



*A
Rose
Unfolding*

STUDIES IN GOOD SHEPHERD HERITAGE

A ROSE UNFOLDING

REFLECTIONS ON A JUBILEE OF SAINTHOOD

-Sr. Rose Virginie Wamig RGS

-edited by Sr. Marjorie Hamilton RGS

**Project of the Cincinnati Province
Sisters of the Good Shepherd
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STUDIES IN GOOD SHEPHERD HERITAGE

I ONLY LOVED, 1985 ALSO, I VOW ZEAL, 1986

OUR SHEPHERD'S HEART, 1987

THE ORIGINAL CHARISM OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY
ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN EUDES, 1989

RECONCILIATION, according to St. Mary Euphrasia,
1990

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Saint Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, oil painting, 1827

ROSE OF NOIRMOUTIER

Rose of Noirmoutier, flow'r of LaVendee
Child of wind-swept isle, spirit-filled and free
See the sheep scattered, straying and lost,
Sheep once redeemed at so great a cost!

Schooled in pain and loss you heard
At early age so tender,
Fluted music of shepherd's call
Total your surrender.

Your sheep are wandering
Pillage of beasts
On high hills and mountains
The last of the least. Ezek 34, 8

We bring you the weary,
The wounded, the hurt,
The hungry and tired
Scattered O'er the earth.

God promised shepherds
After His own HEART
Shepherds wise and prudent
For those from fold apart. Jer 3, 15

Save the scattered sheep
Plagued by greed and hate
Lead them back safely
To the Sheepfold Gate

Great Shepherd of the Universe
Hear our prayer this day.
Spread far and wide to every clime
The dream of Noirmoutier. Jn 10,6-9

Sr Mary Komar, RGS

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INTRODUCTION

May 2, 1990 to 1991. we Good Shepherd Sisters celebrate the Jubilee Year of our Foundress' canonization, of her entrance into the Hall of Fame of the Church among those saints held up to us as models and advocates. Mary Euphrasia continues to be "forever, cooperator in God's own merciful activity" in our salvation history.

Only God can make saints. May our Shepherd God be praised forever for all the wonders effected in the heart and soul of St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier. Like Mary we can sing our Magnificat, for God has done great things for her.

Several Sisters have asked me to share "something about the canonization of our Foundress." I gladly share events surrounding this event in the pages which follow this Introduction. I am then adding a paper in two parts which I first gave in 1980 to our Sisters in Philadelphia on the fortieth anniversary of Mary Euphrasia's canonization. I am calling that section REFLECTIONS ON SAINT MARY EUPHRASIA: THE INTERPLAY OF THE HUMAN AND SPIRITUAL IN HER LIFE'S EXPERIENCE. Lastly. I include a section on the BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION PROCEDURE of our Saint.

May 2, 1940, was a glorious day under every aspect. In order to appreciate this, one would need to have participated in a canonization or beatification liturgy in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. People from all over the world, of every nation and language, gather to glorify God for God's re-creation in his saints. Just to be part of the people of God assembled there, to hear and participate, for example, in the singing of the Our Father, the same familiar tune but in many languages, makes one experience that we are truly all sisters and brothers in the same Creator/Lord, through Christ Jesus. whose words to Mary Magdalen take on a new meaning: "Go tell them I ascend to my Father and your Father. my God and your God." This experience creates a vision which can never be lost and a bond that can never be broken.

St. Mary Euphrasia's day was to have been in the fall of 1939. But on February 10, 1939, Pope Pius XI died after a short illness. This was particularly sad for us because he had developed a great devotion to Blessed Mary Euphrasia. Under the circumstances, the canonization was deferred indefinitely. Eugene Cardinal Pacelli was elected Pope on March 1, 1939, with the name of Pius XII.

All Europe was in grave danger at this time. Hitler had invaded Czechoslovakia. Russia and Germany signed a friendship pact. On September 1, 1939, Hitler's armies marched into Poland. Two days later Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. And so began World War II. Fascist Italy was friend and ally of Nazi Germany but had not yet openly declared war.

In 1940, Mary Euphrasia's canonization was set for May 2, feast of the Ascension of Jesus. The Sisters decided to combine their general chapter with that event, as had been done for the beatification seven years previous. This time, however, unlike 1933, many of the chapter capitulars and delegates were prevented from attending those from India, Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Those who did come, about one hundred in all including guests for the canonization, were quite anxious. However, all fears were temporarily forgotten in the joy of assisting at this very moving liturgy in honor of our Foundress.

It was Pope Pius XII's first canonization ceremony. St. Mary Euphrasia and St. Gemma Galgani were canonized together. On the great day, May 2, our guests left the house at 6:30 a.m. for St Peter's Basilica. They would return about 12:30 p.m. Therefore, we, the "young" of the community remained home in order to prepare all for their return. However, we listened to the radio as we went about our chores, and joined in the joy by clapping with the assembly. We knelt when the lovely prayer to our Saint was first pronounced by the Pope and then for his blessing. We felt we were part of the celebration!

Only our guests would be able to express their experience. Although they were bubbling exterior, I know they were tired physically, and restored and renewed, spiritually. Each one, however, is touched in her uniqueness. All were smiling, but soon seemed to settle into a reflective mood. It was a most unusual day for all of us.

At 9:00 the same evening the facade and the great dome of the Basilica of St. Peter's were hand-illuminated, a custom which ended with World War. The "young ones" were there to enjoy the splendid sight as candle after candle was lit and danced and scintillated in the deepening twilight. Crowds of Romans and tourists viewed and rejoiced with us during the two hours of this fantastic scenario. The memory of this does not quickly fade for an enormous representation of the two saints, which was suspended at the center of the facade, was also illuminated by the dancing light. We too went home tired, but renewed and full of joy and peace.

The triduum of thanksgiving after the canonization was held in the Jesuit Church of the Gesu' in the center of the city, as had been the case in 1933. The Jesuits had been a great moral and spiritual support to Mary Euphrasia, especially in the early years of the organization of the generalate. She had arranged with them for annual retreats and spiritual direction for the community as soon as they returned to Angers following the Revolution. A jubilee of canonization is a time of thanksgiving, but also a time of renewal in the original spirit received from our Foundress. Among the splendid virtues which marked her spirit are universal zeal, gratitude, obedience, fidelity and simplicity, which the Jesuits helped cultivate among our early sisters. It was fitting that the triduum be held in their church.

Immediately after the canonization, the general chapter continued to meet, and elected Mother Ursula Jung as the sixth superior general on May 14th. Cardinal Vincent La Puma presided over this election which was also attended by the outgoing general, Mother John of the Cross Balzer, who had been too ill to attend many other sessions of the chapter.

Ominous world events were not only threatening; they were happening. The various consulates in Rome began warning foreigners to return to their respective countries as soon as possible. The capitulars had a private audience with the Pope the morning of May 15. They learned from him the alarming news that some international frontiers were being closed that very day. He was astonished that the sisters were still in Rome. Consequently, the elections of the assistants general were hastily concluded and there was an anxious rush to arrange departures.

Several were able to leave Rome that very evening, and everyone else the next day. However, for some it was too late. Those from

Belgium and Holland found the frontiers already closed and only after much difficulty succeeded in reentering their countries. Those from North America left by the last boat, the Rex, sailing from Naples. Mother John of the Cross Balzer had been appointed Visitor General to North America and left with them. She had hardly recovered from pneumonia. It was a supreme sacrifice for her not to return to Angers, and to leave Europe in such sad circumstances. Nor was she ever to see her loved ones there again. She died October 21, 1942, in St. Paul, U.S.A.

The hurried departures were a sad climax to the glorious ceremonies of Mary Euphrasia's canonization. We were strikingly reminded of the sunshine and shadows of everyday life and of how Mary Euphrasia embraced both sunshine and shadows, pressing the adorable will of God to her heart, seeing in each event a divine Providence who can and will draw good even from evil.

The consular officials warned again that those who remained in Rome did so at their own risk. We were four Americans, one Maltese, one Irish and one Italian in our community. Our Superior General had asked us to remain, which we did. We realized dark days were ahead but the light we had just experienced through Mary Euphrasia's "day" sufficed.

Italy declared war on Great Britain and France in early June of 1940. That summer our convent on Via Bravetta was requisitioned for a military hospital. We moved into a house not far from the big convent, and the next year to Villa Pacelli, which was in excellent condition. We remained there until the Allies withdrew from Rome in July, 1945. Somehow, all this seems to be part of the joy and sorrow of our Foundress' celebration - all so closely interwoven in God's action.

The sunshine and shadows, the joys and sorrows we experience are the fabric of life while we are here on this earth. However the gifts of God to our world through St. Mary Euphrasia are a living and unending witness to God's love and care through the Holy Spirit. May we her daughters strive to keep God's gifts shining through our "zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls," her original spirit, her light and force of action, which led to her canonization May 2, 1940.

Sr. Rose Virginie Warnig, RGS
April, 1990



Baptism and First Communion of Rose Virginie Pelletier, detail of the Aubusson Tapestry designed by Pauline Peugnez, in the Oratory of St. Mary Euphrasia, Noirmoutier.

SAINT MARY EUPHRASIA: THE SPIRITUAL AND HUMAN INTERPLAY IN HER LIFE EXPERIENCE

Part I

"Like a Rose-bud" ⁽¹⁾

Saints give themselves totally, their whole persons, to God; consequently, the mystery of their person is inseparable from God's action in them and through them.

But because of this fact, at times we may be prone to forget that they were human. And instead of their being models for us or aids on our journey, they become more like obstacles.

In our century, with its tendency for looking inward, we can feel insignificant before the saints, so we tend to pay less attention to them, to lessen any reflection on their lives, or certainly any emulation. They do not seem human to us; we feel they are beyond our reach. What might have been beacons on our way are more like obstructions.

It is true that when a saint is totally dedicated to God as was Mary Euphrasia, a special luster of Christ shines forth from her person and actions. This, too, can cause us to feel discouraged in our weakness. We forget the human effort she had to muster, the human struggles she had to face in order to let Christ live again through her.

The fact is that Mary Euphrasia was very human. What she became through fidelity to grace, by looking beyond herself and to God, can help us be more real, more what we are called to be, for her charism and her mission are our gifts too.

While working on the paper on the Spirituality of St. Mary Euphrasia, I experienced an interplay of nature and grace in Mary Euphrasia's life. The supernatural just seemed to penetrate the human and to be permeated by it in turn, in an intense cooperation. I experienced this as a simultaneous growth process, the human and spiritual developing side by side as it were, from her childhood through youth and adulthood right to maturity in Christ.

(1) Georges pp 9,18

Five early biographers - Portais, Pasquier, Georges, Powers and Saudreau-describe Mary Euphrasia as an integrated person, a wholesomely whole person. They report that she was gifted by nature and, moreover, through grace and fidelity to grace, gifted spiritually to an eminent degree. .

In the SECRET OF SANCTITY Saudreau states:

The virtue of Mary Euphrasia was a balanced virtue, a virtue that edified all well-disposed persons with whom she came in contact. She was humble, yet forceful. She was mortified yet tender and affectionate. She loved poverty yet she was large-hearted and generous. She was a soul of prayer and yet she was energetic and industrious. She patterned her life on Christ Jesus, who became all things to all people. (p. 232)

We who are making an effort to integrate the spiritual and human, the religious and the secular in our own time and culture, will do well also to envision this integration in Mary Euphrasia, an integration which took place to an extraordinary degree. This was partly due to her culture and to her personality, and partly due to the action of grace.

Pope Pius XI, who beatified her, was intrigued by this also. In his allocution at the declaration of her heroic virtue, he said that he found it difficult to pinpoint a virtue in which she had excelled, 'for "She seems to have excelled in all of them;" And he continued, "We have few who equal her. Hers is a personality in which we find a harmonious fusion of beautiful and giant virtues." (March 6, 1924) He called her the "magnificent, blessed woman, the valiant woman of the Scriptures."

At the same time, Mr. Gilet, in his life of Bishop Angebault, described Mary Euphrasia, focusing on her human qualities alone:

Mary Euphrasia was doubtless a woman of great value; her works provE: that. She was intelligent, dedicated, and had unbelievable energy, a tenacious will-power that brought her to reverse all obstacles in her path; yet she was wise and docile enough to step back and wait when necessary, but without ever fleeing before difficulties. She possessed to a rare degree the art of fascinating minds and hearts. She was

capable of shaking up the whole world. (Chapter: The Good Shepherd, quoted in PROCESS, super virtutibus IT, summ. ex officio, p. 22)

Concerning Rose Virginie's early life, we now know that her parents were arrested in February, 1794, in their home town of Soullans, and on the 16th of February were imprisoned on the Island of Noirmoutier with 27 other "suspects." "Suspects" because both the doctor and Mrs. Pelletier had been active in defending the Church and its ministers, and in spite of Dr. Pelletier's political ideals he had cared for the wounded of both political parties. His wife, too, had rendered services to both sides. The doctor was suspect especially because of his professional services.

After three months in prison they were released by the Military Commission of the Island. Dr. Pelletier was then forcibly appointed member of the Revolutionary Control Committee, to test his civil orientation. This obliged him to reside on the Island, where he continued to practice his profession.

Understandably, Rose Virginie, born two years after this frightening experience, was her parents' special joy and consolation. She was baptized privately the day she was born, on account of the "reign of terror" and persecution of the clergy. Most of the clergy had fled to other countries or had gone to the scaffold rather than pledge allegiance as "constitutional clergy."

In her home Rose Virginie learned that a suffering child and an elderly person are cared for as "our brother, our sister." Her father more that once carried the sick poor on his shoulders into his own home to care for them, and Rose Virginie often visited the sick in their homes with her mother.

From her parents Rose Virginie imbibed a deep sense of compassion. From them, too, she learned compassion and risk for the persecuted clergy. As superior in Tours, she hid a priest as a boarder. He was escaping the country but needed female clothing to disguise himself. Mary Euphrasia wrote to the newly established community at Angers, telling them he would stop there.

