. The spiritual and material direction of her Congregation occupied her time even to the very end, and it was only on the eve of her death that she ceased to attend to the duties of administration. The courage, patience and perfect resignation to the Will of God with which she endured her sufferings did not prevent her from feeling them. Unpretending in everything, Mother Sacred



MOUNT ST. JOSEPH, PETERBORO, ONT.



Heart did not conceal her pains she accepted the remedies and thanked the Sisters for the care which they lavished upon her, and became each day more gentle, calm and cheerful. "Trials instruct us", says *The Imitation*, and the saintly Mother profited well by these lessons of suffering. Having told the physician of her continual sleeplessness, he advised her to eat something during the night, were it only a crust of bread, even if she felt no need of it. She obeyed and was slightly relieved by this little refection. "God", she said on this occasion, "wished to show me that I had acted wrongly in judging one of my Religious who frequently asked permission to eat during the night. That appeared to me an excessive delicacy, and now here am I condemned to do just what I disapproved of in that poor Sister. God has punished me and taught me not to judge. Let us return to Him thanks", said she to her Assistant. The anxiety which her illness caused the Sisters pained her much, and she endeavoured by every means in her power to lighten their burden and console them. She waited upon herself as much as possible, and one of her daughters, who knew her well, said: "One would never have thought her to be the Superior-General. What an example for us, and I must say what confusion!" Being obliged to rise during the night on account of a smothering sensation with which she was afflicted, she did so, gently and noiselessly, that she might not awaken the Sister who attended her. When her pain was greatest, the application of hot cloths relieved her. These she prepared for herself, making, as she termed it, "her petite menage." Going one day to take a bath which the doctor pres-

cribed, she met a Sister who had just arrived from a journey, and who appeared excessively fatigued. "Poor Sister", said she, "you should have a refreshing bath after your travels; come with me", and so saying she brought her into her own bathroom, and supplied her with everything necessary. The Infirmary meeting her a moment after, said: "Reverend Mother I have been looking for you, your bath is all ready." "Ah! yes, quite ready", she said, "go and see, there is a big fish there." Then she went away laughing.

The amiable Mother preserved her attractive gaiety even to her last days. One would have said that her great strength of soul found enjoyment in affliction and sickness. At intervals, when her sufferings were less keen, Mother Sacred Heart forced herself to take part in the general recreation. The delight and joy of her spiritual family, on these occasions, was a sweet and consoling balm to her heart. Her presence was a real feast, she enlivened and animated all. Towards the end, for want of strength to speak, she ceased entertaining them with conversations and interesting narratives, in which she excelled, taking part only in amusements which called for neither words nor exertion. The delight and happiness of being in the midst of her daughters was not always the principal motive which attracted her to recreation; like St. Teresa she saw in it an exercise of Community life. Therefore, when they sought to excuse her from it on account of her state of health, she simply replied: "God wills that I should take recreation, it is a point of Rule, that is sufficient." One day when she had been at confession, a bishop, who wished to see her, was kept waiting for

some time. On receiving him she made her apologies with such humility that the Preate withdrew delighted both with the regularity and the affability of the Reverend Mother. "If I did not sometimes act in this manner", said she, "how many exercises of Rule I should have to omit!"

About this time, Mother Sacred Heart received a visit from her dear Adele of former days (Madame Vaillaton), and her niece, Mde. Louise Vaillaton, a young girl worthy at the same time of her esteemed mother and her saintly aunt. The sisters conversed on the happiness and innocence of their early years, of their father, their mother, and all the other members of their noble family, of the joys of their childhood, of their pious morning walks along the paths which led them to the parish Church of St. Jean Bonnefond. They repeated their first prayers, their first simple hymns, and even their innocent little songs, thanking God for the numerous favours with which He had brightened the dawn of their existence. This return to the days of their youth was an act of thanksgiving, a hymn of gratitude to Divine Providence, and for Mother Sacred Heart an adieu, a farewell to earth. Without perceiving it, Madame Vaillaton seemed to sanction it by the gift of a funeral vestment, which she made to the Chapel of the Mother House, at the end of her visit. When leaving, she asked one of the Counsellors what she could do that would most please her sister. Mother Aglae replied that they were in need of a black cope, and since the furnishing of the Chapel was dear to the heart of their Mother, she was convinced that such a gift would be accepted with

sincere gratitude. Madame Vailleton lost no time in purchasing the necessary article, which was used for the first time at the obsequies of her saintly sister.

The month of March, 1867, drew near, and the condition of the patient, instead of improving, each day became more alarming. It was during this month, she told one of her Religious, that several members of her family had departed this life. "Let us hope", interrupted the Sister, "that this month will bring us no sorrow like that." "God is the Master, may His holy and adorable Will be done"! was the answer of the faithful Religious.

