

# THE GIRL FROM NOIRMOUTIER



*A heartwarming story of a young girl who is a model for the woman of today, identifying in the struggle for equality.*

## ***About the Author***



Sister Joan Marie Looby was born in Dublin, Ireland and had her initial formation at the Mother House of the Congregation in Angers, France. She was missioned to South Africa for several years and has been in Canada for a number of years. She pursued studies in South Africa, Rome and North America. Sister is currently national administrator of the Good Shepherd Sisters in English-speaking Canada.

The Girl From Noirmoutier  
*Saint Mary Euphrasia Pelletier*

by

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This is a mini-story about a warm-hearted woman who was entrusted by Jesus, the Good Shepherd, to carry on his mission of reconciliation in the world of her day, to bring his compassion, concern and love to women in need of affirmation of their worth and dignity. It is the story of a woman who is a model for women today in their struggle for equality and justice. It is hoped that it will arouse your curiosity so that you will wish to learn more about our foundress, Saint Mary Euphrasia Pelletier who was born on the island of Noirmoutier, off the west coast of France on July 31, 1796

However, our story doesn't begin there. No, it begins before the creation of the world when:

***God chose us to be his very own,  
through what Christ would do for us;  
he decided then to make us holy in his eyes  
without a single fault, we who  
stand before him covered with his  
love. His unchanging plan has always been to  
adopt us into his own family  
by sending Jesus Christ to die for us.  
And he did this because he wanted to***

***Now all praise to God for his wonderful kindness to us and his favour that he has poured out upon us, because we belong to his dearly loved Son. So overflowing is his kindness toward us that he took away all our sins through the blood of his Son, by whom we are saved; and he has showered down upon us the richness of his grace, for how well he understands us and knows what is best for us at all times. (Eph. 1 :4-8)***

In time our story began almost 2,000 years ago when Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, took on our humanity and lived among us. He came ***"to bring good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart, to seek and to save what was lost."*** In a word he came to reconcile humanity to God and to be our reconciliation.

As we page through our source book, the Good News recounted to us by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, pausing here and there for some quiet reflection, we meet Jesus bringing the healing touch of his love to all whom he encountered and in a special way to those ostracized by society, the poor, the downtrodden, the tax collectors, the prostitutes and the sick. He offered them the gift of life, the gift of

his love, his compassion and his care. He called each by name. Did he not say, on at least one occasion,

***I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. ?***

He awakened in all whom he encountered a sense of their worth and dignity as the beloved children of God.

In our consideration we linger at the meeting between Jesus and the woman in the house of Simon the leper. She found Jesus, threw herself at his feet, washed them with her tears and dried them with her flowing tresses, the mark of her profession. Jesus, in opening his heart to her, revealed his compassion and warmed her with his love. He was gentle, understanding and welcoming. He accepted her for who she was. Though he did not reproach her for her way of life, he looked her squarely in the eye and told her that her many sins were forgiven. Then he told her go in peace.

Some chapters on, in the same gospel, we find Jesus meeting Zaccheus, the tax collector. A Jew employed in the Roman civil service, he was hated by the people, unloved, unwanted, deprived of human companionship. Wishing to see Jesus without being seen, he climbed a sycamore tree and tried to hide in its foliage. Thus he had a ringside seat, unseen by

Jesus and the townspeople or so he thought. Jesus stopped, looked up at him and calling him by name, asked him to leave his perch and come down and break bread, a sign of friendship. Zaccheus seems to have been a short man but surely he grew a few inches as he set off down the road, arm-in-arm with his newly acquired friend. One of the most touching things about this scene is the action of Jesus. He showed no surprise on finding Zaccheus in a most surprising posture for a grown man but put him at ease, treating him as a son of God. Jesus accepted him where he was and as he was. He did not preach to him but called him friend. We know the reaction of Zaccheus as light and love flooded his being, he became reconciled to his God, to himself and to his neighbours. Salvation had indeed come to his house!