In her family Rose Virginie learned to pray for the Church. To the end of her life she persevered in her Paters and Aves for the Church, During her later years these prayers meant more to her,

for she knew and appreciated. the Church from personal experience, and the words brought to her through Scripture had the mellowed sense of history. The Church had become for her the Body of Christ, His visible Presence.

We know of her childish pranks and escapades, as well as her pious projects carried out with the help of her friends. She told her daughters many years later that she had often wished her mother could keep her more busy so that her mind could not think up so many pranks.

Rose was also self-willed. When obliged to go to school at the Ursulines, she who up to twelve years of age had learned at her mother's knee, rebelled and displayed real tantrums of rage while her mother sat with her on the school bench. She finally noted. The surprised look on her companions' faces and realized they were not. "following the leader" in this so she shaped up. She realized she had to be "tamed"! She became a model student.

So, it happened that the malicious demon in all of us, was also in her who was called to the highest sanctity. However, it was soon vanquished for Rose was honest and severe with herself in acknowledging her own dark side, and in making amends for her lapses. Before the end of the day she would ask pardon of the person she had tricked and impose on herself a penance before going to bed. What penance? For example, she would pray on her knees on the bare floor an extra ten minutes - to the despair of her governess-or she would stand bare-foot on the cold stone floor. She even had a cincture made of corn-husks which she wore around her waist to expiate her peccadillos. (Georges, p. 12)

Even at fourteen years of age, travelling to the Boarding School with her mother, Rose cried the whole three days and nights of the long trip. And once there, she felt as if she would die of grief. She had told her little friends on leaving Noirmoutier, "Life is finished for me!" The goodbye between mother and daughter was a fearful wrenching for both. Rose's greatest pain was the separation from her loved ones. She already missed the warmth of home.

Rose was being "tamed", "broken in". She was being prepared for heroism in the complete gift of herself. Her sensitivity soon found friends among the students; she loved to study with which she had no problem; and she found an understanding teacher in whom she

could confide, Loisel de Lignac who had seen her own parents pay for their faith with their life blood. Under her guidance, Rose progressed rapidly. She soon became again the "leader" admired by all her companions and admired for her piety as well as for her fun, comradeship, joviality and happy disposition. They called her "our Rose without thorns".

In speaking of her gifted nature, I am sure we realize how many of these could have become formidable stumbling-blocks in Mary Euphrasia's spiritual career: for example, her vivaciousness, impetuosity, always a leader, independent, spontaneous, tenacious, head-strong, mischievous or prankish, intelligent with a prodigious memory and round-the-clock energy. All of these and more could have been fatal if not disciplined and well-directed..

Rose had been warned at age twelve, that she would be a devil or an angel; at fourteen, that she had the capacity for great good or great evil; at nineteen, the directress of the Boarding School told her she had been strict with her because she knew Rose would go fully into whatever she chose to do. However, de Lignac had given her the title of "Doctor" on account of her love for the study of the truths of religion and of a virtuous life. Miss de Lignac had also introduced Rose into the practice, or asceticism, of virtue; that is, the royal road of renouncing self and wounded nature, which leads to the victory of goodness over selfishness.

Moreover, even as a child, Rose who had tried to discipline her nature, was ever more eager to grow in spiritual maturity. In her Conferences she tells us: "Life is a combat". She also came to realize GOO had "tamed" her through detachments which are inevitable in life. Accepting them, she was being prepared for her wonderful mission. Rose was learning for life, and in order to be life-giving for others.

We, ourselves, may have often been left to indulge our nature, taught not to contradict our egoistic tendencies, not to suppress our emotions. Rose did not suppress her nature, she transcended its woundedness, disciplined its excesses; and the tremendous energies with which God had endowed her, she re-directed away from self and to goodness and otherliness. That is, Rose directed all to God and to the benefit of her neighbor.

At the same time, God was maturing her at a rapid pace. Had she not said: "I know I will have to be tamed, but I will be a religious"? To be a religious is to be all for God and for his children across the world. Is this not worth any price? Mary Euphrasia thought so and was taught so byword and example. With the help of grace she was able to cooperate with God. Her sister Emilie's death at 15 when Rose was nine (a sister she dearly loved because she was a great help to her mother) was a great blow to Rose. Her father's death two years later was another great detachment.

Leaving her Island, her childhood friends, her mother and her dear ones, her brother's death at 24 years of age, and her mother's death the next year in 1813 at 52 years of age, were rude awakenings to the reality of life which wounded and at the same time matured Rose. Then, her separation from her loved teacher and formator, Loisel de Lignac, who joined the Ursulines, was the final detachment which completed her formation for God's work. She felt free to follow the Father's invitation, "TO BE ALL FOR JESUS", which she had experienced at her First Communion.

All her life had been a preparation for her mission to the broken-hearted. Rose had learned immensely and experientially for this mission. She had learned that truly love means self-sacrifice. We cannot but realize that her teaching in her "Practical Rules" and her "Conferences" are the fruit of her own human and spiritual journey. The sensitivity and practicality expressed therein are sure signs all has been lived and experienced.

It was during her childhood that Rose Virginie learned from fishermen about young slaves sold on the North African market, and babies thrown away, not wanted. And she began at that time to hear voices of these little ones in her dreams, calling out to her to come and save them. She tells us that these things tore at her heart and remained with her all her life. As foundress, before opening houses in North Africa, she cared for African children, saving pennies in order to keep them in their families.

All the suffering and sorrow around her marked Rose Virginie's soul and gave her an irresistible urge to COMPASSION AND TO CHARITY. COMPASSION AND CHARITY became the key-note of her life. For, Rose Virginie's early sense of compassion developed under grace to a peak experience of charism. Mary Euphrasia's special grace was an exceptional awareness of the love of God in His

mercy. She was called to incarnate mercy in imitation of Jesus the Good Shepherd. image of the Father's compassion. (Mission & Spirit. p. 119)

Mary Euphrasia became in Christ Jesus the missionary of merciful love (ibid) "Mercy is what comes to us from God's active love in our salvation history. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit, a charism." (Futtrell) The generalate was the means of announcing and living this love. "Manifested as a work of the Spirit, it is the result of her love of God." (Georges, p. 73)

The most impressive and touching characteristic of Mary Euphrasia's personality is this charism of mercy. It regulated her relationships. It reached a depth which graciously gave and forgave personal offences through an empathy which penetrated the offenders very being. She acquired this attitude towards all persons who offended her, including her superiors.

In regard to her mission. Mary Euphrasia needed all the grace of her CHARISM to tend to the social problems that were affecting especially women and girls of her day. The Holy Spirit, it seems. chose her sensitivity. her feminine intuition. her capacity for compassion and her genius.

The problems of youth that Mary Euphrasia faced in the 19th century were magnified by 200 years of social change after the era of St. John Eudes, and the seemingly total destruction of accepted values as a result of the French Revolution. What remained practically unchanged was the general attitude of apathy or scorn towards the socially and sexually exploited. and contempt towards those who nurtured Christian compassion towards them.

At this point it may be helpful to recall the changes rapidly overtaking society because of the Industrial Revolution alone. and the consequences of the prevalent unpreparedness for these changes. One such change was the plight of children six years and over who, up to that time. had lived and worked side by side with their families on farms or in mines. Now they were taking their places in factories and mills and working 17 to 18 hours a day. They were often treated as adults. For petty theft and minor infractions they were thrown into prison with murderers, robbers, prostitutes, old and young alike.

Mother Pelletier felt that their tender age and inexperience should be a guarantee against such punishment. We can only imagine the magnitude of this problem and the way it touched Mary Euphrasia. Consequently at this time her zeal was directed especially to these "irredeemables" as they were called. and to young children whom continual war and popular uprisings left as vagrants. Her prayer led her to understand that "our God does not want one of these little ones to be lost." (Mt. 18, 14). And her compassion was stirred for them.

The Catholic social revival was slowly taking shape, but it focused mainly on the appalling material misery of the time. Her biographers tell us that Mary Euphrasia was an exception in this, too. Her compassionate care harmonized spiritual, social and human dimensions. Hers was total care for the total person.

When she was a young sister at Tours. the older sisters considered Mary Euphrasia the future pillar of their convent. She was only 29 when they elected her their superior; 40 years were required by the rule. Said she, "I am not worthy to be your superior. but since you have elected me. we shall found the Sisters of St. Magdalen." For her times that was a most challenging project.

Three years later, called to found a community in Angers. Mary Euphrasia did not hesitate a moment. It was rare in those days to found anything. There was no precedent.

As Foundress of the Good Shepherd Sisters, years later. Mary Euphrasia was a zealous spiritual leader. and an apostolic leader also. She led by her example and by the force of her personality and spirituality more than by her counsel or authority. She declared later that she never commanded anyone to do anything. The sisters were in tune with her soul. As foundress, her leadership was exceptionally wise and humble, but firm and discerning, gentle and moderate.

From her own words and those of her friends, it is clear that Mary Euphrasia was aware from her childhood of a personal vocation. At her First Communion. when she was 11, Rose Virginie felt assured of her call to follow Christ as a religious.

Mother Peter de Coudenhove. as a witness at the beatification, tells us that Mary Euphrasia recounted what she called "the origin

of my special vocation." In early 1814, one of the teachers gave the students a talk on "zeal for the salvation of souls" and referred to the girls residing at the house of the Refuge across the street from the school. These young people, the teacher pointed out, had been in danger of being lost. Immediately, Rose Virginie felt such a flame within her heart that she could not resist an impulse to go immediately to the Refuge to ask admission. It was 9:00 p.m. One of the teachers accompanied her, and they went quickly. The sisters were happy to admit Rose Virginie but they realized it was not all that simple. Rose Virginie, however, did not want to delay; she felt she must remain there, so intense was the longing in her heart.

"This," she later told Mother Peter, "was the origin of my special vocation." (OP p.197) Another witness provides additional information. The superior of the Refuge, Mother Joseph, sent a messenger to the Vicar at the Cathedral. This cleric was Vicar for both the Refuge and the Christian Association. At 11:00 p.m. he arrived at the Refuge. He sent for Mme. Chobelet, the directress of the Christian Association, who also responded immediately. When Mme. Chobelet saw Rose Virginie, whom she presumed to be in bed, with the superior and the Vicar in the parlor, she was so startled that she fainted and had to be taken home. Rose Virginie remained in the Refuge for that night. (OP p. 78; AP p. 199)

But her guardian was not happy and obliged her to return to the school until he could come for her. She had completed her education. She went home with him. While home with her sister and family, Rose Virginie became godmother to her sister's third child, a girl. During this stay, eventually she convinced her brother-in-law that she had a vocation to the Refuge. He consented, provided that she await her 21st year before pronouncing her vows. Rose Virginie returned to Tours and entered Our Lady of Charity on October 20, 1814.

Again, she proved resolute in making her own choices. One can only marvel at her posture. This resoluteness, tempered by prudence and grace, and her zeal tempered by the cross, are, as it were, woven into the fabric of her life as foundress. The Canon at the Cathedral of Tours, who had taught catechism at the Christian Association, had remarked that "Miss Pelletier is gifted like those geniuses who go all the way in what they do or choose to do."

Madame Chobelet was present at Rose Virginie's clothing ceremony and confided to her, "I had to be very strict with you because you are of a temperament that will go all the way in whatever you decide to do. These were certainly marks of her character.

Included within her personal call and vocation, Mary Euphrasia was aware of several special missions. She said to a friend, "I feel sure within me that the idea of the generalate is an inspiration from heaven. And I have an intimate conviction that Providence will give me the means to succeed in this project." (Mirror of Virtues, p. 134) "I felt, in spite of myself, the necessity to work for the generalate." (Mirror of Virtues, p 133.) "God alone mows what he has placed in my heart for our new foundations."

In September, 1837, she wrote to Sister Dosithea, "You remember, Sister dear, that it was to you and to me that God first gave the inspiration of the generalate. I will never forget that moment! You first understood my mission. I was not worthy to be chosen but now I must accomplish it."

Mary Euphrasia also revealed her special mission to save many souls - her zeal must embrace the world. And another special mission to foster vocations to religious life. Several of Mary Euphrasia's biographers write that she pursued both her vocation and her special missions with tenacity, courage, tact and her habitual joyfulness. (cf. Georges, Powers) Her goals were before her. Her insight was enlivened and fortified by her deep spiritual life.

We learn from the Process that Mary Euphrasia had a capacity for friendship and for forming positive relationships with the great and the small. Her faith in God was equalled by her faith in the goodness of people. From this source we also hear that she had a great sense of justice, reflected in her respect for each person. No one was excluded. This sense of justice led her to provide for the spiritual and social needs of her young people's future.

Workmen testified that "Mother Euphrasia was extremely just in seeing that we were paid regularly and justly. She never bartered with us for lower wages. She was concerned about our welfare and that of our families." One of the maintenance men declared that he was ready to offer his life for her in return for her goodness to his

family. (Process) He referred to dangers from the revolutions and harassments the convents were suffering at this time.

From the Process we also learn that Rose Virginie was simply herself. Many witnesses declare that all her life long she did not lose a certain simplicity and spontaneity in expressing her feeling. One witness states, "Mother Euphrasia was always herself. always. And she wanted others to be themselves ... She loved with a sort of enthusiasm. We were fascinated by her goodness. Her serenity, her gaiety. her self-possession created peace and harmony among us. She was moderate in sorrow as in joy. She always recommended that we avoid excess in all things. But she was always enthusiastic, and her enthusiasm was contagious." (Process. p 491.995)

One sister remarked that Mary Euphrasia went into ecstasies even over a cabbage. (AP VI, 391) She had a joyous sense of wonder. She says that gratitude really caused her suffering: "It is truly a very poor heart that has no memories to be grateful for." And she gave and received with simplicity. All her sisters did not always agree with her expressions of generosity, as in including Madame D'Andigne at community recreations at times.