For some days the invalid had not risen with the Community, but with two Sisters, who remained at her bedside, she followed the various exercises without a single omission. If sometimes they were interrupted, to allow her a little repose, she would say: "Let me pray with you, there is a special grace attached to prayers said in common." She made her own bed until two days before her death. When no longer able to make it, she said to her Infirmarian: "Today you may do everything." "Ah"! cried the latter with a sigh, "our Mother must indeed be very ill when she allows me to render her this service." The bath was the only remedy which alleviated the irritation and fever which consumed her, but on Saturday, March 16th, her weakness was so extreme that it was with the greatest difficulty the Infirmarian could remove her from the bath to her bed. On Sunday, the 17th, for the last time, she heard Mass from the gallery.

To her nephew, M. Louis Vailleton, who came to see her, she extended a most affectionate welcome,

asked news of his family, and was greatly pleased on hearing of a small inheritance that had been bequeathed to one of her nieces who was financially embarrassed. It was characteristic of her great soul to rejoice at the happiness and good fortune of others. Her nephew, remarking that he saw a striking resemblance between her and his grandmother, she replied graciously: "They always said I looked like my Mothe.", and for an instant a childlike smile overspread her venerable countenance.

On the eve of her death, March 18th, she expressed a desire of once more assisting at Mass. Her Assistant, Mother Louise, did not think it wise to allow her. "Ah! well", she said, "let me be lazy then: obedience is more precious than sacrifice."

Her vitality encouraged the worthy doctor of the Community, who, to the very last, retained the hope of prolonging the life of the venerable Superior-General. He desired this as ardently as the Community, whose sentiments he sympathetically shared. Full of confidence, Mother Louise said to the patient: "You will see, we shall restore you to health before long." "May the holy Will of God be done!" was the reply. Mother Sacred Heart had, apparently, other lights than those of the kind physician.

In a calm and firm tone, she said to her niece, Sister of the Heart of Mary: "I am going." "I hope not, my dear Aunt", replied the latter. "My child, I am aged." "You are not as old as my mother, and, thank God, we do not think of losing her yet." "Your mother, yes", replied the dying Religious, "she will remain with you, but I must go." Her words proved true.

the noble Madame Vailleton lived for several years after the death of her sister, the joy of her family, the poor and the Church.

With regard to the patient sufferer, her words, "I am going", were verified in spite of the efforts of the physician, who even the day before her prophesied departure, still hoped. On March 19th, the feast of St. Joseph, she received Holy Communion very early in the morning, having passed the night in continual prayer and pious preparation. The Community firmly believed that their great Patron would obtain the complete recovery of their cherished Mother, so necessary to her children, therefore a novena had been made and fervent prayers addressed to him to grant this favour. Mother Sacred Heart, on the contrary, asked to have the last Sacraments administered. "No, no, Mother", said the Infirmarian, "if you are suffering more than usual we must attribute the change to the fatigue which the ceremony of this morning has caused you; after you have taken your broth you will rest a little, and then you will be better." Obedient to the last, Mother Sacred Heart arose from her bed, and, seated in her arm-chair, took the broth which the Assistant offered her. This being done, she renewed her desire to receive the last Sacraments, and said: "Sister, I depend upon you; watch carefully over my condition." She was perceptibly sinking, and burned with the desire to once more receive the Beloved of her soul.

The Sister at once found the Chaplain, Father Minat, the Superior-General, Father Desgeorges, and the Assistant, Mother Marie Louise. She reiterated

to them the wish of their dying Mother to receive the last rites of the Church, before going forth to meet her Divine Master. "Do not alarm the House", said Mother Marie Louise, "the doctor fears no immediate danger." The Chaplain and the Superior desiring to see the patient, Mother Marie Louise preceded them to announce their coming. "Remain with me", said Mother Sacred Heart, "I can speak no longer, you must help me to receive them." "Ah! well, Reverend Mother", said Father Desgeorges, on entering her room, "Are you celebrating the Feast of St. Joseph in bed? That is unfortunate, the Chapel was beautiful this morning, and the singing very devotional. St. Joseph ought to be satisfied when he is so well honoured by his daughters. Your presence alone is necessary to crown this glorious festival." "Doubtless God had not so willed it" she said, "since He keeps me here." "All the Communions were offered for you", replied Father Desgeorges "and the most fervent prayers will still be said for the same intention. We trust that the good St. Joseph will hasten your recovery." "May it be as God wishes!" she replied. Even to the end she showed no attachment to her own will in any arrangements made concerning her welfare and comfort.