And how about the meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well as recounted for us by John. A tired and thirsty Jesus sat by the well while his disciples went into the town to buy bread. A woman came to draw water. Jesus allowed her to break into his space and solitude so that he might show her his solicitude and compassion and touch her with the reconciling power of his love. What was unusual about this incident was that she was a woman and a Samaritan. Jews did not speak to strange women in public nor did they relate to Samaritans. Asking a favour of her, a drink of cool

refreshing water, allowed Jesus to get into a conversation with her. Then he accepted her as she was but, at the same time, he challenged her way of life. Speaking to the depths of her heart, he invited her to reconciliation with her God and he supported her through the process. In her turn she became a reconciler of others as she ran to spread the Good News and lead the townspeople to the Messiah.

There are many similar incidents to be found in the gospels but space does not permit us to examine them. In all his encounters with people who were on the fringes of society Jesus treated them as the unique persons they were. In each case the person experienced the healing touch of the Good Shepherd. In his love Jesus let each know he was a friend.

By now you are probably asking what all this has to do with the foundress of the Good Shepherd Sisters, for you expected to be introduced to her on the first page. So far she has been mentioned once only. Instead you have found yourself looking at Jesus and how he related to people in his day. It was Jesus who gave Mary Euphrasia the task of continuing his mission of reconciliation in the world of her day. He called her to be his concern, compassion and love for those in whom the beauty of God's image was most obscure. St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians:



***Some of us have been given special ability as apostles, to others he has given the gift of being able to preach well; some have special ability in winning people to Christ, helping them to trust him as their Saviour, still others have the gift of caring for God's people as a shepherd does his sheep, leading and teaching them in the ways of God.*** (4:11)

Jesus has asked us, who claim Mary Euphrasia as our foundress, to strive to incarnate these same qualities in our lives so as to portray the Good Shepherd for the wounded people of our day. And now we introduce you to our saint who, in baptism, was named Rose Virginie.

***YOU ARE GOD'S WORK OF ART,  
CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS TO LIVE  
THE GOOD LIFE.*** (Eph.2:10)

Rose Virginie, eighth child of Doctor Julien and Madame Anne Pelletier was born when the French Revolution was at its height. The family had to leave their home in Soullans in March, 1793 to settle on the island of Noirmoutier where they hoped to live in relative safety. Madame Pelletier had been blacklisted by the revolutionaries because it was rumoured that she had harboured a priest, who was later martyred.

The penalty for helping a priest was death.

Born on July 31, 1796, Rose Virginie was baptized that same day behind closely drawn drapes and locked doors. The complementary baptismal rites took place when a priest visited the island one year later.

Rose was a happy child who grew up in a home in which much love was given to each of the children. She was cherished by her parents and older brothers and sisters for was she not their **rose**?

A child of the great outdoors, Rose delighted in the beauty of creation, being drawn to God through nature, the trees, the flowers and above all the rolling waves of the sea. She spent countless happy hours on the sandy beaches, delighting in feeling the wind blowing through her hair and the spray from the huge waves, splashing on her face as they crashed and dashed against the rocks.

She was a daring child, leading her companions in their games and in their mischievous deeds. She was fearless and determined, always ready to take a risk, qualities which would be an asset to her in the leadership of her Congregation through almost forty years.

She was an affectionate child, giving and receiving love with ease. From an early age she had a deep and fervent love for the Church and in particular for the person of the Holy Father for whom she prayed daily.

She learned compassion and concern for the poor and the homeless from her parents. Frequently she helped her mother care for the needy and saw in her father, the gentleness of God for suffering humanity as he tended the waifs and strays he brought to their home. From an early age love for the unfortunate stirred within her heart.

**UNLESS A WHEAT GRAIN FALLS ON  
THE GROUND & DIES, IT REMAINS  
ONLY A SINGLE GRAIN. (Jn.12:24)**

These words of Jesus were to play a dominant role in Rose Virginie's life. In 1805 her sister, Victoire Emilie died. Rose was inconsolable. Two other girls had died earlier. Some of the grains of wheat had been planted in the soil. But the Sower was to ask still more as he thrust the seeds deeply into the depths of the earth for, the following year her dearly loved father went home to God. Rose was only ten years old and in that instant the grain of wheat died. She had always loved both parents passionately; she never did things by halves so now she mourned her dead father and, at the same time, grieved for the pain and sorrow of her beloved mother.

Soon after this bereavement her older sister, Anne Josephine returned to the mainland to live with their aunt, leaving Rose Virginie to be the comfort and solace of their mother.