Her manner of approach was charming and delicate. Her biographers say she was as gracious and noble to a small child as she was before a king. (Portais II, p.381) Both religious and lay remarked her melodious voice and pleasant conversation. Doctor Farge, who cared for her during her last illness, attested that few people had attained, as she had, the power of moderate and gracious speech. through which she had strengthened friendships and disarmed enemies. He said she truly lived her name - Euphrasia, "gracious speech."

Mary Euphrasia had a sense of humor also. She spoke to the novices of a "marmalade of bad habits," "treating the sisters like old slippers," or "acting like machines," being "squirmy about taking the hand of the cabin boy or the sailor who is helping up and down stairs..." (Spirit and Charism p.101)

Mary Euphrasia knew loneliness. As a child, when the first school was opened in Noirmoutier by the Ursulines, her mother had to carry her there by force. She was fearful and lonely. Later she learned to love school, loved to study, and had a very good memory. But it was hard for her to learn the discipline of school, she who had

enjoyed such freedom of movement. And she, who was always ready with an answer, had to discipline her quick retort. Through prayer and reflection her readiness became pondered and wise and gracious. How lonely she was when her father died! He left a great void in her heart. But when her mother decided to leave Noirmoutier four years later, and return to the mainland, Rose Virginie confided to Sophie, her friend, that "her life was finished." Loneliness invaded her, and the idea of going to a boarding school almost crushed her spirits. During her third year at the boarding school known as the Christian Association, her favorite teacher, Miss De Lignac, left and joined the Ursulines in Tours. Rose missed her immensely.

Then in 1814, in the novitiate of Our Lady of Charity, which she had chosen so readily and so freely, again she knew loneliness. There was only one other novice for companion; the rest were elderly. She studied and reflected on the meaning of Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and whatever she could find about her Order and its origins. She thus learned to transform her aloneness into a fruitful solitude. She was learning surrender, and that life-in-Christ is a life-of-becoming. She loved the few hours she taught catechism to the girls and served them at table. But these were brief activities for a lively young person. In solitude she began to rediscover the heart of the world and to feel new stirrings of zeal. She wrote to her Carmelite friend asking her "to pray that one day I will be able to save many souls in far away lands..."

Upon her return to Angers as superior in 1831, although she felt called to be there, Mary Euphrasia was suddenly frightened and lonely. She was leaving the known for the unknown. She did not feel supported. She unexpectedly had a great struggle. She loved her sisters at Tours and she knew she would always love them. Fidelity was characteristic of her personality. Her sensitivity to "good-byes", moreover, had led her to go to the Ursuline convent the evening prior to her departure for Angers. Her former friend and counselor, Sister de Lignac, was superior there and would be able to sustain her courage. But Mary Euphrasia was very upset and sad about leaving her sisters. She had a premonition it was for good. At the same time, she felt they were not supporting her in this new project. The truth was they did not want to lose her from their own community. And she was fearful of the unknown future at Angers. Therefore, why not remain where all was secure, where their approval sufficed, and where the future posed no questions?

Her soul was in turmoil and she was on the point of deciding to go back to her community when quite unexpectedly Father Pasquier visited with her. As soon as he saw how distraught she was, he understood what was happening. He told her she was experiencing a temptation. "Go to Angers." He added, "God has great things for you to do there." His words brought her back to the reality of her troubled emotions. Mary Euphrasia realized with horror and pain that her vacillation was getting in the way of God's will and therefore of His glory in souls. On May 21, 1831, needless to say, Mary Euphrasia went to Angers to begin her real mission there.

She came away from this experience not only a more interior person, but a more zealous apostle of God's Will in His Merciful Love. That is to say, the service of His merciful love after the example of Jesus, Good Shepherd, became evermore the only object of her life, not only the consequence of her experience. The Lord was calling her ever more insistently to be with Him, and to give herself ever more unreservedly to the restoration of humanity.

Then, as foundress, in the years 1840-50, she lost many of her close friends and co-founders: Mdme. D'Andigne, Count de Neuville, Therese de Couespel, Jane de Chantal Cesbron de la Roche... With each new foundation, the more mature of her sisters left Angers for other parts. Often she felt alone, as though responsibility for the whole organization was upon her. She wrote: "We have such lovely young sisters, but they cannot help me, they cannot understand.. I am very alone..."

In her later years Mary Euphrasia's union with Jesus in the Eucharistic Presence had deepened, but humanly, she felt alone. She spoke of this to Sr. M. Anges in April, 1868. "What would have happened to me during these last two years when I have been so alone and so abandoned... if I had not been able to receive the Bread of the Strong. This has been my life ... Holy Communion gives me courage to face the difficulties which come on me from all sides..."

We also learn from the Process that in her last years she would pass long hours before the Tabernacle. The Sisters would have to call her out for some urgent business or to take her meals. Lastly, during the last six months of her life, Mary Euphrasia was deprived also of her only human consolation. Her spiritual director, Father Roux, OMI, was transferred from Angers to Rennes. He managed to come to see her only once, a few days before her death.

All her life, Mary Euphrasia was keenly aware of her times, with the hopes, frustrations, fears and needs that these times produced. As foundress, she was continually challenged by the political, social and religious tensions of her century. These were difficult, heroic times, but she maintained a positive outlook. She faced situations just as they were, and tried to do whatever could further the mission. She was involved in the advances and progressive movements of her time. The Industrial Revolution, for example, saw much that was new and helpful, but also had negative effects on families and the lives of young people. She entered into her times, striving to better the conditions of the poor. She tried to reach out to those who were victims of disorganized progress.

Nevertheless, she made good use of advances in transportation and communication - the locomotive, the steamship, the telegraph. She was enchanted by sewing machines and hand-weaving machines. She sent three Sisters to Paris to learn the secrets of these new inventions. They lodged with the owner of a sewing factory for three months and there 'learned these trades. She informed her other houses about these marvelous advances.

In addition she promoted the Missionary Movement of Gregory XVI. This enchanted her and gave broader horizons to her zeal. As early as 1834, Mary Euphrasia had engaged all the Sisters who so desired to study languages. She wrote in 1844: "Everyone here is so busy studying languages, busy with our classes of children, with manual work and with prayer, that we can hardly do more. But all are happy as larks." She herself had no time to caress her projects. They were no sooner conceived than put into execution.

The Propagation of the Faith Movement engrossed her also. She had stayed with the foundress, Jeanne Jaricot, in Lyons once en route to Rome, and caught some of Jeanne's zeal and shared her own. How often she said "How fortunate we are to be living in these times." Zeal for Africans, which she carried through from childhood, did not wane. She made room for African children in Angers. Dom Gueranger's Liturgical Movement, which enlivened the prayer life of her communities, found her involved. Nothing seems to have escaped her attention and participation.

One is also impressed by Mary Euphrasia's practicality. In 1840, she wrote to her Sisters in England: "Go along with the customs of that country, We can do nothing better than that." She

prepared missionaries with information concerning the countries to which they were going. Outside of France were sent only those who desired to go. For, she said, "Not everyone feels called to foreign lands." In 1835, she advertised in newspapers of both political parties for work for the new machines. So many applications came that the sisters could hardly handle the requests. She then suggested that other communities do the same... and she added "not just the right-winged paper, but the other one too."

In her daily instructions to the novices Mary Euphrasia quoted the newspapers of the day, as well as history. She instructed them concerning pluralism in church rites and current trends in the Church. Much of her teaching was suggested by her conversations with them at recreation, and by their questions of her. Permission was influenced by conflicting ideas and trends in the Church of her day: She had to deal with the National Church, the Gallican Church and the Church at Rome. One is impressed by the way she handled each situation.

In her own life Mary Euphrasia met with continual intense opposition. People were confused by the audacious newness of her ideas and activities and confounded by her meek courage. Through it all she remained firm in her intimate assurance of her mission. Pope Pius XI said at her beatification that he had encountered many men saints who were very courageous. But Mary Euphrasia was blessedly audacious.

Sometimes referred to as the Teresa of the 19th Century, she was also a decidedly apostolic contemplative. She was energetic and at the same time deeply spiritual. In those days the prayer of contemplation was considered special to Carmelites, Trappistines, the strictly contemplative Orders. For apostolic religious there was so much to do the day was not long enough -misery and ignorance all around, people clamoring for help. Activity was the order of the times. Many apostolic congregations came to birth or were reborn in the revival of Catholic social works. These religious had prayers to say, vocal prayers in the morning and evening. But Mary Euphrasia gave her congregation a strong contemplative base; mental prayer was part of the daily routine. She taught the novices that without contemplation they could not accomplish anything worthwhile for souls or for themselves. She herself gave the example. Her sisters and her novices whom she, together with four other Sisters taught, were enriched by her profound teaching, as

well as by her faith and example. A priest witness declared:

Mary Euphrasia's spiritual doctrine was of great simplicity and devoid of all affectation and gives me the impression that it flows from a source and from a true inspiration..... I have personally seen this and felt this in her own life and in her teaching to her daughters, who are real pearls of deep spirituality. They witness to Mary Euphrasia's greatness of faith and purity of doctrine. (Apostolic Process, p. 422)

Gradually, in her own life, prayer and action became one. Everything Mary Euphrasia did seemed to become a response to and beyond the ordinary. She grew to see everyone and everything in God. Said Mother Augustine, "Anchored in God in faith and hope, Mary Euphrasia felt free to embrace God's world in her love and her zeal." There are many witnesses to a unifying component in Mary Euphrasia's life experiences. The Congregation of Rites, quoted in *Osservatore Romano* 1939, stated that Mary Euphrasia had unified her life in the two great commandments of love... that "she pursued them as if she had received a personal command from heaven to do so." One of her confessors witnessed: "I have never met a person who lived more intensely the divine precept of love for God and neighbor." (AP IX fol. 5720)

Before she died, Mary Euphrasia tried to speak to and to encourage a newly appointed superior, who was on her way to begin a foundation in Aden. All she could say was, "Just love." "But, adds the superior, Mother Ignatius, "I understood all she wanted to say to me: 'LOVE GOD, LOVE THE CHURCH, LOVE SOULS, LOVE OUR INSTITUTE'." (AP I. fol. 231)

"The glory of God and the salvation of souls, this is my life!" she said. Indeed the two great commandments seem to have become one for her. She herself revealed the secret: "Do as I did. I had no great talents. I have done nothing great. 1 ONLY LOVED... BUT I LOVED WITH ALL THE STRENGTH OF MY SOUL." (Conf. p.30)

We can summarize Mary Euphrasia's becoming-in-Christ, in the words of her spiritual director, Father Roux. As a witness to her sanctity, he declared that the great principles which guided her were PRAYER, STRUGGLE, SUFFERING, SILENCE. And he explained:

Prayer was her life ..

Struggle... who can count the struggles she had to sustain and the victories won for the glory of God in her own soul over her own will and her own heart!

Suffering... became her constant companion and also her JOY...

Silence... what fortitude and what virtue she had to practice to keep silent always. not to speak to anyone about the persecutions of which she was the victim for so long! She only spoke to the sisters whose mission it was to share her trials.

I always saw in this, her way, a sure sign of Mary Euphrasia's sanctity.

Father Roux added that he never left Mary Euphrasia's presence without feeling himself a better person and without desiring to pass on her principles of sanctity.

Mary Euphrasia did not come by this all at once. Asceticism and self-discipline cost. Much like a rose mysteriously unfolding its delicate beauty and lavish perfume gained through absorbing the sun, the rain and the wind - our human Rose, from baptism gradually and consistently opened herself to love: to be loved and to love. The rose is a symbol of love, its stem is usually protected with thorns. Human love also is always wedded to suffering, and sacrifice, but its fruit is joy and peace. "Love is our banner". she told us.

It is true, our Rose/Mary Euphrasia was gifted with a rich personality and in her, grace blended with nature. However, it was fidelity to grace that brought her to a special momentum and enlightenment necessary for her to intuit and to follow the whisperings of the Spirit of Love.



Upper: Rose and her companions. Lower: Rose joining Our Lady of Charity; Rose as Sister Euphrasia with the young girls

PART II

The Rose Unfolding

Mother Euphrasia's historian wrote that she embodied, in miniature, the glorious history of her people. Like her ancestors, she originated in the Vendean Region on the North western coast of France. "She belonged to this people whose very soul is faith itself: a faith as deep as it is simple, a people of strong will and energy, tenacious in purpose and straight-forward. (Pasquier, p. XI)

Rose Virginie was born in heroic times, heroic for her country, for her Island of Noirmoutier, for her family and for the Church. This was the setting in which she grew up.

Sensitive, impetuous, tenacious, self-willed, Rose Virginie grew up in the open atmosphere of her Island, the vastness of the ocean around her, the frolicking of angry waves, mighty rock formations which spoke to her of firmness or strength, boats with fishermen at work, or sailboats peacefully gliding along, and the immense pine-woods sloping down to the water. Again, her biographers, Pasquier, says, "All this left a deep impression on her as it molded her spirit and gave her that natural strength which in after years made her capable of great toil. She always retained a sense of the action of God in the wonders of nature, and of God's presence in the scenes that land and water present to us." (p. 10). Her teaching, too, and her conversation were full of these images. Hers was a vibrant, generous, warm nature.

Devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, too, special to her Island, grew with her growing. After Louis XVI from his prison, before going to the scaffold, consecrated his country to the Sacred Heart, these devotions appeared even more forcibly in Noirmoutier. The two hearts became a public symbol of unity for her people.

In spite of a systematic effort to wipe God and Christ out of history, the people of her time clung to a general understanding of a real meaning to life, a common faith, common customs, a common morality. However, these were fast fading as materialism expanded. Mary Euphrasia was aware of this and often referred to it in her teaching.

As a religious of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge, Mary Euphrasia was a disciple of John Eudes. Right up to her death, she used his book THE LIFE AND KINGDOM OF JESUS IN CHRISTIAN SOULS. She had a copy of the first edition, badly printed, which is known the possession of the Eudist Fathers. John Eudes' other works had not been printed, and there was but a manuscript copy of his life. John Eudes was a disciple of Berulle, De Condren, Olier, Francis de Sales.