After this conversation, the sufferer was recommended to the prayers of all the Communities, a great number of masses were promised, they entreated prayer in all the sanctuaries dedicated to Mary, they made offerings at Notre Dame de la Salette. The Chapel of the Mother House was thronged with Sisters, praying at the foot of the Altar, beseeching God with the most fervent supplications to spare their beloved Superior

Meanwhile the doctor still held out hopes of recovery. Again the invalid rallied and was able to take a slight repast. For a few moments she remained seated on the side of the bed. Mother Louise asked her how she felt. With a gracious smile to her dear Assisants, she repeated gaily the answer given on a similar occasion by a good peasant who was well known to both of them, imitating at the same time his language and his accent. The Sisters could not refrain from smiling, and can we fail to be impressed with this sweet and innocent joy, coming from a bed of suffering, which in a few hours was to be her funeral couch. "For the Saints", says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "death is life and the bier a cradle, from which the child of God smiles." "The valiant woman", says the Holy Spirit, "smiles in her last hour." *Ridebit in die novissimo.*

It was now ten o'clock in the morning. After this little incident, she again expressed a desire to receive the last Sacraments. This time they acceded to her earnest entreaties, and they were administered to her towards noon with the same lively faith and holy piety which had characterized her. Thus, on the last day of her life, the feast of her dear Father, St. Joseph, she welcomed with transports of delight the Well-Beloved of her pure and loving soul. At three o'clock she received the indulgences for the dying. She was then ready to break her earthly fetters and to soar on the wings of love to the bosom of her Eternal Spouse. A cerebral congestion had unexpectedly occurred, and the most strenuous efforts of the doctor were powerless.

This news was a sad blow to the Community. The

feast of St. Joseph, which should have been so joyous, was transformed into a day of inexpressible grief, sobbing and weeping resounding throughout the House. "It was", said a Religious, "a sorrow beyond all sorrows." How many promises, how many vows were made to obtain the recovery of their reverend Mother! Many Religious offered to God the sacrifice of their lives for the preservation of the precious life so rapidly drawing to its close. All had expected that St. Joseph would work a miracle in favour of the Congregation which bore his name, but the great Saint, on the contrary, called his well beloved daughter home to recompense her for the good she had accomplished in his spiritual family.

The Superior-General, Father Desgeorges, entered the sick room and approached the bed, saying: "Reverend Mother, we entreat you, watch always over the Congregation which is so dear to you." "If I can do anything before God", she replied, "I will never forget it." "Pardon me, Reverend Mother, if I have in any way occasioned you trouble or suffering." "It is I, Father", she cried, "who must ask pardon." All were moved on hearing these expressions of humility.

Summoned by a dispatch, Mother Emilie, Superior of Mi-Careme, arrived in the evening accompanied by Sister Francis, Mother Sacred Heart's own sister. The venerable patient was now sinking rapidly, and lovingly clasping their hands in her own, she welcomed them without uttering a word. Mother Emilie was distracted by grief, and everyone longed for even a word from their loving Mother, who was now unable to speak to her sorrowing children. Leaving the sick

room about eight o'clock, Father Desgeorges found the Community on their knees in the corridor. "My daughters", said he, "God demands a great sacrifice from you, your devoted Mother is dying, you will soon be orphans." At nine o'clock, it was thought that the last moment had arrived, and the Chaplain, Father Epinat, recited the prayers for the departing soul. This devoted client of St. Joseph completed, however, the feast of her dear Father on earth, and shortly after midnight her enraptured spirit winged its flight towards Heaven, while the Chaplain pronounced the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. She had reached the advanced age of seventy-one years, three months and twelve days.

The first day of her life had been the feast of The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the last, the feast of St. Joseph, the Patron of a happy death. The dawn and evening of this life were stamped with the seal of predestination. Happy the family that had given her birth; happy the Congregation where her life had been so passed in such a holy manner, and so beautifully ended. It would be impossible to express the desolation which her death caused to the Community and her family, but all bowed in resignation to the Will of God, though the Chalice was exceedingly bitter.

The body of The Reverend Mother Sacred Heart lay in state two days and three nights, surrounded by her weeping daughters, who seemed unable to tear themselves away from her. Knowing that it was impossible to retain the body entire, they desired at least to possess her heart. It was taken out with great respect and deposited behind a marble slab in

the wall of the Chapel which she had constructed. Seeing it the doctor exclaimed: "Oh, how much that heart has suffered!" Then falling on his knees beside the saintly dead, he prayed for some time, kissed her hand, as he would a precious relic, and withdrew, mingling his tears with those of the afflicted Community.