**YOU ARE A LETTER FROM CHRIST...  
WRITTEN... WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE  
LIVING GOD. (II Cor. 3:3)**

In 1807 Rose Virginie received her first Holy Communion. In later life she would tell her sisters that it was then that she heard the call of Jesus, inviting her to follow him and to give herself to him for the sake of his suffering people. She responded in the depths of her being to this initial call: "Here I am, Lord." One year later, for the first time since the Revolution, the bishop came to Noirmoutier and Rose Virginie was confirmed, receiving a further outpouring of the Spirit.

A few months later the Ursuline sisters from Chavagnes arrived in Noirmoutier to open a school. Rose Virginie was among the first to enroll. Thereafter, each day saw her setting off for school. Her thirst for knowledge was being satisfied but at what cost. Hitherto she had been able to roam the island, free as a bird. Now she was confined to a school room for hours on end. The sisters recognized in her a child of remarkable ability. They had great hopes for her, though often her determined will caused them to pause and wonder. One day she voiced her intention of becoming a sister realizing that, with her particular character, she would have to be "broken in!"

It was during these years with the Ursulines that her love for Scripture deepened and developed, especially her appreciation of the gospels on which she reflected at length. With her compassionate, warm, tender heart she easily identified with the Jesus of love and mercy whom she met in them, the Jesus who showed compassion and concern for Mary Magdalene, for the Samaritan women, for the woman condemned for adultery, for Zaccheus. There was a response and an echo in her heart.

**I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE IN MIND  
FOR YOU, PLANS FOR PEACE AND  
NOT DISASTER. (Jer.29:11)**

In 1810 Madame Pelletier decided to leave Noirmoutier and return to Soullans. Her childhood friend, Pulcherie Choblet had founded a school of the Christian Association in Tours so she considered this just the place for her daughter. Rose would be given a sound education and the regime of the boarding-school would fashion and restrain her as she was showing signs of independence and stubbornness.

With a heavy heart Rose Virginie bade her island home goodbye, a sad farewell to all that was dear to her, her home, her family graves, her childhood friends, the Ursuline Sisters and many more. It has been said that to really know somebody one needs to

see where "the grapes have grown." Certainly those of us who have been privileged to visit Noirmoutier have learned much about our saint from the island. Rose felt the parting from her mother keenly. As she kissed her goodbye she did not know that they would never meet again in this life!

She had already heard the call of Jesus in her heart and with her eyes fixed on him she embarked bravely on this new phase of her life. She must have often wondered what kind of tapestry the Lord was weaving of her life - there seemed to be so many dark shades in it, so many shadows, so many hours of sorrow. Her years at the Christian Association were not happy ones. Pulcherie Choblet, though well-meaning, was misguided in her handling of teenage girls, as a result of which they were prone to insubordination. This caused great suffering to the sensitive soul of Rose Virginie. During one notably bad period at the school she was the instrument God used to reach the girls who were in a state of near open rebellion. She went among them, praying with and for them, listening to them, appealing to them in Christ's name to become reconciled and surprisingly they responded!

Her lonesomeness for her mother, for her former friends, for her island home, grew day by day; the seed was being buried evermore deeply in the soil. Then the Lord set his sun to shine on it in the person of Pauline

de Lignac, one of the members of the Institute who became her friend. Only five years her senior, Pauline de Lignac was a young woman of exceptional character. This friendship would endure throughout their lives.

**IF IT DIES IT YIELDS A RICH  
HARVEST. (Jn.12:24)**

In 1813 Rose suffered the greatest cross of all. She had not seen her mother for over three years and she would never see her again. Worn out by the sufferings of the Revolution, by the early death of her beloved husband and so many of her children, Anne Pelletier died. Rose Virginie was not at her deathbed nor indeed at her funeral. She was inconsolable as she stood with Mary at the foot of the cross. Grief stricken she felt abandoned and so alone. Her brother Constans had died the previous year. Having recently lost her own mother, Pauline de Lignac reached out to the broken-hearted girl and was a source of comfort to her. But soon, she too was to leave Rose Virginie's side. It having become impossible for her to live her religious life in the ranks of the Christian Association, which was in a constant state of depression, Pauline decided to become an Ursuline sister. In her heart she hoped that one day Rose Virginie would join her. It was a terrible blow to Rose but she weathered it, keeping her eyes fixed on Jesus and suffering in silence. She was very much in process of being

"broken in," being formed in the school of suffering. Day after day she was being invited to follow in the footsteps of her Lord.