So, Mary Euphrasia's early years of religious formation brought her into contact with these masters of the French School of Spirituality. She especially loved John Eudes for his zeal and for the fourth vow to which she herself was called to give a world-wide dimension and a precise biblical orientation, that of the Good Shepherd.

From childhood, Rose Virginie was influenced by Teresa of Avila and her spirit of prayer. Later she would speak of and quote her very often.

And from childhood, Rose Virginie especially loved to study and reflect on Scripture. When she was 12 she recited by heart the Passion of Christ according to the four Evangelists. Father Alleron told her in a letter that he was ashamed; she knew Scripture better than he. Scripture gave her a keen understanding of human nature. And we know how freely Mary Euphrasia quoted from the sacred texts in her teaching, her correspondence and even in casual conversation.

What is most striking in Mary Euphrasia's spirituality is its humaneness and practicality. In her there was a blend of the human and the spiritual. Therefore, there was harmony in her somber moments of deep suffering as well as in her joy in life, just as it is... God was not only present to her in prayer; she learned to live and think and move conscious of her Savior's presence.

To repeat - Mary Euphrasia did not arrive at this all at once. Nor did she keep a journal of her spiritual journey with its joys and crosses. Her incredibly busy life would not have permitted her to do so. With a little study of available sources, however, we can follow the tempering and enlivening of her human personality by the gifts of the Holy Spirit as they show forth the Spirit's fruits, especially in her latter years.

That her prayer life reached great heights we know from several sources:

- a. From her own teaching. Mother Peter de Coudenhove tells us that Mary Euphrasia lived what she taught. Mother Peter reported that Mary Euphrasia's conferences give insight into her spiritual itinerary.
- b. Our second source is the scrutiny of the Church, carried on for 43 years, into her heroic life of faith, hope, charity and zeal.
- c. Our third source is her confidences to her intimate friends, which we glean from the Process of Beatification, from her letters especially to: Mother Stanislaus, her novitiate companion; Sr. Therese de Couespel; Sr. John of the Cross and her confidences to Mother Augustine. (Process)
- d. Finally, her confessors and spiritual director, two of whom were sworn-in witnesses.

From these sources we know that Mary Euphrasia had some deep mystical experiences. Among them "intimations" on the Blessed Trinity, especially in relation to our redemption and to her mission; an intuition of her own creatureliness and sinfulness; an experience of the value God sets on a soul; a special understanding of Scripture, the Cross, the Eucharist.

From the Process we learn that Mary Euphrasia was devoted to many saints and to the angels. Also, that she believed firmly in the communion of saints. But her primary devotions, many tell us, were the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lady, and the Holy Family. (RP 57 ff) By "devotion" Mary Euphrasia meant deep relationship expressed in exterior acts and practices, a relationship which permeated everyday life.

Mother Augustine wrote that it became natural to Mary Euphrasia to tell her sisters: "Go, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit to the conquest of souls." (OP III, fol. 508-513) She often invoked the Holy Spirit for light and for her young sisters. And often she spoke of the Blessed Trinity and of the sufferings of Christ, likewise of the Father and His immense tenderness.

Another interesting note from Mother Augustine is that Mary Euphrasia's zeal was renewed and enkindled through her contemplation of the Blessed Trinity. When she considered how each Divine Person contributed to the mystery of the Incarnation and our Redemption her heart would become inflamed, and she would cry out, "Oh, see the love of God for us!". (Mirror of Virtues, III, Sec. V, Process)

Mary Euphrasia's primary devotions seem to be interrelated and to merge in the Eucharist, which one witness tells us is the point of unity in her faith experiences. She herself described the Eucharist as the "compendium of all devotions." These mysteries nourished her daily life to such a degree that her personal life and her relations were brought into harmony with her deep faith.

At the same time, Mary Euphrasia's devotions and teaching reflected a special experience of God as a loving, merciful Lord, all tenderness and graciousness.... Her special gift was an EXCEPTIONAL INTUITION OF GOD'S LOVE IN HIS MERCY. This strikes us all the more when we recall that a "Lord of might and punishment" was being preached in the hundreds of renewal missions given across France, especially from 1830 to 1845.

The judges of the tribunal in her process of beatification were impressed by this. They exclaimed, "Oh, how much our world needs the merciful love of God Mary Euphrasia gives us!".

Mary Euphrasia was keenly aware of the power of the Eucharist (cf. Conferences). She experienced in the Eucharist Christ as our true food and drink, a food and drink which transforms us into Himself. The Eucharist, she tells us, is the seat of the burning love of the Sacred Heart of Christ Jesus for us.

This is interesting since the Sacred Heart is not mentioned as one of her primary devotions. Historically, through the liturgical renewal, the Church was reviewing these special devotions. When Mary Euphrasia presented John Eudes' Mass and Office for acceptance she was told these devotions were not approved any longer. In her letters she mentioned the Sacred Heart and confiding new projects to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. But Mary Euphrasia found the Sacred Heart in the Eucharist. (Georges p. 306)

The Eucharist is reality, not a figure. The Good Shepherd is our model. We are called to take on the attitudes of His mind and heart. It is in the Eucharist that He teaches us, that we learn, that we are transformed. This is Mary Euphrasia's own personal experience. Therefore, she sees the Eucharist as the center of her communities.

One of the paradoxes of her life is that as foundress, the Hidden God in the Eucharist, as she calls Him, gave Mary Euphrasia a longing for the hidden life. When we think of her mission to embrace the peoples of the world with her zeal and apostolic ministry, we are impressed by this longing for the hidden life.

Mother Augustine remarked that she saw Mary Euphrasia as sought out and surrounded by the great leaders of the Church and the civil world of her day, and that although she was present to them in simplicity and openness, "the Lord of her life called her to be centered in God." She continues, "Mary Euphrasia lived with God in the secret of her soul." And she adds, "Father Roux told me that Mary Euphrasia was a woman of great contemplation ... the union of her soul with God was continuous." (AP p. 566). Mary Euphrasia repeated, like the prophets in the Old Testament, "Let us hide ourselves in the face of God, let us be healed of our wounds under God's light in the Eucharist."

In her centeredness Mary Euphrasia gained liberty of spirit, grew in moderation and was strengthened in perseverance. In the "light of God's Face she finds her goals, her values, makes her decisions and responds to each situation." (AP IX, 566)

Another effect of Mary Euphrasia's union with God is that it deepened her relationship with all her sisters. Each felt loved in a special way by her. "She loved us with a sort of enthusiasm." They experienced a sort of mutual interiority. Mother Marine, third superior general, declared in the Process, "I can't exactly find the right words to express what I mean. It was something easier to experience than it is to explain. Her very words had power to inflame us with love for God and for souls." (AP p. 685)

Paradoxically, with her natural gifts of leader, Mary Euphrasia was interiorly drawn to obedience from her earliest years in religion. Obedience caused her to listen and to consult her sisters, to want to do as they desired, to bend her will to theirs. And in her

role of foundress she graciously blends firmness with flexibility, forcefulness with humility and gentleness, through that she wins all hearts.

Mother Augustine said that Mary Euphrasia freely put all human and spiritual conditions of those she loved before the Lord. A sister tells that she even consulted the Lord each day on how to feed her large family in Angers. We can easily understand this was a continuous concern. At one time, due to a minor revolution there were 1300 mouths to feed three times a day.

And although Mary Euphrasia taught her sisters to trust implicitly in Providence, she would add, "Do all in your power as if Providence did not exist." With her deep spirituality there was a blend of practicality. We hear her saying, the most trying form of poverty is lack of financial means. Lack of money is a martyrdom. Her great anxiety of providing for tomorrow and temporary affairs filled her days. She found insecurity a most trying form of poverty .

In 1838, after her first visit to Rome, Mary Euphrasia described to Sr. Stanislaus the great statues in St. Peter's Basilica, and she added, "Just think! Each one cost 100,000 francs. What could we not do with that sum!" And visiting the tomb of St. Ignatius which she was told cost a million francs, to her companion's consternation she exclaimed spontaneously, "How many souls we could help save with that amount of money."

Mary Euphrasia also cultivated benefactors. No funding was assured her for the many young people for whom she worked. She developed a system of private contributions - an "Association for the Good Shepherd", which engaged lay people in her mission. And she taught the necessity and the dignity of work, but also its creative energy. She considered work one of the joyful austerities of the Good Shepherd Order. (Process) She also taught efficiency and organization.

"She had a great sense of administration and taught that 'poverty could be a means of saving souls if we live it with order and economy,' "She was generous and large hearted, and did not consider misery or hoarding an asset to evangelical poverty." She warned that "Both too much and too little are dangerous to religious life. One brings on laxity; the other, too great preoccupation for temporal affairs and needs". (Conf.325,350)

In her letters Mary Euphrasia often spoke of charity and unity. These were of great significance to her. As her religious family grew and expanded, she felt the need to foster unity in values and goals. She understood the need, therefore, for communication. Her correspondence testifies to her effort to keep the two-way flow open, healthy, encouraging and stimulating. She urged the sisters never to write anything that could wound another. The flow of correspondence to and from the Mother General was formidable; a letter almost every five days to one person. There was consternation on both sides when 15 days had passed without reciprocal news.

As her communities multiplied, she organized a newsletter. There were no typewriters, no photocopiers either, but there was communication among all and sharing among all, even after the division into provinces in 1856. With all of that, the flow of personal correspondence did not cease. There are over 1300 personal letters of Mary Euphrasia, and an official letter from the motherhouse usually had a personal note added.

One letter reveals the importance Mary Euphrasia placed on communication: "I am writing to you during High Mass, the feast of the Most Holy Trinity. Oh, heaven knows how I love and adore the Blessed Trinity! But I know that I will not have another moment to write to you. I am officiating for the feast also, but I have not yet sung a note! During Vespers, the Inviolata and Matins I was engaged in the parlor, and of course not in useless things..." (May 28, 1834)

Just the thought of what the daily mail brought to her of news from around the world and the effect of this news on her emotions, makes us wonder. There was joy, surprise, pain, anguish but always a reason for greater confidence in God.

In her letters, whether as young superior of Tours or from Angers as superior general and foundress, Mary Euphrasia comes across in originality and authenticity. There we find the secret of her person. No matter what main message or business they carry, her letters are full of life and imagery; they vibrate with deep feeling, expressions of anxiety, of admiration, of enthusiasm, or trust and confidence; they express inner sentiments she does not try to hide, tears of joy or pain, of love for God, of compassion. All is there. Her inner person is there.

Her advice has nothing vague about it. She spoke personally, even though from a distance, to her daughters. Even in the most complicated situations, Mary Euphrasia was prudently aware of the person receiving her letter, although clarity and truth were not dimmed.

We read in the *SECRET OF SANCTITY* (French edition p. 42-43), "The historians of Mary Euphrasia either remained silent or glossed over what she had to suffer from others, even her sisters. Moreover, it is principally crosses of this kind that led her to the heroic exercise of patience, charity, pardon, zeal, and love for God for whom she endured all this suffering. She suffered all the more because she was extremely sensitive. Where there is greater love there is greater suffering. Mary Euphrasia wrote, "I am not as invulnerable as you think I am. I can't help feeling certain expressions, criticisms, judgments and complaints which wound me in the depths of my heart." (Letter, July 1842) In all her letters, Mary Euphrasia was loving, modest and patient - she who was so spontaneous! To her sisters she was all gift and enthusiasm, selfless concern, and trusting to the limit. Her charism was magnificently present all through her correspondence. She wrote: "My heart is dictating all I am writing to you" - in her letter written on the boat which carried her back to Angers after the departure of the Sisters for India. She had accompanied them to their ship.

Each of the sisters was "unique" to Mary Euphrasia, so her initial greeting was very personal to each. We hear her: "My very faithful daughter, my true support," "my tender and faithful dove," "my unique daughter," "my beloved children, my glory, my crown," "Believe me, my daughter, I love you.." And from afar she seems to be looking, for each one. "Where are you, my beloved St. Joseph, where are you my good St. Louise? St. Marcella, St. Reparatrix? Oh, you are in America, my most beloved mission..." "What are you doing, my loved beloved John of the Cross?" (November, 1842)

Mary Euphrasia was very tenderly affectionate. Just one word of hers proves how deeply she loved: "Having generated our young sisters on the cross, I love them more than my own life." Her love led her to admire each one's qualities and gifts while their faults and weaknesses remained unnoticed by her. She said of herself: "With St. Paul I can say, 'How can I remain indifferent while anyone is suffering!'" (Letter to Sister Stanislaus)

She maintained this same love for the sisters who disappointed her, and a loving forgiveness of those who betrayed her trust, or who imprudently bungled financial affairs and agreements so painstakingly negotiated for her foundations. Her letters combine business and material concerns with the spiritual element strongly accentuated.

Another light in Mary Euphrasia's life was her devotion to Our Lady - a logical sequence to her other primary devotions. What the Holy Spirit has accomplished in Mary, the same Holy Spirit can bring forth in each one of us. - She loved Mary for her place in the mysteries of Christ, for her role in Redemption. She warned that a crisis in faith, a crisis in the Church always begins with a crisis in devotion to the Eucharist and in devotion to Our Lady. (Conf. p. 98)

We can also see the logic of Mary Euphrasia's devotion to the Holy Family. The word Incarnate sanctified family life. God in Christ lived and loved our human life with its joys and sorrows; therefore, our own daily living, our occupations, our praying, all are spiritualized through His living of them.

Mary Euphrasia had a deep sense of family, of team work in a family spirit. Recall her conference on the Bees. She considered the congregation to be "one community of persons and of goods." This led her to try to develop each one's potential and to respond to each sister's personal call. She was keen to discern the Sisters' capacities and talents, and she urged them to study in order to better their knowledge and improve their ministry.

Her sense of family also brought Mary Euphrasia to respect the local community's autonomy, in organizational, cultural and financial development. She thus stimulated creativity and initiative. She would say, "The zeal of one community stimulates that of another. One's experience can help another find new ways." "Do as you see best; you are on the spot." (Letters) Her concern was union in spirit, in charity, in goals. Her central government was very different from the centralized forms characteristic of the latter 19th century.