"The life of a Christian", says Bossuet, "is characterised by suffering and compassion", and these Mother Sacred Heart possessed in a supreme degree. If the eye of science could discover traces of suffering in the heart, one ought to find them engraved in that of this heroic Christian, the more so, since being endowed with exceptional mastery over self, she never allowed the least complaint at the bitterness of life to escape her. Mother Sacred Heart carried the cross in imitation of her Divine Master, of whom the Prophet said: "He was led like an innocent Lamb to slaughter, and He did not open His mouth to complain."

The interment of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart took place on the 22nd day of March 1867, at nine o'clock in the morning. The Religious of her Congregation hastened from all parts of France to assist at the funeral ceremony. From the City, the best and noblest were present, to share in the esteem and love shown to the honoured dead. The concourse was immense and to maintain order the procession passed around Place d'Armes. When the body was removed to the Chapel of the Community, there was a fresh outburst of grief. "We should never have believed", said the people, "that one could be so loved and revered!" "Tears and sobs speak eloquently indeed in

favour of the deceased!" "It is seldom that one is so loved upon earth." "What a beautiful example in the midst of our aversions and social divisions!" Such were the reflections of many. It was a most impressive sight and the venerable dead seemed more than ever to attract the hearts of all. Her coffin was a pulpit from which she taught the love of virtue and religion, and as the Apostle St. Paul would have said, "After death she still spoke." The earth, which, according to the words of St. Irene, is the bosom which prepares for a new life, received and kept her precious remains as a divine seed, one day to spring forth into a rich harvest. To the eyes of faith, and in the language of the Church, death is a birth, the tomb a cradle, a resting place, where the just sleep, awaiting eternal life.

## CHAPTER XXI

### REPUTATION OF HOLINESS

MOTHER Marie Louise announced by a circular, addressed to the Congregation, the irreparable loss which it had just sustained. She said: "My very dear daughters, God has imposed on me today the most sorrowful of duties, that of announcing to you the terrible blow which has fallen upon our Congregation. For some time the health of our Reverend Mother has been failing, but we loved to persuade ourselves that it was a passing indisposition and the courage with which she continued to discharge her accustomed duties seemed to justify our hopes. But during those last days we began to entertain certain fears, which were only too soon realized. During the solemnity of our Glorious Patron's feast, our dear Mother expressed her desire to receive the last Sacraments."

Having related to them the holy death of their beloved Superior, Mother Marie Louise added: "Behold us, then, deprived of this incomparable Mother; but her memory remains to us as an encouragement, and as a lesson that we shall never forget. Her life has been a model of perfect virtue. Good, amiable, exact, regular and of a uniformity of soul that it would be impossible not to admire, she conciliated all, and at the same time guided with a firm hand the Community which God had confided to her care. It is to the wisdom of her administration that we owe the won-

derful growth of our Congregation, it is to her we owe the Mother House, which shelters the Community during our retreats, and to her also, we are indebted for the beautiful Chapel where we love so much to pray." The worthy Assistant then dwelt upon the sacred duty of grateful recognition, and concluded as follows: "Allow me, my dear daughters, to moderate your sorrow and soften my own, by reminding you that it was on the feast of our glorious Patron, St. Joseph, that God called to Himself His faithful servant, our beloved Mother. Shall we not see in this happy coincidence a touching evidence of the mercies that St. Joseph has obtained for her? If we have lost our Mother on earth, can we not, with a sweet certainty, abandon ourselves to the hope that already from the heights of Heaven she watches over us? She will preserve us in that spirit of faith, of piety, of charity and of regularity that she has so often and so earnestly recommended. For the continuation of her work, she will by her intercession, obtain a Superior worthy of her and of you. We will unite with her in asking this from the adorable Heart of Jesus, that Heart she loved so well, and Whose glorious name she bore with such profound respect."

The spiritual father of the Congregation, Father Desgeorges, also expressed to her spiritual family his sympathy in their sorrow. "My very dear daughters", he wrote to them, "the severe trial which God has been pleased to send you, in calling to Himself your Reverend Mother, has plunged you into such profound grief that we would vain respect it by silence. For some days at least, words would have been powerless to

all share your sufferings. Consolation must come to you from on High. You have sought it at the foot of the Cross, and there you have heard the Divine Wisdom say, by the mouth of His Apostle: 'Take care that you grow not sad like those who have no longer any hope'. Yes, your tears were lawful, and far from blaming you, we have been pleased to see this unanimous expression of regret, which is a tribute of honour, not only to the Mother whose loss you mourn, but also to the daughters who appreciated her virtues and her works. But the time has come when you must raise your wounded hearts and turn them towards Heaven. To prolong sadness will only serve to enervate your courage, and become an insult to God. Do you think that it will be difficult for Him, Who could raise up children to Abraham from a heap of stones, to find in the blessed family of St. Joseph a Superior who, penetrated with the spirit of your departed one, will prove herself worthy of your choice? Shall I say that your venerable Mother is lost because removed from your mortal gaze here upon earth? And can you believe that from the unfathomable abyss of her great charity she has already forgotten you? No, no, my dear daughters, the friends of God, when they leave this earth, do not abandon us. In Heaven they love us more perfectly and plead for us more powerfully before the throne of our Common Lord and Master. Very often their departure is the signal of some special grace that God holds in reserve, and which He will grant to the ardour of your prayers, for He loves to glorify His Saints and to honour His friends.