**YOU ARE PRECIOUS IN MY EYES...  
AND I LOVE YOU. (Is. 43:4)**

Some months later, conscious that the hour had come, Rose Virginie sought in Scripture and in prayer for the guidance of the Spirit with regard to the institute to which Jesus was calling her. She felt deeply drawn to suffering humanity. Now at Tours there was a community of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge, an order which had been founded by Fr. John Eudes in 1641. (He would be canonized in 1925). These sisters were concerned, caring women who witnessed in their lives to the tender love of their God. Their mission was to girls and women who, because of character, behavioural or social difficulties, needed special guidance and training, compassion concern and love. The number of sisters at the Tours convent had been sadly reduced as they had been dispersed during the Revolution. They now numbered but a handful and most of these were elderly and unable to be active in the ministry of the congregation. They lived in great poverty.

Rose Virginie learned of their life and their apostolate and became convinced that it was here that the Lord was calling her. She prayed, reflected, sought counsel



and towards the end of 1813 wrote to her sister Anne Josephine whose husband Mons. Marsand, was her guardian, telling them of her desire to become a Sister of the Refuge. To her dismay he refused permission. He would not hear of his young sister-in-law entering the Refuge community and suggested other congregations. She continued to pray, to suffer and to hope. She had an interview with the superior of the Refuge convent who recognized the admirable qualities of the young girl and promised to receive her into the community on condition that she had her family's consent. In 1814 Rose Virginie visited her sister and family and managed to get her brother-in-law to agree to her entry into the Refuge community. His sole stipulation was that she could not profess vows until she was 21 years of age. She gratefully and gladly agreed to this and once more set off for Tours.

**I HAVE CALLED YOU BY YOUR NAME,  
YOU ARE MINE. (Is. 43:2)**

On October 20, 1814 Rose Virginie Pelletier entered the convent of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge in Tours. That was a special day for the sisters, as it was the feast of the Divine Heart of Jesus, which cult Fr. John Eudes had fostered and spread in the Church. What better day could have been chosen for Rose's entry. Her heart burned within her as she stepped within the portals of the convent; from now on her

heart would beat in unison with the Heart of Jesus in her love for all deprived of hope and love.

Her love for Jesus continued to grow and her gifts of nature and grace became more and more evident. On September 8, 1815 Rose received the habit of the congregation and a new name. When God called Abram to be the father of a great nation he changed his name to Abraham. Jesus gave Simon a new name, that of Peter, when he declared him to be the rock on which he would build his Church. In future Rose Virginie would be known as Sister Mary Euphrasia. She too would do great things for God.

After Jesus, her great love was for the girls and women confided to the care of the sisters. In her approach to them she brought with her the tender compassion of the Jesus of the gospels, the reconciler of humanity with the Father. She delighted also in the sisters of the community and in turn was their delight. Her joy, enthusiasm and youth were so refreshing and brought new life to them, such as they had not imagined. How she listened to the older sisters and drank from the well of their wisdom.

On September 9, 1817 Sister Mary Euphrasia made her covenant with Jesus and vowed to follow the chaste, poor and obedient Christ forever. As a novice she had already made a private vow of obedience, a rare

privilege but maybe not so strange when we realize the calibre of she who had made it. In addition she vowed to labour for the salvation of souls. This vow of zeal, special to the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge (and later to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd) personifies God's love in action through the medium of persons consecrated to him.

**I AM AMONG YOU AS ONE WHO  
SERVES. (Lk. 22:27)**

Sister Mary Euphrasia ministered to the girls and women who were confided to the care of the sisters until 1825. She sought to disclose the beauty of God's image in each of those with whom she came in contact and endeavoured to awaken in them a sense of their worth and dignity. Then God called her to a different form of service. The sisters elected her to be their superior when she was only 29 years of age. As spiritual leader of the community she fostered the growth of the sisters, she was among them as one who served. She extended the convent buildings and those of her dear girls, providing more space for all. She founded a contemplative branch within the congregation, initially named for Saint Mary Magdalene and subsequently named the Contemplative Sisters. She considered this society to be the crown of her work. The founding of a new society within the parent

house was but a beginning to the establishment of many new communities.