Mary Euphrasia gradually learned to hear and to see the Lord in all events. And her one desire was that God's will be accomplished in all things. Her prayer became complete trust in God, thanks-

giving, praise; in her own words her prayer became SILENCE. "I press the Will of God to my heart!" (Secret of Sanctity, p. 31)

It is in the light of God's Face that Mary Euphrasia became ever more whole, humanly and spiritually. Her absorption in God (she herself tells us, "I am full of God" "I feel God in me") became her source of light and of strength. But it DID NOT LESSEN THE HUMAN IN HER. In fact, Father Roux wrote toward the end .of her life, "I have never met a person so totally united to God nor have I ever met a more sensitive person ..." (letter to Sr. M. des Anges, April 9, 1868)

Mary Euphrasia reveals in a letter written in 1855: "I am not as invulnerable as you think I am. Except that I am not in prison, I have all other sorrows combined. I am without support, without help. My soul, torn with sorrow, no longer dares to express itself. But I am in great peace." Another time, "I feel so irritable today ... Please pray."

Sr. John .of the Cross, one of her intimate friends, relates that, at the time .of her reelection in 1855, Mary Euphrasia was suffering great interior trials, temptations and aridities. She confided that it cost her much to take up the heavy load again. "I am tempted to give it up," she said. "Oh, my God, what sufferings! And you are hiding your will from me..." (Poinset, p. 222)

Her absorption in God deepened her already keen awareness of her creatureliness, of her oneness with sinful humanity (Process) and established in her that gentle humility that won all hearts. We read in the Process also that "humility became an attitude .of mind and heart which shone forth in her appearance and in her behavior. "

It is evident that the intensity of her spiritual life enhanced her human qualities and kept her heart alert to others. Whatever serious business she attended to in her room on the second floor, Mary Euphrasia was never too busy to hear the chatter, pitter-patter, and telling coughs .of the children below her window. She would answer their expectations with a greeting and a shower of candy or sweets .of same kind. At times, too, from this same window she somehow noticed a sister far off, bent over, working in the garden, and sent her a cup of warm broth.

Mary Euphrasia confided to one of her intimate friends that she was favored with deep insight into the value God sets on a person (Process, Mirror of Virtues) and was given a keen sensitivity to their spiritual needs. We know what this implied for her in her unselfish giving to God's children. One writer notes, "Nothing was too great or too small, too arduous or too costly, to put into action day or night for one of God's little ones so dear to Him ..." (Georges, p. 56) And the Report on the Process sums it up thus: "The action of grace carried Mary Euphrasia out of herself to works of zeal, to the well-being of others." Mary Euphrasia herself tells us: "I feel consumed by zeal when I meditate on our vocation." (Canf. Ch. 3)

But at times, Mary Euphrasia seemed frightened by the magnitude of her personal vocation and that to which her sisters were also called. She wrote, "Oh, if you only knew how I tremble and how I fear that I am failing in what I owe to God, to you, and to souls... I need your prayers greatly." She was by nature lively and impressionable, yet somehow timid. She had an instinctive fear of the dead, of the dark, and of storms. But she gradually gained self-possession, offering this her weakness to God. (Poinsenot, P. 229)

She felt called by the Lord to resurrect the title of the "Good Shepherd" in her foundation of Angers. Jesus took to Himself this title in order to image the Father's love and care, and it described her peak experience of charism. She was inspired to make this Gospel message her way and that of her Order. She developed an entire ascetic and apostolic spirituality from her contemplation on the Good Shepherd in both the Old and New Testament.

We can follow Mary Euphrasia as she was gradually shaped, in heart and soul, and measured up to Christ the Good Shepherd by the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught her in the Eucharist; there she learned to be a good shepherd, to let Him take over. She knew that redemption and filiation once entered into carried her into the Paschal Mystery with Jesus. Zeal for the Father's glory and for souls burned in her from early childhood. This zeal became ever more a devouring flame, as she herself expressed it. We hear her say, "The fire of zeal can only be kindled with the wood of the cross. No cross, no love." The cross became her daily companion, especially in her life as foundress. This illustrates a process-of-becoming.

Mary Euphrasia's confessor in her early religious life, Father Alleron, reported that in her novitiate he found her "far advanced in the spiritual journey and deep in the shadow of the cross. "In her conferences Mary Euphrasia mentioned her early spiritual trials and said she endured them for several long years. Father Alleron clarifies: "The spiritual interior trials which enveloped Mary Euphrasia's soul during her early years (1817-1829) did not eclipse her charm, her graciousness and her gaiety, which drew hearts to her - the children, sisters and friends alike." (Letter July 13,1831)

Mary Euphrasia had also been sorely tried by the death of her loved ones; first her father when she was 10, then her mother when she was 17 years of age. She also lost three older sisters and of these she especially mourned Emilie, who died at 15, when Rose Virginie was 9 years of age.

As foundress her health left much to be desired. Portais tells us, "Her life held together by a miracle. Early in life she developed liver trouble which impeded her digestion and forced her to a very light diet all her life. Hardly enough to keep her alive, much less carry an her prodigious activity of every day." (11,242)

During her first years at Angers, from a letter of Father Alleron dated July 14, 1831, we learn that Mary Euphrasia was undergoing harsh interior trials such as a penetrating insight into her nothingness, her misery. She was plagued by desolation, dryness, temptations and anguish of soul. At this time he wrote her, "I see you are accepting the cross, but you are not yet embracing it with love." Her biographers tell us that obtaining grace for souls, Mary Euphrasia through her heroic fidelity to grace was also moving forward through these trials on her route to wholeness in Christ. She was learning that becoming-in-Christ is a painful, often rude process. And she was learning how to understand and to guide her sisters through the mysterious ways of the Spirit.

For, Mary Euphrasia was a skillful spiritual director for many of the sisters. In a letter of 1866, Mother Peter learned from her that no sister had ever confided an inner suffering or pain that Mary Euphrasia herself had not experienced. And she added, "We must learn to keep the secrets of our crosses to ourself and to bring only joy and sunshine to our sisters and to our girls." (Letter 1866 to Mother Peter)

"When our lamp burns with the oil of tribulation, its flame is ever so much more pure and bright." (Process 936)

Mary Euphrasia's own letters give some idea of her progress on the way of the cross:

On July 22, 1840, she wrote, "I have no light. I am completely in the dark. I have no more strength. I am overwhelmed with work and crosses. But graces too. God is with me."

In 1845, "Each day brings me new crosses, new sufferings. I feel them so keenly that I can hardly speak of them. If God did not sustain me, even my faith would be shaken."

In 1855, "There was a time when I was very broken and disheartened by adverse criticism and contradictions. Now, I listen, and with God's grace I remain serene and in peace."

And at the end of that same year she was able to say, "They do not see things as we see them. They believe they are right. The day will come when all will be clear. As for myself, I feel that the glory of God and the good of souls is my very life."

From that time on Mary Euphrasia counted her crosses by the "Laudates" she sang instead of by her earlier "Fiats." She confided to Mother Augustine, in 1867: "How I love to repeat the greeting of our Divine Savior: 'Peace be with you!' In fact, what can we desire but God, Souls, and His peace? Each day in Holy Communion I ask the Lord for His Eucharistic Bread, daily bread, and His peace for all my congregation!" (Process p. 382)

Eighteen years after Mary Euphrasia's death, Father Roux gave this beautiful testimony. In the Process: "Seeing her always serene and so gracious, one would never have imagined that the Cross occupied such a great place in her heart and in her life. However, this interior martyrdom which she suffered raised Mary Euphrasia's soul to a sublime identification with Christ Jesus." And Mary Euphrasia embraced the cross as a prelude to new life, in hope. She was known as the "mother of hope" even in her lifetime.

What may be difficult for us to fathom is the anguish Mary Euphrasia suffered in not being able to keep pace with the urgings of zeal in her heart, with the vision of her mission with which God favored her. She herself often said, "Zeal devours me interiorly." The thought that souls were unable to know, to love, and to feel loved, tormented her. She longed to reach all those who needed the love of the Good Shepherd. This was one of her special missions. It soon became as a martyrdom for her. It urged her on, gave her no rest day or night. At the same time it gave her a heart like Paul, like Jesus Himself.

Mary Euphrasia's life was like a crescendo of zeal, and at the same time a crescendo of inner pain in the form of contradictions, humiliations and rejection.

Bishop Paysant replaced Bishop Montault des Isles in the diocese of Angers. On August 12, 1841, Mary Euphrasia wrote to Sister John of the Cross: "We would need a light fulminating from heaven to enable our bishop to see God's work in its reality because everyone tries to influence him in our regard. Our career is certainly not strewn with roses". And to Sister Clement that same year she writes: "Just imagine a soul without any support, surrounded by enemies, torn by sufferings and over-burdened, and you see me in my present desolation. I received your dear letter just as I drank a most bitter chalice: that is, our bishop completely influenced by our enemies. Yesterday what desolation I experienced. O my God, I thought at first I was dying. But no, I am still living in order to suffer more for God and to be able to console you, my beloved daughters." (Secret of Sanctity, p. 103)

Bishop Paysant, however, came to respect the mission of the Good Shepherd and gave Mary Euphrasia and the sisters some valuable advice and support. After only two years in the diocese he died suddenly. (Ibid)

In 1842, Bishop Angebault became bishop of Angers. Then began for her a veritable way of the cross for each new foundation. In fact, the very existence of her institute was threatened by this man until the end of her life. This conflict with the diocese of Angers and with her bishop was her great cross. It was a suffering which according to Father Roux "she bore as coming directly from God's hand." And she bore it patiently and humbly for 27 years.

Mary Euphrasia had known what it was to suffer with the Church during the revolution of her childhood and early religious life. To suffer with the Church was her glory. She loved the Body of Christ, she loved Christ's ministers. But to suffer-at the hands of the Church was bitter indeed. And it especially bore on the sacred mission she felt keenly urged to pursue, the "holy work," "God's work," as she called it. At the same time, to be cursed by those you have loved and still love is, also, unbearable pain.

Her sisters of her beloved Refuge and the sons' of St. John Eudes whom she so esteemed fought her, and rejected her. On two occasions she went to Tours to the Convent of the Refuge in an effort at reconciliation - she whose mission was reconciliation. But she was refused entrance. Bishop Angebault died in 1869, one year after her own death. Three years before her death, Father Le Dore, assistant general of the Eudists, was sent by their chapter to visit Mary Euphrasia and bring about reconciliation. He became a witness in her cause for beatification.

In addition, the conflict between her local Church and the Church of Rome in her regard was doubtless an intense suffering. Accepting it as she did, in humility and patience, she was capable of a heroic forgiveness that freed her completely. This cross could have crushed her and destroyed her work. In fact such a hope was explicitly expressed by her persecutors. (Letters, Process, RP) The glory of God and the salvation of souls, the longings of her life, constantly urged her on.

A few considerations may be helpful here:

Mary Euphrasia saw the central government she was inspired to organize to be a practical necessity. She looked to the signs of the times. Many vocations were coming, but she needed immediate help. An exchange of sisters with other houses of the Refuge was not allowed. She had tried that with Tours, Caen and Nancy. De Neuville had offered 2,000 francs for a temporary loan of a sister. Bishops and civil leaders were clamoring for foundations. There was need, moreover, to assure unity in goals and in spirit while expanding communities for the sake of the Kingdom. Unity among communities with a central government would foster support, renewed vitality, creativity and initiative. Mary Euphrasia feared segregation, aloofness and isolation of individual convents.

She had no initial intention of founding a new Order but the Holy Spirit led her in that direction. The opposition of the Eudists and of the Refuge also forced the issue. When they understood they could not prevent the generalate, they put pressure on her to bring her to establish an entirely new Order. They wanted to have nothing to do with her. Mary Euphrasia had loved her vocation to Our Lady of Charity. In several letters she said she loved all the particulars of that life. She would want nothing changed. And she would only make changes if the Church in Rome ordered her to do so.

At this point in time she could have taken an entirely new approach. In reality, she retained a form of life that balanced community, prayer and ministry. With her council she proposed some minor changes in dress. From the official title of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge they retained "Our Lady of Charity" and broadened it to her own Gospel spirit by adding "Good Shepherd". This may seem a minor addition, but in reality it gave a whole new spiritual orientation and philosophy to the new Order.

A remarkable change was the establishment of a central government which united all the communities into one world-wide community, This gave unity in diversity, broader vision, support, vitality, creativity, expansion.

Mary Euphrasia pursued this undertaking, often so painful, with wisdom, tact, and an inner compassion for those who did not grasp her intentions. She was humble, but she was sure of her inner inspiration, and she had many supporters. In reality, Mary Euphrasia's sense of mission overrode all other inclinations and compromises. She felt sent and urged to concretize what her mission called her to do, no matter what the cost. Father Georges, Eudist, writes, as for the generalate, it had at its source the most tremendous and unrelenting passion, that of the salvation of souls. (p. 72)

Mary Euphrasia believed in the Lord of history. She wrote, "Those who wanted to destroy us have succeeded in founding us all the more securely in the Church. In fact, it is the Church herself who has founded us." (Dec. 23, 1835) And the Church has formally declared her "Foundress of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers". (Decree, Gregory XVI)

Eighteen years after her death, the Tribunal saw in Mary Euphrasia a "prophet of universality in Gallican France". In this she was 20 years ahead of her time; they saw in her a "prophet of ecumenism". A central government would foster both of these values. The judges of her cause for beatification were impressed by protestant and secular authorities requesting foundations of the Good Shepherd in their countries. They were impressed by children of all religions and races being cared for. (In Cairo at that time there were children of 15 nationalities and 9 different religions.)