"It remains but for me to recommend you to unite

your prayers with hers, that your glorious Patron may obtain for me, from the Holy Spirit, the wisdom which comes only from Him, and without which I should be for you all a blind guide, while my duty, as well as my ardent desire, is to lead you by the surest paths to that supreme happiness where await you the Mother you deplore and all your companions who have been faithful to their holy vocation."

The illustrious Bishop of Nimes, Mgr. Plantier, who had been for seventeen years Chaplain at the Mother House of St. Joseph, and who still remained a true friend of the Community and a sincere admirer of Mother Sacred Heart, being informed of her death by Mother Marie Louise, wrote the following letter:

*"Nimes, 22nd March, 1867*

"I have received, my good Mother, the manuscript and the printed form in which you announce the death of your Superior-General. What regret must have followed this venerable Mother to the tomb! What respect, what gratitude must be attached to her memory! Mother St. John founded the Congregation at the outset; Mother Tezenas discovered the secret of founding it in her turn; the second creation appears to me to have been as difficult as the first. For nearly thirty years Mother Sacred Heart has governed your large Congregation, and during that time she has increased fourfold the members of the Novitiate, maintained strict discipline and proper direction, and opened numerous houses. Under her administration the Communities were more frequently visited, and during this period also the Sisters of St. Joseph have

attained a degree of culture and education more in keeping with the demand of the times, without, however departing from that modesty and simplicity which form the distinctive mark and glory of the first houses of the Institute. In order to place her work on a solid foundation, she made with the approbation of His Eminence alterations in the primitive Constitutions, which were no longer suited to the order of St. Joseph. Thanks to her, Vernaison is an admirable Retreat for those Religious who, either from advanced age or infirmity, have been obliged to retire from an active life of duty. The Mother House was remodelled, and the Chapel, which was the sole ambition of her life, may be called a brilliant jewel of religious architecture. To her devotion to our Lord in the Eucharist, you are indebted for the costly sacred vessels and beautiful ornaments, which adorn your altars. She added to all this a country home, to which Sisters may retire for a time for repose and recreation. Her holy perseverance, her calm and patient courage, her unshaken confidence in God accomplished all this. Many times I have seen her smile at censure, submit with marvellous humility to most cruel insults; many times, unknown to her Superiors, she guarded her secret sorrows with the most amiable humility and the most filial respect. On numberless occasions she was obliged to drink of this bitter chalice and she relished its bitterness as others relish intoxicating beverages. With her, the practice of heroic virtues was nothing unusual; she seemed to possess an ease and grace of manner which imparted a charm to all her actions, and revealed an intimate union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for

Whom she had such tender devotion. May our good Master receive her into the Kingdom of His glory, this is the favor that I have asked for her in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Accept, my dear Mother, the assurance of my sincere devotedness.

"HENRY, *Bishop of Nimes.*"

A few days later the same holy prelate, writing to Miss Fanny Tezenas, niece of the Reverend Mother Sacred Heart, confirmed the preceding letter in the following terms:

"MY VERY DEAR CHILD,

"When I was informed of the death of your aunt, I wrote to Mother Marie Louise a reply, in which on one side I sketched the life and acts of her whom God had just called to Himself, and on the other side refuted in advance the prejudices by which I foresaw some would endeavour to diminish the merit of her administration. All has been said in these few pages, and if they should come under the notice of the Community, and I have reason to believe they will, they may read therein a vigorous protestation (though possibly indirect) against any unjust or ungrateful criticisms that might, perchance, be made. For the rest, I shall limit myself to this: each time that circumstances will permit, I shall be firm and faithful in proclaiming the praises of Mother Sacred Heart, and in justifying the many noble works which she performed without ostentation or display."

The venerable Superior of Mi-Careme of St. Etienne, Mother Emelie, who shared in all the troubles of

Mother Sacred Heart, and who had been to the end her cherished and faithful friend, also received from the Bishop of Nimes a letter of condolence, the contents of which may be considered a complement of those letters which preceded it.