**A CITY BUILT ON A HILL- TOP  
CANNOT BE HIDDEN. (Mt. 5:14)**

In 1828 Sister Mary Euphrasia was re-elected superior of the community at Tours. What a transformation had taken place during the previous three years. Tall new buildings stood where formerly there had been small, shabby ones; the institution was filled to overflowing. Young girls, anxious to answer the call of Jesus to enter into a deeper relationship with him for the sake of his suffering people, flocked to the novitiate. The Tours convent was in a flourishing state and the name of the young superior was becoming known far and wide.

In 1829 the Bishop of Angers desiring a convent of the Refuge in his episcopal city, invited Sister Mary Euphrasia to make a foundation there. Her name had been brought to his notice by Madame d'Andigne, a gracious and wealthy lady who admired Mary Euphrasia's zeal and enthusiasm. Later on she would do everything to encourage the saint and the work of the congregation, accompanying the foundress on many long and painful journeys across France and as far away as Rome.

Mary Euphrasia consulted her sisters with regard to the Bishop's request and met with strong opposition.

She waited and prayed. Eventually the sisters consented to her travelling to Angers with another sister to examine the situation. She did so and received a warm welcome from Bishop Montault. She was introduced to Count Augustine de Neuville, whose mother had just died, leaving a sum of money to purchase a property to house a community of sisters with a mission to women exploited by society. He was to be a loyal, staunch and firm supporter of the work throughout his life and was given the title "father of the Good Shepherd." For the rest of his life he gave himself, his time, his prayer and his fortune to further the work of the foundation at Angers.

Sister Mary Euphrasia visited the place set aside for a convent and institution and liked what she saw. It would need a great deal of hard work to make it possible but she had never been one to shrink from a challenge. She returned to Tours, firm in her conviction that it was indeed the will of God that a foundation be made in Angers. She had to invest time easing the fears of the community. Finally she was able to set off once more, this time with five sisters and a novice who were to make up the community. She was to see them settled in, inaugurate the apostolate and then return to her own house at Tours.

The poverty of the Angers house was great, truly it was founded on the cross. The house was named the

convent of the Good Shepherd in memory of a house that had existed prior to the Revolution. For Sister Mary Euphrasia this was a dream come true. The words of the prophet Ezechiel were forever before her:

**I will look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong. I shall watch over the fat and healthy, I shall be a true shepherd to them. (34:16)**

With the beginning of the ministry the foundation seemed to flourish. The official opening took place on July 31, 1829. However after Mary Euphrasia returned to Tours the Angers community and apostolate languished. In 1831, Mary Euphrasia's term of office as superior of the Tours community having ended, she changed places with the superior at Angers. Her administration was to expire only with her death and it would extend her area of mission to the farthest corners of the globe.

**WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE WHO CAN BE AGAINST US? (Rm.8:31)**

After her return to Angers the sisters, and the girls and women in the institution, took a new lease on life. Suffering was never absent as the mission was rooted in the cross and called for total self-giving. As St. Mary

Euphrasia once exclaimed, "***O house of Angers, how many tears have you cost. But the more we suffer, the more God is glorified.***" Her great desire was to bring the consolation of the Good Shepherd to as many of his wounded sheep as possible. She was utterly selfless in making his concerns a living reality in her life. In July, 1833, with a zeal that sought to embrace the whole world, she established a preservation section where the sisters devotedly watched over innocent children and young girls who had been removed from doubtful circumstances. Meanwhile the rehabilitation centre was proving to be a real asset to many older girls and women. She also hastened to found the Contemplative Sisters, the powerhouse of prayer of the institute.

Having broadened the fields of ministry, Sister Mary Euphrasia was faced with having to confide the direction of the various sections to inexperienced sisters. Nothing daunted she appealed to the convent at Tours for more sisters but met with a resounding refusal; likewise with the Refuge at Nantes. The houses of the Refuge were autonomous, once founded they subsisted alone, self-supporting and self-governing. Mary Euphrasia prayed, waited pondered in her heart. She knew what she wanted to do but awaited the confirmation of the Spirit.

At the close of the year she accepted an invitation to found a convent at Le Mans. Her commitment to this

foundation was a commitment to a destiny of expansion far beyond local frontiers. She grew in awareness that without a Mother House and a central form of government the congregation would not grow and expand so as to be at the service of the Church. She discerned that there should be a central novitiate from which sisters would be sent on mission as required and there would be interchange among the communities.