Simultaneously, Mary Euphrasia was one of the pioneers "liberating" religious orders of women from the limited horizons in which they operated. The Sisters of the Sacred Heart and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd were establishing a precedent for religious women not attached to an order of men. This was something new in the Church. The novelty of women heading a whole congregation had not been duly worked out. The French Bishops who dealt with them were both tainted with Gallicanism and without understanding of the rights and duties of these new congregations. One can excuse their ignorance, but the painful treatment meted out to the two foundresses is a blight on the history of the period. For Mary Euphrasia it extended for 27 years. (cf Secret of Sanctity pp 104-114 ff)

CONCLUSION:

Especially in her role of foundress can we detect most vividly the interplay of nature and grace in Mary Euphrasia and trace her becoming-in-Christ to fulfillment.

Besides the spiritual trials, which Father Roux states accompanied each of the new foundations, each one also called for heroism from many other points of view, particularly on account of the opposition and obstructions Mary Euphrasia encountered. Her soul cried out in anguish, but she stood firm. She said she felt she was experiencing the agony in the garden, was often called to its fiat, and then to enter into its peace. An ocean of peace, a peace of fortitude.

In each distressing situation, Mary Euphrasia prayed. She consulted. She discerned the Will of God - in the signs of her times. She then pursued His Will with courage and tenacity

through personal suffering and difficulties. She did not blame. She did not criticize or retaliate. She did not reject in turn or break off. She remained anchored. in her faith and hope. (PR manuscript) Her charism of mercy was vividly active in her responses to these sufferings.

This became her usual mode of procedure. It began with the foundation of Angers. It took great foresight and great courage to found. as it did to resurrect the title of the Good Shepherd effaced by the Revolution. Mary Euphrasia not only made it her own, she brought to it a "spirit... a philosophy. a spirituality. which pervaded her life and activity and that of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd. A spirit, a philosophy, a spirituality which perdure.

Mary Euphrasia loved God passionately and her" sisters and brothers" around the world. Her zeal reached out particularly to the deprived of love. the broken-hearted. all who suffered. Her zeal. her love, was marked by tenderness, shaped by the tenderness of God, a delicacy of affection and mercy. patience. hope. trust. compassion. Fidelity, pardon. Hers was a tenderness which defines mercy and compassion for it equalizes, raises up the self-worth. consoles. encourages to the end. and heals and saves. Her tenderness of zeal had no limits for its source was a loving intimacy with God in His Trinity. where she pressed His will of salvation to her heart.

Her own experience of God's tenderness led Mary Euphrasia to desire that everyone be able to enjoy this grace. Her sisters first of all then all the unloved and without hope. How often she spoke of tenderness!

Hers was a lively faith in Christ Jesus in the Eucharist where she learned to live His Shepherd ways. imbibed His attitudes and sentiments and her child-like love for Mary who always leads to Jesus.

Mary Euphrasia shared generously and lovingly in the Cross of Jesus. The cross became a symbol of hope. of new life. Of resurrection. of joy. Her great strength was her faith, coupled with a profound love of the Church, the People of God. She considered herself a daughter of the Church. (Process pp 99. 104. 106; Portais p. 44: Pasquier p. 15; Georges p. 9), Moreover, she discerned the humanity of the Church and compassionated it, and the divinity of the Church and loved and respected it, no matter who represented it.

Mary Euphrasia's times were, in a certain sense, similar to ours: an era of change, of renewal, of rebirth.

Mary Euphrasia believed in the energies of life that God gives us. Because she loved and because she acted on that love she was capable of building 'up something in which each of us can find herself. But it took the heroism of her faith and the zeal of her charity to generate in the Church the Congregation of the Good Shepherd. It took her exquisite understanding of the Paschal Mystery to be able to bear the cross in her own person, as she did, so humbly and so graciously, in hope.

In rendering her life to the God she had loved and served in His little ones, Mary Euphrasia trusted in God's mercy for herself on account of her vow of zeal.

Mary Euphrasia died at 72 years of age on Friday, April 24, 1868 at 6:00 in the evening. All her last day on earth until 3:00 p.m., when she seemed to lose consciousness, was as usual a self-giving to others in her own gracious, grateful and loving ways: benefactors, Sisters from England and nearby communities, those of Angers and even a delegation of her Contemplatives, and all who gathered around her.

Just a few days earlier, Mary Euphrasia had bequeathed to us: "Love for the Cross and zeal for the salvation of souls". A few hours before her "tranquil agony" (AP 1334), she had said: "Just love! Her loves were: God, the Church, the Institute which was God's work, God's children, souls! - And she had added: "Promise me you will always love one another". And, "Tell all my beloved daughters that I embrace each one with tenderness, that at this supreme hour not one is forgotten." (Georges xi).

Sensing she was losing consciousness, she exclaimed: "Adieu, my beloved daughters. Adieu to the Institute". And she spoke no more during the three hours of her "serene agony". - "Her passing was so serene, in fact, that we hardly noticed it. And in spite of our own agony, pain and tears, we experienced a profound inner joy: We had the certitude that our Mother was with God". (AP 1334) Truly, the food of her life had been, "To work without ceasing for His glory and the salvation of souls." (Mirror of Virtues, p. 33)

It is in this way that the "Rose of Noirmoutier" blossomed unto eternity!



Marble statue of Saint Mary Euphrasia and group in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, by the Italian sculptor Giovanni Nicolini, 1942.

PART III

A Jubilee of Sainthood

The Church has a policy and follows an established procedure similar to a legal procedure (or process) to examine and to prove the holiness of those persons she proposes as examples to encourage us to live a full Christian life, to measure up to Christ. An outline of this procedure, which has developed down the centuries, gives opportunity to measure somewhat how seriously the Church scrutinizes her saints.

The Process is divided into two sections and phases. The first is usually called the Ordinary (or Informative) Process; the second, the Apostolic Process. The first takes place in diocese or dioceses in which the person lived and died. The second or Apostolic Process takes place in the Vatican. Both call for sworn - in eye witnesses who testify for or against the holiness of the person in the living out of the theological and cardinal virtues and all they imply; and in the case of a religious such as Saint Mary Euphrasia, her vows. Each witness must give concrete proof of all depositions by producing precise facts or documents.

The Apostolic Process also requires sworn-in eye witnesses unless the cause in question is based on historical evidence. This could be due to a long lapse of time or to the disappearance by death of eventual witnesses in the ordinary process. In case there are no living witnesses, the procedure must depend solely on historical evidence. St. John Eudes' cause was an historical one.

For the declaration of sainthood by the Church it must be proved beyond doubt that the servant of God lived the theological and moral virtues and all they imply, continuously and on every occasion however difficult it might have been, and to a degree superior to the ordinary mode of operation usual to Christians and fervent religious. Mary Euphrasia's lived experience of these is amply described in the booklet "Mirror of Virtues" which became part of the Process of Beatification.

Mary Euphrasia died April 24, 1868. She was 72 years of age. Seventy-two years after her death she was canonized for her heroic life of love for God and souls.

Eighteen years after her death, June 12, 1886, the Chapter of our order was convened in Angers for the usual six-year election of a superior general. Ninety-five capitulars were present. Mother Mary Peter de Coudenhove was reelected for the fourth time. The capitulars requested her to petition the Holy See to begin the cause of beatification of Mary Euphrasia. They affirmed that they were "witnesses of her heroic virtues, and that they had experienced the effects of her powerful protection." (RP) One among them had brought reports on three miracles attributed to Mary Euphrasia's intercession, together with all the relative documentation. The desire of these sisters was shared by many prelates and bishops. In fact, 150 bishops had promised their support to the cause.

A written request to the Holy See was prepared and placed on a table in an isolated room, and any capitular who so desired was free to go there at any time and sign it. After three days the petition carried 95 signatures - all of the capitulars. Among these were nine French, two Alsace-Lorraine, five German, five English, four Irish, three African, three Asian, twenty from the United States, two Canadian, and four from Latin America. They represented 4000 Good Shepherd Sisters, 1500 Contemplative Sisters in 158 convents, and 20,000 young, girls, children and women.

It is interesting to note that 90 of the signers had known Mary Euphrasia personally. All knew of the difficulties the motherhouse encountered with the diocese of Angers. By this time, a book had been published in Chile under the title Espirito della Madre M. de Sta Eufrosia Pelletier. It had been translated also in French in 1886 under the title of Mirroi des Vertus de la Reverende MM de Ste Euphrasie Pelletier. Fondatrice. and in English in 1888, Mirror of Virtues.

The superior general delegated two sisters from among the capitulars to take the petition personally to the Holy Father. The Provincial of Chile, Mother Augustine of Jesus Concha, and the Superior of San Felipe, Teresa Letocart, were chosen. They were to take with them also the book just mentioned and an authenticated copy of the canonical process of the miracles attributed to Mary Euphrasia with a declaration written by the Archbishop of Santiago.

The two sisters arrived in Rome in September, 1886, and went immediately to our Cardinal Protector, Cardinal Monaco de la Valletta. After hearing them, the Cardinal personally presented them to Pope Leo XIII. The Cardinal was well aware of the strained situation between the diocese of Angers and the Good Shepherd. Moreover, Pope Leo XIII himself, as bishop of Perugia, had written twice to Bishop Angebault requesting Good Shepherd Sisters for his diocese. He had no answer from the bishop. The Holy Father showed great interest in the sisters' request. He personally sent the documentation he had received from them to the Prefect of Rites, Cardinal Bartolini, asking his opinion on the case. After several days of study, Cardinal Bartolini responded to the Pope suggesting that the Bishop of Angers, who was then Monsignor Freppel, be requested to organize the Tribunal of Inquiry and to open the Ordinary Process of the reputation of sanctity of Mary Euphrasia: on her life, her virtues and her miracles.

Leo XIII said he was happy to confirm this decision. He again received the two sisters in audience and expressed his desire that the Cause meet with great success. The first step was to find a postulator who would begin organizing. A Trappist in Rome, Father Marie Edmond Obrecht, was appointed. (Incidentally, Father Obrecht visited our convent at 35th Street, Philadelphia, in the spring of 1924. He later became abbot of Gethsemani.)

The machinery then got into motion. The Bishop of Angers was officially informed by the Sacred Congregation of Rites of the desire of the Holy See. He was astonished by the request of the Good Shepherd since it had not passed through him. Bishop Freppel, therefore, sent his vicar to the convent to warn the sisters of the difficulties the cause would encounter, the uncertainty of the results and the cost. But the sisters remained firm.

In the meantime the Postulator had begun his work in Rome. Initially, he began to gather information and to suggest to the petitioners what documentation would be required, such as letters, books, publications, writings about the servant of God together with all of Mary Euphrasia's writings and letters, etc. He also drew up a list of questions the petitioners were requested to answer and which were also used in the official examination and cross-examination of witnesses by the Tribunal. He suggested several rota lawyers who would defend the case legally, and he proposed a Cardinal Promoter in Rome who should present the Cause and uphold it. The

Superior General. of course, needed information on the different persons proposed in order to make a selection. The Postulator also began to formulate the list of witnesses he desired to be questioned officially by the Tribunal.

Mother Augustine of Jesus Concha, who had carried the original petition to Rome, remained in Angers over two years to prepare the Cause. She was the liaison between our Congregation and the diocese of Angers and the Postulator in Rome. She was also a sworn-in eye witness.

The Bishop too was organizing the Tribunal of Enquiry. This was composed of the Presiding Judge, two assistant Judges, a Promoter who was also the fiscal promoter of the diocese, a notary, a secretary, and assistant secretaries. It was the duty of the Judges to question and cross-question the witness in the presence of the Promoter, notary and secretary. The Promoter also formulated, secretly, interrogations to which each witness was obliged to respond with proofs and documentation. He also prepared a list of witnesses and counter-witnesses.

The Promoter was appointed by Bishop Freppel of Angers. He made sure that all the witnesses who might be contrary to the Cause were called in to testify. We learn from the Report on the Process that he himself "was contrary to the Good Shepherd on account of his love for Bishop Angebault, .. and that his "questions were provocative and at times even sarcastic" (RP trans. p. 7). A vice-Postulator was also appointed by the Bishop though it was the right of the Superior General to appoint him.

The Ordinary Process was opened in February, 1887. Seventy-two witnesses were called in to depose under oath. Of the seventy-two, thirty were men and forty-two were women. Of the seventy-two, forty were presented by the Postulator and thirty by the Promoter, who, as we already said, was contrary to the Cause. Twenty-six of the forty-two women were Sisters of our Congregation. All took the oath to say only the truth and all the truth under pain of excommunication. During the three years and eight months of duration of this Ordinary Process, there were 216 sittings with the witnesses. The documents studied were taken from the archives of the diocese and the archives of the motherhouse together with all of Mary Euphrasia's letters to whomsoever they were written. All had been collected from the four winds. Her teaching in her Conferences.

the first volume of her Life which Monsignor Pasquier had just finished writing, the Constitutions and Rules, the little book, Mirror of Virtues, and all the reports and certificates on the miracles attributed to Mary Euphrasia were thoroughly studied. There were fifteen miracles attributed to her at the beginning of the Process and thirty at the time of the publication of the Process in September, 1890.

An interesting point in the Report on the Process which was written by two members of the Tribunal is this:

Reputation of sanctity, according to law, does not exclude objections and oppositions to it: Benedict XIV (De servi Dei beatif. II, Chap. XLI) is very explicit on this point, and he quotes the example of Our Lord and of the saints who were calumniated. One of the necessary questions in fact in the Process is this: Did the servant of God proposed for canonization suffer persecution?'

In fact, if on the first Holy Saturday the legitimate religious authority of the Jewish nation had opened a Process on the reputation of Christ's sanctity, there is no doubt that the greater majority of the witnesses would have confirmed the sentence of Caiphas, 'He was a seditious person, a rebel who excited others to revolt, a liar, an imposter, a Samaritan, a schismatic, an ambitious one who wanted to be king, made himself GOO, was imprudent unto folly (John, VIII), rapacious, and a wine biber.' He certainly had no reputation of sanctity in his own country.