"Your grief, my dear daughter", wrote this eminent Prelate, "has every reason to be profound, as you have been the witness for so many years of the virtues of this great Mother. Privileged object of her benevolence and love, the confidante of her trials and sorrows, as well as of her consolations and joys, finally separated from her on account of the friendship and affection which you bore her, it is but natural that the sword of grief should rest more heavily upon you than upon any other in this sad hour of bereavement, yet what beautiful memories of this beloved Mother must be indelibly impressed upon your heart! How you will love to recall the remembrance of those days spent under her maternal care! Her thirty years as Superior have been but one unbroken record of noble deeds; no administration could have been more productive of good or more fruitful in works of zeal for the glory of God. She accomplished this marvellous work with no other guide than the light of her own good sense, no other assistance than her own strength of character, and no other resource than an absolute confidence in the goodness of Divine Providence. Those who by their authority should have been her support and stay one by one abandoned her. In this sorrowful desolation, in order that she might preserve that firmness and peace of soul which never failed her, and maintain in the Congregation that spirit of union which from

many causes was endangered, a long miracle of heroism and wisdom was necessary on her part. I love to think of her glorious entrance into Eternity; she was like gold purified in the fire, and her death was a direct passage into Heaven. Yesterday I had the consolation of celebrating the holy sacrifice of the mass for her, and be assured that the remembrance of her will never cease to accompany me to the Altar.

"And you, my dear child, while praying for your Venerable Mother, who is no more, pray also for the Congregation that she has left, pray that her successor may keep alive the same spirit, may remember her many noble works and perpetuate these benefits. In the interests of this great cause I shall ask God to direct your Community in the important choice they are to make."

This repeated testimony of the Bishop reveals the extent of the sufferings which were inflicted on the heart of the venerated Superior. He was an indisputable witness, having a true knowledge of the circumstances of which he spoke, and having followed, with a watchful eye, their causes and effects. To touch these wounds, no surer eye could guide a more delicate, firm or skilful hand.

The esteem in which Mother Sacred Heart was held was so universal, that during the time her mortal remains reposed in the Chapel objects of piety were unceasingly applied to her. Her personal effects were regarded as relics. On all sides demands were made for some object that she had used, to be religiously preserved in future. A short time after her death

testimonies of cures wrought by her intercession were proclaimed in honour of this holy servant of God. A Normal School student had been suffering from a tumour of the knee and the doctor declared an operation necessary. Fearing the results of so serious an undertaking, the pupil, after the physician's departure, asked for a piece of the paper which had been folded around the heart of the Reverend Mother. She applied it to the afflicted member, at the same time thus addressing her departed Superior: "You, who are so good, cure me; you can do so." Then the invalid slept peacefully, and on awakening all symptoms of the malady had disappeared. She arose and went to Mother Aglae, who had given her the relic. "Mother", she cried, "we may well say that our Reverend Mother was a skilful physician; I am cured." The following day the fact was related to the doctor, who confirmed the cure, and replied: "That does not astonish me; I have always considered your Superior-General a saint. I am not surprised that she works miracles."

A Postulant, who had been for a long time in ill health, having lost her voice completely, was after a thorough examination ordered to return to her family. Being informed of this, the poor child begged her Novice Mistress to allow her to pray at the tomb of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart. "Go", said her Mistress, "but to remain in the Community, it will be necessary for you to obtain a strong and distinct voice."

Accompanied by several of her companions and one of the Sisters, the young girl confidently visited the Sacred tomb. For quite a long time she remained prostrate in fervent prayer. All at once, she recited

in a clear, loud voice, an Our Father and Hail Mary, to the great amazement of her companions, who had not heard her speak for a long time. Returning to her Mistress she said: "Our Reverend Mother desires me to be one of her daughters; I am cured." She was indeed quite cured and continued her Novitiate.

A Religious who had charge of the children, being some distance from the Community, did not hear the bell to rise, and for this failure in punctuality, she had been often reprimanded. In her perplexity she had recourse to Mother Sacred Heart, and began at once a Novena. "You who placed such high value on exactness and regularity", she said to her innocently, "can you not obtain for me the favour of awakening at the hour appointed by the holy Rule?" The following morning at the first sound of the bell, she heard a voice whisper in her ear: "The bell is ringing." "My Reverend Mother, if it is you", replied the Religious, "awaken me every day during my Novena." Each morning she was awakened. "Our Reverend Mother has granted my prayer", she said to her Superior, and ever after she never failed to awaken at the first sound of the bell.