Mary Euphrasia had long considered that Fr. Eudes had never desired that his work should remain static and inert, in what appeared to be an arrested stage of development. The idea of a Generalate began to take shape in her mind. She continued to pray to the Spirit for enlightenment.

Her bishop, Monsignor Montault, was in agreement with her and recommended the matter to Rome. In the interim there was a clause added to the existing constitution "that all houses founded henceforth shall depend upon this house of Angers."

A storm of protest arose in the dioceses in which the Sisters of the Refuge were already established and indeed throughout France as a whole. Mary Euphrasia was accused of wishing to seize control of the already existing Refuge convents. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Her sole concerns were the glory of God and the reconciliation of as many persons as possible; nothing else mattered.



**BEHOLD THE HANDMAID OF THE  
LORD. (Lk. 1 :38)**

Sister Mary Euphrasia invited the houses of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge to form part of the Generalate but they declined. She suffered greatly, as she had deep regard and affection for her Refuge sisters and continued to love them. It is understandable that they felt anxiety. Their spiritual leaders lacked the vision, the courage and the daring of the saint.

On the feast of the Assumption, 1834 while the decision was still pending in Rome and the storm was at its height, she wrote a letter to Rome which she commenced:

**Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it  
be done to me according to your word.**

She ended it:

**I desire only the greater glory of God. If  
the Sovereign Pontiff and Your  
Eminence see any difficulties to  
establishing a Generalate, I submit  
myself humbly to your decision.**

She always looked to Rome as her guiding star and was one of its most loyal daughters. She left this legacy to her sisters as part of their heritage.

The letter found its way to Cardinal Odescalchi, the Cardinal Vicar. For years he had wanted to found a community in Rome to care for the neglected girls and women of the city. He had just celebrated Mass in St. Peter's Basilica for that intention. Coincidence? We do not think so. Rather it was the Good Shepherd paving the way for the establishment of the Congregation in the Eternal City. The Cardinal saw the letter as an answer to prayer.

After much opposition the decree approving the Generalate was granted by Pope Gregory XVI on January 16, 1835. This was the birth of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd.

Drawn by the image of the merciful and loving Good Shepherd of the gospels, many young women applied to enter the novitiate. There they were introduced to the spirituality of the Congregation which is centred on the person of Christ, and devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary in which the vow of zeal, proper to the Institute finds its source. Good Shepherd zeal is an evangelical spirit of welcome, kindness, understanding and loving service, which gives witness that one person is more precious than the whole world.

**I WILL MAKE YOU THE LIGHT OF THE  
NATIONS SO THAT MY SALVATION  
MAY REACH TO THE ENDS OF THE  
EARTH. (Is. 49:6)**

In 1838 Cardinal Odescalchi extended a warm welcome to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd to make a foundation in Rome the centre of the Catholic world. What a place it had in the heart of the foundress. The thrill of expectation was hers. It would be a joy to bring the Good Shepherd Congregation to the city of the chief shepherd of the flock of Christ, to be at the service of the Church which had confided a share in her mission of reconciliation to the Institute. Mary Euphrasia escorted the sisters who had been chosen for the new foundation. Pope Gregory XVI received her in audience and her happiness was complete. He was delighted with the crystal clear quality of her soul, her simplicity, her humanness and her great concern for all denied hope and love.

Within a few years the Congregation expanded into Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Holland and across the sea to England and Ireland. Mary Euphrasia then turned her eyes further afield and soon groups of sisters were setting off for the far away lands of Egypt, Arabia, India, Sri Lanka, the United States, Canada, Chile, Australia. With unwearied love she watched over the houses of the Congregation of which there were 110 on her death. The letters which flowed from her pen to the sisters show the extraordinary love which she had for each one. Though she rejoiced in the spread of the

Congregation, the moment of leave-taking was always a heartbreaking one, repeated again and again. The attachment of the sisters to the Mother House and especially to the general superior was deep and lasting.

Although living in the 19th century, Sister Mary Euphrasia had a breadth of view which projected far beyond her time. Her vision was global. In addition she was a born therapist in her handling of the girls. Had she not modelled herself on the Jesus of the Gospel, learning from him how to relate to others? She encouraged the sisters to adapt themselves to varying circumstances.