What a coincidence! These are the same objections and the only objections raised against the foundress of the Good Shepherd. (Trans. p. 4)

The Report tells us (p. 6) that the reaction among the secular clergy of Angers to the opening of the Process on Mary Euphrasia's sanctity was surprise, and among some, indignation. They were all well (or badly) informed of the administrative conflicts between Mary Euphrasia and Bishop Angebault. Some considered the Process a provocation:

This woman had always been in conflict with her bishop; she was wanting in obedience and respect to her bishop and his

delegates; this woman was cunning and a liar in her administrative affairs, proud and ambitious in her imprudent enterprises, a flatterer and a hypocrite with the ecclesiastical dignitaries, playing craftily the Pope's authority against the bishop's authority, and the bishop's authority against the Pope's authority. She was a schismatic from the Refuge from the beginning and opinionated right to the end, a politician always....

"Some moderate tongues hid behind the statement: 'Never did we hear in Angers the foundress of the Good Shepherd was a saint. We heard praised her intelligence, her capacity, her strength of character... yes, but her sanctity, never.'" The least offensive conclusion was that, "The Process was premature, and that one should have waited at least until after the death of the contemporaries and friends of Monsignor Angebault." All this was the talk of the secular clergy before taking the oath. They also ascribed negative motivations to the Bishop and his appointments in the Tribunal." "He has named a sick Presiding Judge and an enraged Promoter so as to let the Cause drag on forever." In fact, the sick judge died during the second year and only five witnesses had been examined at that time! I quote again from the Report on the Process:

...What a surprise the Tribunal received on hearing these witnesses declare they knew very little, and some, absolutely, 'nothing' about Mary Euphrasia. Not one of them spoke as an eye-witness. Nor could any of them prove the accusations they had learned by hearsay. They produced no facts, no concrete examples of disobedience, irreverence, cunning pride, despotism, imprudence, temerity, or any other objection they had made before taking the oath. (Trans. 8)

In the Report the Judges sum up their enquiry. They give us an overall picture of their conclusions after hearing all the witnesses: ("In what concerns the positive part of the Interrogations, from the unanimity of the depositions, it is evident the servant of God, Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, practiced all the virtues and each of the theological and moral virtues, all and each of the four vows pronounced at the Good Shepherd to an eminent and heroic degree by continuous acts, on every occasion no matter how difficult it was, with intensity, facility, and constancy right up to her death ...")

"During their depositions each witness 'painted the picture' of the difficulties. the trials. and the perpetual contradictions. the calumnies and the outrageous treatment which the servant of God had met with besides the physical and moral suffering she endured in this motherhouse ..."

"...each witness, under oath, proved his or her statements on the Servant of God. with precise facts and as eye-witnesses, sometimes as witnesses personally involved. The witnesses testified with proofs to:

the purity, the veracity, the power and perseverance of her faith

the firmness and the intrepidity of her hope which nothing could discourage

the ardour, the zeal, the activity, the greatness of her charity for God and neighbor

her intimate and continuous union with God in spite of her incredible occupations

her ardent love for Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist and her zeal for the cult of God

her unshakeable attachment to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff and her respect for prelates and ecclesiastics

her horror of sin and all imperfection

her ardor for religious perfection and the observance of the rule

her pure motivation

her devotedness and tenderness for her neighbour, for her daughters, for the penitents, and for the poor and the humble

her horror of pettiness and criticism

her admirable love for her enemies and her delicacy and heroism in pardoning all injuries

her perfect prudence in her enterprises and in her government. the discretion of her speech and her moderation; she was an enemy of extremes

she knew how to cede when necessary and to succeed with meekness

she possessed circumspection and wisdom; she undertook nothing without due reflection and counsel

her superior lights in spiritual matters and in the direction of souls

her keenness for justice and her love for her duty to God and to her neighbor

her unshakeable fortitude and her invincible constancy in the midst of the greatest difficulties and the most violent persecutions

her fortitude united to a constant meekness and kind-heartedness which infused enthusiasm into her religious companions

her temperance and the perfect discipline of her passions. In spite of her lively and sensitive nature, she remained always self-possessed and serene

never was she seen to be irritable or discouraged

her moderation, her tireless work, and her self-forgetfulness

her profound humility no honor or insult could tarnish

The perfection with which she lived her vows was proved with touching and at times extraordinary details."

'The servant of God had received extraordinary supernatural gifts. Among them:

the gift of very high and very powerful contemplation

the gift of numerous prophetic enlightenments

the gift of miraculous powers during her life time

the gift of power in words

the gift of discernment of spirits and insight into souls

the gift of a holy death

the gift of miracles after death."

"Her humility, her recommendations to mutual charity, to zeal, to unity, to attachment to the Holy See, left in these eye-witnesses an ineffaceable memory." (21)

The judges gave an evaluation of the witnesses from a moral and legal stance. Their evaluation of Mother Augustine Concha is interesting. She had thirty-six sittings before the Tribunal during six months. Here is what they write about her:

"One (sister) had lived continuously 110 days near the Foundress during the last year of her life. But this religious, Provincial in Chile, had a superior intelligence especially concerning spiritual things; she had received very exceptional confidences from the Foundress who had also foretold her future to her. She had consulted all the sisters, all the documents, especially the Annals of the Congregation; she had edited the MIRROR OF VIRTUES and also gathered the material for the Book of Instructions of the Servant of God.

Finally, favored herself with extraordinary divine communications, she had done all she could to obtain the opening of the Process only under the impulse of an interior word which the Lord made her hear many times in Santiago and in Angers: 'I desire to glorify my' faithful spouse who glorified me so much!'...This religious is an absolutely exceptional witness by the authority of her holiness, of her Wisdom, of her lights and of her greatness of soul...The Tribunal was deeply impressed during the examination of this great religious and does not hesitate to consider her the First witness in the Cause." (RP p. 17-18)

In order to avoid any delay, in the opening of the Apostolic Process, the Judges in the Report then made a comparison of Mary Euphrasia with another servant of God from Angers whose cause

was being put forward ostensibly by Mary Euphrasia's enemies. The following points stand out in this comparison:

"The Servant of God, Mary Euphrasia, had immediate knowledge of her mission, and from the very beginning of it, she embraced the universe. She saw and predicted the total extension of her mission. All her divine communications took place in colloquies of her soul with the Lord. Day by day, at Holy Communion, the foundress of the Good Shepherd consulted and received her answer with clarity and precision without any dubious equivocality or error"

"Mary Euphrasia excelled in her love for her enemies, and considering the kind of accusers and accusations, how delicate and meritorious was this virtue in her!"...(p. 45)

"In the midst of the greatest successes, as in the face of the most fearful catastrophes, and in violent surprises, Mary Euphrasia remained calm, self-possessed, confident in God, moderate and prudent. The action of grace carried her out of herself to the works of zeal, to the well-being of others, to love. She became enthusiastic only for the good of souls. She was never discouraged. She was never indifferent, she never rested. She worked day and night not only to govern but to extend her mission; and on her deathbed the 110 convents, far from satisfying her zeal, seem to give her a new ardor to spread even further the Kingdom of God." (p. 46)

"The Foundress of the Good Shepherd forgot herself entirely; she lost herself in the work of God. It was as if her person had become an instrument...She remained calm, smiling, serene when favoured with incredible honors by the Roman Pontiffs, Cardinals, Roman princesses, the King of Piedmont and his ambassador, the King of Bavaria and the Court of Tem Heim, but above all by her own daughters whose veneration and esteem gave a special significance to the hand-kiss which was customary in the Refuge and the Good Shepherd. (Some of the priests criticized this on her part). At the same time while being insulted to her face and loaded with indescribable humiliations, Mary Euphrasia remained the same: serene, meek, silent, always strong for what was good." (p. 47)

"The spirituality of the servant of God, the foundress of the Good Shepherd, was always consoling, fortifying, enthusiastic for whatever was good. It was a spirituality of love, of zeal, of confidence, of looking to the future in hope. There are some incomparable

passages in her Instructions, and nothing more sublime than her pages on 'The Government of Love'. Her word is challenging, stimulating. After having listened to her, the sisters were determined to face anything for the salvation of souls..." (Trans. p. 46)

In recommending the Cause of Mary Euphrasia to the Holy See, the Tribunal expressed itself in these terms:

"This is a glorious Cause on account of the growing importance of an ecumenical work in the Good Shepherd and because of an impressive number of miracles attributed to Mary Euphrasia; we should make reparation for the considerable wrongs that canonical errors have done to the Good Shepherd...Mary Euphrasia has been harmed in reputation; her Congregation in its development.

For in reality, it is her fidelity to the Holy See and to the constitutions approved by the Holy See, that brought on the servant of God those long and painful trials and the diminution of her reputation which this Process has proven to be unjust." (p. 39)

The judges do not hesitate to state that Mary Euphrasia's Cause is probably the most important cause of the nineteenth century:

"on account of the greatness of the mission of the Good Shepherd

on account of the genius and the heroism of Mary Euphrasia, the foundress

on account of the great number of miracles attributed to her intercession

and the living - witnesses and doctors ready to testify to them."

At the close of the Ordinary Process, which lasted three years and eight months from February, 1887 to September, 1890, all the documentation was notarized and sent to the Holy See for examination and for judgement concerning the immediate opening of the Apostolic Process -its postponement or its rejection.

Included was the preliminary work of the Promoter of the Faith (or the devil's advocate as he is called), and the work of the consultors and of the Postulator. Pope Leo XIII then ordered the Introduction, or opening of the Apostolic Process with a decree signed in his secular name. It was December, 11, 1897, three years before the legal date. This is extraordinary when we consider the 1700 pages of Acts and depositions and the 2000 pages of documents. In fact, the Tribunal of the Ordinary Process had considered it impossible to begin the Apostolic Process before 1905, given the considerable amount of documents and of work to be done.

Then followed the work of translating, ordering, printing, and study of all the depositions, the examination of the 'validity of the Ordinary Process, the examination of Mary Euphrasia's writings by separate consultors, the second questioning of the living witnesses, the study, discussion, and deliberations on the objections and questions posed by the devil's advocate.

Then came the most crucial point in the Cause: consideration of the heroicity of the virtues lived by Mary Euphrasia. Three different commissions were formed to study every aspect of the depositions. All objections and questions had to be answered and favorably explained with documentary evidence through rota lawyers. There had to be no doubt about Mary Euphrasia's heroic virtues. These commissions are called the Antepreparatory, the Preparatory and the General Congregation. This last is held in the presence of the Holy Father. Twenty-seven years had now passed since the beginning of the Apostolic Process!

The General Congregation for Mary Euphrasia was held on January 29, 1924. The Pontiff, Pope Pius XI, having heard the members, reserved time to himself for reflection and prayer, but he set a date when he would make known his personal opinion. He chose Sexagesima Sunday, but he reserved twenty-five days for prayer and study.

Here is an example of how the Pope personally studies the case even after hearing the working of the commissions: at this period in the Cause of Blessed Maria Droste, the Postulator requested a copy of every life we had of Mother Divine Heart in French, English and Italian, and whatever pertinent writings we possessed. He told us not to expect any of them back because the Holy Father (this was Pope Paul VI) tears out all the pages he considers important and

carries them with him. Any moment he has free, even during his brief walks, he takes them out to study them and to pray over them.

On Sexagesima Sunday, February 24, 1924, the decree on Mary Euphrasia was ready and signed by Pope Pius XI. Printed copies were then affixed to the exterior walls of twenty-five parish churches in Rome. The decree was also published in the Vatican and the secular press. Dissenters had a legal time in which to come forth with formal statements of opposition. Since there were none, the Decree on the heroicity of the virtues Mary Euphrasia had lived was promulgated on March 6, 1924. It was on this occasion that Pius XI delivered an allocution, treasured by Good Shepherd Sisters. (See Appendix I)

Once the heroicity of virtues had been promulgated, the examination of Mary Euphrasia's miracles began. Two miracles were chosen from among the many presented and attributed to her. These were examined, discussed, deliberated and pronounced upon after the procedure of translating and printing, and the validity of the first process had been ascertained. Two commissions were involved in the final stage of this procedure. One was a commission of Cardinals, who examined and pronounced by, vote from a canonical stance, and the other, a commission of experts in the medical field, who examined and pronounced or voted from a medical stance.

Once the miracles were approved, the final step to the Beatification was to set the date for the public ceremony. The date was set by Pius XI after consulting with our Superior General. Mary Euphrasia was publicly declared "Beata" on Good Shepherd Sunday, April 30, 1933, the jubilee year of Redemption. On this same day in Angers, her tomb was opened and her body canonically authenticated.

Nine years had passed since the declaration of heroicity of her virtues! Seven more years were to pass before her Canonization. During this period, two recent miracles were processed in the same way that was required for the beatification.

An impressive tribute was given to Mary Euphrasia in the "Vatican Osservatore Romano" of June 5-6, 1939, quoting the Congregation of Rites. It was to the effect that Mary Euphrasia had lived the two great commandments to the highest degree as if she had received a personal command to do so from heaven, and her "effective mission was so superior to human capacity that we must

acknowledge a striking miracle of God who filled her with grace to such a degree that she personally-up to her holy death-and now through her daughters, has become forever a cooperater of Divine Mercy"

It was on Ascension Thursday, May 2, 1940, that the Church, through the Vicar of Christ, Pope Pius m, inscribed Mary Euphrasia Pelletier in the Directory of Saints of the Catholic Church and publicly proclaimed her to the world as a model and advocate.

A young lay woman, Gemma Galgani, froin Lucca, Italy, was canonized with her. In his homily for the occasion, Pope Pius XII said it was both fitting and providential that these two should be united in this solemn and glorious ceremony of canonization in St. Peter's basilica in Rome. Both Mary Euphrasia and Gemma are especially linked to the redemptive mission of Christ: Mary Euphrasia, actively spending her whole life that all might share more fully in the total redemption of Christ; and Gemma, mystically bearing in body and person some of the sufferings of Christ crucified.

The Ascension of Christ seemed so appropriate a day for their glorification too, because both were being publicly acclaimed as witnesses to His grace and His Spirit's sanctifying power. In both, Christ re-lived His paschal mystery.

Saint Mary Euphrasia!

Saint Gemma Galgani!

It was Pope Pius XII's first canonization.