Reverend Mother Sacred Heart had confided the care of a young Religious to one of her Superiors. While the Mother General lived, her *protégée* was satisfactory, but after her death, her conduct became much changed, and she resolved to take off the Religious habit and return to the world. Her Superior, in grief, cast herself on her knees before a picture of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart, crying out: "You confided this child to me, and I, in turn, confide her

to you; as a favour, I beg of you to change her resolve." She was still prostrate in tears before the picture when the young Sister entered, fell upon her knees, asked pardon, and implored her to forget the past. Mother Sacred Heart had saved her *protégée*.

Some time after, this same Superior found herself in a complete state of penury. The day appointed for the payment of three thousand francs was drawing near, and she had not a single sou in her possession. In her distress she again addressed herself to Mother Sacred Heart, saying: "I know you were often in the same position. St. Joseph assisted you, intercede with him for me. In you I place all my confidence." The same night a secular presented himself to the disconsolate Superior and said to her: "I desire to confide to you a small sum of money until next year. Meanwhile, you may use it if necessary; you will have no interest to pay." This sum with which the Superior was providentially entrusted was exactly three thousand francs. One may easily imagine the joy of the Superior and the love and gratitude with which she afterwards regarded her deceased Mother.

A certain person, anxious about the conversion of one who had for some time neglected his spiritual welfare, wrote thus to a sister of St. Joseph: "Everyone says that Mother Sacred Heart was a Saint, and that she is certainly in Heaven. I wish to obtain the conversion of a certain person, that he may go to Confession and make his Easter duty. I pray you to make a novena, in company with some of your fervent postulants at the tomb of your Reverend Mother, and I ask that before the end of the novena,

the confession will be made." In answer to this apparently peculiar request, the Religious wrote as follows: "It must be admitted that your request is a little extraordinary, not to say indiscreet. Our Superior may be a Saint, but God may hear you just as quickly without her." A few days later, the Religious met the person for the conversion of whom they were praying, and spoke of the joy it would give Reverend Mother Saered Heart. "Oh, oh"! he said, "you are coming at that!" and adroitly changed the conversation, but the following day he returned to the Religious, saying that he had been thinking of the remark she had made. "I can well believe it", replied the Sister, "the affair is of the utmost importance, and I am sure Mother Sacred Heart is praying for you." "But, to whom shall I address myself", asked the now penitent sinner. "I do not know any Priest." This objection was very easily removed. The Religious then wrote to the person who had asked this proof of the Sanetity of Mother Sacred Heart: "Your request has been obtained. Thank our dear Lord, and Mother Saered Heart. The novena is finished and the Easter duty has been performed."

If we cannot accept these facts as actual miracles, we must at least admit that there is something extraordinary about them. A worldly man, who had called Mother Sacred Heart, the "Queen of Mothers", is reported to have said: "I should not be surprised if one day she should work miracles."

Nine years after the death of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart, March 26th 1876, the Congregation sustained the loss of their fourth Superior-General, in

the person of Mother Alphonse Liguori. They wished to have her buried beside her old Superior, and as they were convinced that the coffin of the latter had fallen to pieces, they prepared a new one to receive her remains. No one doubted the decomposition of the body of Mother Sacred Heart. On the eve of her interment, the body was swollen to such an extent, they were obliged to unclasp her hands and place them extended on each side of the body. Everyone then expected that the corpse would be in a complete state of dissolution, but what was their amazement on finding the body wholly intact! The features were perfectly recognizable, the skin only slightly discolored. The habit was well preserved, the end of the apron only appearing a little torn. The sexton thought that a slight blow would cause the body to fall into dust, an occurrence which he had daily witnessed. He struck the chest of the deceased several times. The guimpe was torn, but the body resisted and remained intact. He took one of the arms, raised and extended it: her arms were quite flexible. Astonished, they lifted the venerable remains, and to their surprise the body remained perfectly entire. "In all the years that I have been here", said the sexton, "I have experienced nothing so extraordinary as this, especially as the heart has been removed. If the deceased had been placed in a vault her body would have been more easily preserved, but buried in this place, where I have seen so many turned to dust, there is something about it that I cannot explain." Four seculars and three Religious were on the spot where these events occurred. "God guards the remains of His Saints".

says the Prophet Isaias, "even to the last day; they will grow up and flourish like plants and flowers in the springtime." "At the end of the world", says St. Augustine, "the human race will rise up like an immense harvest." And St. Paul calls the risen Saviour, "The First Fruits, The First-Born among the dead, for He Who caused Jesus Christ to rise from the dead, will call into life our mortal bodies." Jesus Christ is, as it were, the advance Guard, and the army, that is to say the human race, shall follow Him.