The Bull of Canonization, on authentic parchment, was signed by Pope Pius XII and the Cardinals in Rome and sealed with the lead Seal of the Fisherman.

June 2, 1886 - December 11, 1897 - April 30, 1933 - May 2, 1940. Fifty - four years had passed since the ninety-five capitulars petitioned the inquest on Mary Euphrasia's holiness. Fifty-three had passed since the Tribunal in the diocese of Angers had begun the canonical procedure which would bring before the world the heroic sanctity of the foundress of the Good Shepherd.

October 21, 1942 is another memorable date. When visiting the basilica of St. Peter's in Rome, one cannot help noticing the huge statues of many great saints in ornate niches embellishing the inner walls. Only one of these niches was still available when Mary Euphrasia was "catalogued with the saints". It was offered to the Good Shepherd for a statue of our Foundress. Our Cardinal Protector of that time, La Puma, suggested a well-known Italian sculptor, Giovanni Nicolini, who was asked to prepare some sketches. After he had read and pondered over Mary Euphrasia's life, Nicolini drew up three versions which he thought expressed her Gospel message. These were sent to our generalate in Angers where one with three figures was chosen: Mary Euphrasia, a sister sitting at her feet, and a lamb.

The artist's idea, which he brought to life in carrara marble, is a dynamic group combining strength and serenity- It expresses action and contemplation, teaching and welcoming. The sister, modeled by Sister Mary Euphrasia Littel, now of the Washington Province, is sitting at Mary Euphrasia's feet with curved outstretched arms in an attitude of reverence, of love, of tender anxiety and waiting. She seems to reflect the soul of our saint who is transmitting to the sister her own ardent, urging and reverent zeal for souls. The posture of the lamb, so expressive of our mission in the church, denotes a questioning, scrutinizing, almost defensive attitude while in the act of surrendering to such great love.

Sister M. Angelique Handley, from the St. Louis Province, whose sister (pen-named Gabriel F. Powers) wrote the biography Redemption, was model for Saint Mary Euphrasia, and the entire community of Bravetta in Rome walked, ran, stood for the effect of the movement of the habit for all the versions of the statue. Sr. Angelique was procurator in Rome at that time and handled all the affairs concerning the statue.

The artist carved the statue from one block of carrara marble at Carrara in Northern Italy. On June 16, 1942, he brought it to Rome by truck and left it near the great obelisk in St. Peter's square. His work was finished. When transported from the obelisk to below the niche it was intended to occupy, the same method and tools were used as Michaelangelo had invented for transporting and hoisting his own precious marbles.

The statue is located on the left-hand side of the basilica, near the "confession", and St. Mary Euphrasia looks down on St. Peter's tomb and the whole area of the papal altar. The statue was unveiled and blessed in its niche on October 21, 1942. It was the feast of St. Ursula, the name day of our then superior general. On the same day, one who had done much to further Mary Euphrasia's cause of beatification and canonization, Mother John of the Cross Balzer, died at our convent in St. Paul, U.S.A. Coincidence? Or rather, mission accomplished!

We can also recall Sister Augustine of Jesus "Concha of far away Chile, inspired by the Lord to initiate the procedure of recognition of our saint's remarkable imitation of Jesus Good Shepherd. She had longed to see this day, but died January 13, 1928. Our Saint Mary Euphrasia had such faith and trust in God's loving Providence! How consoling and stimulating to experience the same loving Providence of our God, still active in our Good Shepherd history-knowing it will always be just as loving and active!

Epilogue:

What a gracious surprise from the Lord to find myself in Rome in good time for the Jubilee celebration of Saint Mary Euphrasia's canonization, May 2, 1990! I knew nothing of this special celebration when planning my trip. I arrived in Rome, en route to South Africa, April 30. The solemn liturgy of the Mass was offered at 5:00 p.m., May 2, in St. Peter's Basilica, in the transept in which Pope Pius XII had publicly enrolled her among God's saints. The window of the Holy Spirit dominates this area under which are enthroned St. Peter's Chair and the papal cathedra. Cardinal Poupard officiated with thirty concelebrants. There were very many participants, religious and laity, of all languages. Saint Mary Euphrasia was looking down on the whole scene not only from heaven, but from her memorial statue just to the left of the altar. It was very fitting- and very exceptional in my experience - to see our Superior General, Sister Mary Gema Cadena, mount the lectern and deliver a twenty-minute Spanish explanation of the festivity and the meaning of the statue. The Provincial of Rome, Sister Ester Gervasi, followed her, delivering the same in Italian.

Cardinal Poupard then opened the liturgy while the choir, mostly of Good Shepherds, sang in four voices. During the liturgy, they alternated most appropriately in Italian and Latin. The Cardinal delivered his very arresting homily alternating in French and Italian. Someone took my photo during the distribution of Holy Communion so I have a personal proof of my presence there. Sister Elise Rasch very thoughtfully and kindly had the picture sent to me.

At the conclusion of the beautiful liturgy, all present were invited to proceed to the "Consolata Fathers Missionary Cent.er", a ten-minute walk from St. Peter's, near the Porta Cavalleggeri, (through which Saint Mary Euphrasia entered the City on her first visit to Rome, 152 years earlier, June 4, 1838). A happy group of people faced the heavy Roman traffic and soon reached the Center . We all enjoyed the reception, and then a surprise offered by a group of French girls from Pau. These young girls dressed in flowing robes executed figurative dancing representing Reconciliation, Charity, Pardon, Communion. It was all very touching. At 9:00 p.m. we all returned home, refreshed, renewed, and with hearts full of gratitude for the wonders of God we had experienced in the soul and mission of our foundress and saint.

May 2, 1990, must have been 8 day of blessings for all of us Good Shepherds, those we serve, our co-workers and associates, and all those persons who celebrated with us around the world. One of our sisters asked me if I had been invited to Rome for the occasion. When I answered, "No, I just happen to be here", she exclaimed: "Only God could have arranged that you be here. And He did. And I knew He would!" I didn't! But I thank God for his gracious and tender Providence in his special gift to me.

Perhaps some of our sentiments have already been expressed in these words of Gaetan Bernoville:

"May all mankind, O saint Mary Euphrasia, give thanks to the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church that you have been set upon a candlestick instead of remaining hidden under a bushel, as is the usual fate of women."....

"You accomplished your stupendous plan in the deepest humility ...You threw yourself on your knees and you wrote: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord'. And in the invisible world the MAGNIFICAT chant was continued, for 'He has regarded the humility of his handmaid.'

"In you we see both the saint and the woman, perfectly proportioned and perfectly blended. When invited to follow you on the royal road, to conform to your life as to a model, we might very well be discouraged... by your faith which moved mountains, by your irresistible hope, by your charity which embraced the whole world, and by that fortitude which nothing could daunt. But then we remember your kindness to all who suffered, your affectionate disposition, your womanly nature which was not ashamed of sorrow and tears, and we are reassured in our hope of imitating you and not inclined sadly to go away, like the rich young man in the Gospel." (Bernoville, Shepherdess of Souls, p. 179)

However, many questions flood my mind as I terminate this memorial in honor of the Jubilee of the public declaration of our foundress' sainthood and her entrance into the Church's "Hall of Fame", for our veneration and emulation. I leave some of these questions to you, who read this, for your reflection, with a fervent prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God whose tender Providence is without end:

How many persons in the ecclesiastical world, in our congregation, in other religious orders and among the people of God have had a

part in Mary Euphrasia's life-process and in her glorification? This is probably difficult to say.

How many of God's people have been influenced by Mary Euphrasia's virtue and holy life is also impossible to say.

But, what impact does Mary Euphrasia's spiritual heritage have on the world today?

What impact does her spirituality have on her Congregation today?

What is her spirituality?

Only we of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd can answer these questions. This is what we desire to share with our "sisters and brothers" around the world as did Saint Mary Euphrasia.

APPENDIX

I Allocution of Pope Pius XI

II Sources

I ALLOCUTION OF POPE PIUS XI

In Answer to the Address of Bishop Rumeau, Bishop of Angers

On the occasion of the Proclamation of the Heroicity of the
Virtues of Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia Pelletier

March 6, 1924

Monsignor, with all our heart we unite ourselves with your joy, and we congratulate you on this ray of light which descends from heaven on your diocese, on this religious family which was so marvelously born in your diocese, and which as you have just said so eloquently, is one of the most precious ornaments of your flock. We rejoice heartily with you, daughters of the Venerable Pelletier, daughters of Our Lady of Charity of the divine Good Shepherd, a title so full of meaning, so rich with all the sweetness of the charity and the mercy which descends from the Divine Heart upon all mankind.

We congratulate you on your Apostolate, which, like the stars which shine all over, is spread over the world and produces everywhere its precious fruits of redemption and regeneration.

It has been said that the universe is so resplendent with divine poetry because a divine Mathematician, a divine combination of numbers, regulates its movements. This seems to be very true, for numbers have also their poetic sense.

It is perhaps true that of all the concepts of the universe - the architectural, the mechanic concept-the most authentic, the most admirable, that nearest to the Creator, is the numerical concept. *Omnis fecit Deus in pondere, in numero et mensura*

And we have here, precisely, a magnificent example of the poetry of numbers: in less than a century we can count 282 communities, institutes worthy of the name, with more than 9,000 religious, over 9,000 great souls, noble with the highest nobility, that of Christ, who dedicate themselves to the very work of Jesus, the King of Charity, of Jesus, Shepherd of souls.

In the warmth of this setting we see flourishing and multiplying many services in favor of over 60,000 persons, who are being guided

to regeneration and to moral redemption. We cannot find words to express in a fitting way the happiness and the satisfaction these magnificent statistics arouse in us.

You have wisely indicated. Monsignor, the deep sources which nurtured this abundance of fruit and spiritual riches; they are the gifts of nature and grace, of wisdom and holiness which the Venerable Servant of God put at the service of her charity in order to assure its fecundity - a Prodigious marvel of interior gifts, a harmonious fusion of the most beautiful and resplendent virtues.

Among these virtues you have indicated those which emerge as characteristic and you present one which seems especially striking in our Venerable-her heroic attachment to the Holy See, to Holy Church, to the Person of the Sovereign Pontiff, a virtue more remarkable in her times when Gallicanism was strong in its orientations and customs-very different, truly, from what the Heart of God wanted. This is a very opportune statement, for it was in Peter's bark that our Divine Redeemer, our Shepherd and Saviour, sailed forth; it is in Peter's bark which carried Him, and when He seems to be sleeping during the violent storm, this ship is safe, safe even during His divine slumber.

Together with this virtue, so many other giant virtues really make this woman worthy of admiration. For in her, all the virtues seem to be crying for eminence, and at first sight one does not know which one takes the prize. This is very encouraging for us on whom weighs the responsibility of decreeing justice and honors of heroism, honors of the altar, to such great servants of God! It is a divine weight, it is true, but placed on human shoulders! Therefore, confronted by such a rich life and such solid fruits, our judgment is rendered relatively easy.

Even though our task is lightened, we cannot refrain from reflecting on the great things, and in these great things-we do not hesitate to say this - what great difficulties! We are thinking of that great prudence which embellished this soul called, yet so young, and so suddenly, to such a vast area of government, among people with such delicate and difficult situations, people not easily guided or led.

We are thinking of the situation in which Mother Pelletier found herself all her life. in a situation of conflict between two authorities, to her venerable and sacred, and to whom she never failed in devotion.

She had to obey and resist, resist and obey. She needed and desired to venerate and to love, but it was impossible for her to satisfy the conflicting demands of both sides and to follow all their directives!

At the same time, during these tensions, this torment which tortured her to a degree hard to gauge, she maintained her serenity of spirit, her clairvoyance in her pain; she perceived always clearly, with sure intuition all that was capable of leading her safely through. God is truly admirable in His Saints! She is truly the valiant woman: "Who will find the valiant woman? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her." Hers is a perfection which seems to surpass all human and earthly capacity.

Your joy is fully justified, Monsignor, and yours is equally if not more so, - you the daughters of our Venerable Servant of God, who continue her apostolate and mission.

Again we heartily repeat our congratulations, and together with you we gather a new Word, a supreme Word which comes to us from this magnificent life, as though it were written by God's hand and put before our eyes. She beckons us towards the supreme ideal our Divine Master Himself proposes to us: Be perfect as your heavenly Father is, perfect! No greater word, nor more sublime ever came to mankind or ever will. Naturally this does not allude to a measure of holiness, but to an example. In regard to this example, we have few to compare with what the life of our Venerable Servant of God offers us today. On one hand, a more than virile super-human strength, on the other hand, all that wealth of virtues that variety of perfections which such a life implies, and what an abundance of good works. And on the other hand also, this welfare of so many others.

The words of Scripture come spontaneously to our mind: "His mercy is above all his works." It is mercy which commands all, which triumphs over all, which directs all to its end. Mercy is the most tender, the most touching expression of the Heart of Jesus, which He Himself wants us to remember by calling Himself the Good Shepherd: Ego sum Pastor Bonus - the Good Shepherd Who, anxious about His sheep, goes out to seek the strayed ones and carries them back on His shoulders and on His heart, rejoicing because He has saved them.

In the light of these divine analogies and these divine marvels we find not only reasons for glorifying God and our Venerable Servant, but also lessons not only for our edification but examples also for our imitation.

"Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful!" (Estote misericordes, sicut Pater vester caelestis misericors est.) Let us interiorize this message from the heart of God and from His servant, and keep it deep in our own hearts and let us make it a plan of life! And may this sublime invitation be the seal on our pious rejoicing for the Gift of such a magnificent example of life and of virtues: Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful!

In order that the fruit of these holy reflections may be ever more efficacious and abundant, let our Apostolic blessing rest upon them, a blessing We give wholeheartedly... especially to you, O daughters of this family twice-holy - Our Lady of Charity and of the Good Shepherd-whose life is made up of the purity of Mary and the Mercy of her divine Son; especially to you who are continuing the mission of your venerable Foundress and developing it with such great zeal and efficacy; to all your communities, your services, to all the souls to whom you direct your concern and who experience its precious efficacy .

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