## CHAPTER XXII

### CONCLUSION

AFTER the death of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart, that they might preserve as long as possible her cherished memory, the Congregation of St. Joseph elected in her place the venerable Mother Marie Louise. She had been her Assistant, her faithful companion and constant friend in tribulation and sorrow, even more than in prosperity and joy. These hearts, so generous and sincere, were closely united. To use a Biblical figure, the soul of Mother Marie Louise clung to that of Mother Sacred Heart, as the soul of Jonathan to that of David, and faithfully offered her in time of trial the treasure of intimate and unwavering friendship, which the author of *The Imitation* exalts as of inestimable value, whilst at the same time he deprecates its rarity.

The election of Mother Marie Louise, which took place on May 16th, 1867, was not only an act of wisdom justified by her rare virtues and amiable qualities, but still more an act of gratitude, of filial piety, and of holy love on the part of the Congregation. In their new Superior the Congregation of St. Joseph hoped to see the living image of their departed Mother Sacred Heart.

Thus, the administration of Mother Marie Louise was but the continuation of the work of her friend, to complete which was her only endeavour. For this

reason, after her death Mgr. Plantier wrote as follows to her worthy Assistant, Mother Chantal: "God has called to Himself the two great restorers of your Community, Mother Sacred Heart and Mother Marie Louise. I fervently pray that God may confide their authority to a worthy and capable Superior, who will perpetuate and crown the good which these two ardent souls accomplished."

The administration of Mother Marie Louise was like the waters of the fountain of Siloe, which, coming from Mount Sion, poured themselves into the pool wherein was cured the blind man of the Gospel. "They glided peacefully and quietly away, carrying everywhere freshness and fertility."

The mission of the humble and gentle Mother was to soothe, to encourage and to console her bereaved Sisters, in the midst of the general desolation caused by the death of the Reverend Mother Sacred Heart. She could give consolation and sympathy. From the day that Mother Sacred Heart made an appeal to her devotedness as Assistant, even to the day of her death, which occurred after the long period of thirty-seven years, she never ceased to dwell on Calvary. She soothed souls in affliction and grief, governing only with the Cross and by the Cross. Under this Sacred Tree, she gathered for herself and her children, the fruits of life, and brought down upon her spiritual family sweet consolations and strengthening graces, hence they called her a Mother of Mercy. Having nobly accomplished her mission of patience, labour and love, the venerable Mother Marie Louise went to join her saintly companion on April 8th, 1875. She was preceded

by three of her Counsellors, Mothers Aglae, St. Peter and Emilienne, whose loss she deeply felt. Vessels of honour and election, chosen souls, perfect Religious, they merited Heaven, since on earth they had faithfully served the Congregation of St. Joseph.

On August 31st, 1875, Mother Alphonse Liguori was chosen fourth Superior-General. Her election was highly commended by the Superior, Father Richoud, Grand-Vicar, and successively honoured by the confidence of two illustrious Princes of the Church. "She was", he said, "a rich hidden treasure, an accomplished Superior, whose heart was adorned with solid virtue, and whose soul was filled with noble and generous aspirations

One of the favorite plans of Mother Liguori was to publish the life of Reverend Mother Sacred Heart of Jesus, whom she held in most profound esteem and filial affection. This life was for her a mirror in which she beheld the model she proposed for her own imitation. She was hastening the execution of this work when death snatched her from her spiritual family. After her happy entrance into eternity, certain circumstances permitted by Divine Providence revealed that she still desired the completion of this work.

It is evident from these facts that the first four Superiors-General of the Congregation of St. Joseph at Lyons present a beautiful example of perfect unity—unity of heart, unity of mind, and unity of work. The first foundation of Mother St. John was followed by the second foundation of Mother Sacred Heart of Jesus. In time, the work of Mother Marie Louise fully completed that of her friend, Mother Sacred Heart.

The express desire of Mother Alphonse Liguori was to make these holy and venerable Superiors known so that their spirit might be imitated and diffused throughout the Community. This unity, the source of strength and greatness, as well as of deification, explains the spiritual growth and beauty of the family of St. Joseph. This wonderful unity is a resemblance of the most sublime and the most fruitful of the divine mysteries, the Holy Trinity, "these Three are One." It is the realization of the ardent desire of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord and Saviour: "Father, keep them in Thy Name, that they may be one, as we also are." This unity is, moreover, a reproduction of the life of Nazareth. That the Sisters of St. Joseph may continue this unity of life, they must bear in mind and put in practice what the Apostle recommends: "We beseech you to know them who labour among you and are over you in the Lord, that you esteem them abundantly for their work's sake. Have peace with them."

Thus closes the story of the lives of these holy women, whose memory will be ever cherished by their daughters, whose spirit of charity and humility still dwells with them, and whose good works it is their joy to continue for the glory of God.