**One town, one foundation must not be sufficient for our zeal which should embrace the whole world. One little corner of this earth should no longer enslave our heart. ... As for me, I no longer wish to be called French. I am Italian, English, German, Spanish, American, African, Indian. I belong to every country where there are souls to be saved.**

**I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA,  
THE FIRST AND THE LAST, THE  
BEGINNING AND THE END. (Rev. 22:13)**

Worn out by the extent of her activities, by her sufferings and crosses, especially the antagonism of the bishop of Angers, Monsignor Angebault, from 1842 until her death in 1868, and by the illness which, unknown to her sisters, had afflicted her for a number of years, Rose Virginie Pelletier entered the joy of her Lord on April 24, 1868. Her agony extended over several weeks, but to the end she consoled her sisters and was engaged in regulating the affairs and concerns of the Congregation. One of her last acts was to authorize the foundation of a house of the Good Shepherd in St. Paul, Minnesota.

As the Angelus rang out through the courtyard on the evening of April 24 she went to meet Jesus the Good Shepherd. What a meeting that must have been! How lovingly he must have greeted her. She had reflected him, so valiantly and faithfully, to so many, her sisters, the benefactors of the congregation and especially to the rejected women of her day.

**THOSE WHO TURN MANY TO  
RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL SHINE LIKE  
THE STARS FOR EVER AND EVER.**

**(Dan.12:3)**

Pope Pius XI beatified the girl from Noirmoutier, Rose Virginie Pelletier, on April 30, 1933. On May 2, 1940 in his first canonization ceremony Pius XII raised her to

the altar of the Church while the Sistine choir sang out "**Saint Mary Euphrasia, pray for us.**" She had once said, "**I mean to be a sister. I know very well that I will have to be broken in, but I mean to be one all the same.**" Indeed she had been broken in; the seed buried in the soil of Noirmoutier, Tours and Angers has borne much fruit.

**IF WE LIVE BY THE TRUTH AND IN  
LOVE, WE SHALL GROW IN ALL WAYS  
INTO CHRIST. (Eph.4:15)**

Today the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd numbers 6,000 sisters approximately. In addition there are hundreds of Good Shepherd Associates as well as lay collaborators. In the United States and Canada there are a small number of Companions of the Good Shepherd, women who live a consecrated life, in the spirit of the Congregation, in their own milieu. There are Good Shepherd convents in most countries of the world. Groups of houses form a province which is under the leadership of a provincial. Presently there are 48 provinces in the Congregation. The general superior and her councillors reside in Rome which is the seat of the central government.

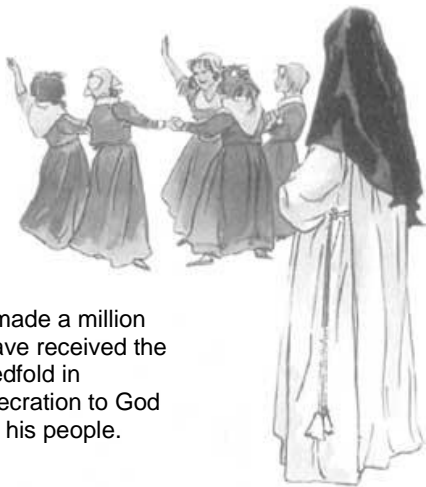
Good Shepherd philosophy is grounded in the belief that each person is of more value than a world; that each individual is loved infinitely by God and needs to

be free enough to know that merciful love. The mission of the Congregation ever remains that of reconciliation, the reaching out to persons, especially girls and women, marginalized by society, in an attempt to help them rebuild their lives.

We are living in an age of extreme individualism, a time in which people are preoccupied with looking out for number one! The measuring rod of most enterprises seems to be, "What's in it for me?" Some years ago a survey showed that the burning ambition of a number of young adults was to make a million dollars before they were thirty. Whether that has happened or not we do not know though it hardly seems likely. When Peter asked Jesus what reward he and the others would have for leaving all to follow him, Jesus replied:

**Everyone who had left houses,  
brothers, sisters, father, mother,  
children or land for the sake of  
my name will be repaid a  
hundred times over, and also  
inherit eternal life.**

**(Mt.19:19)**



None of us has made a million dollars but we have received the promised hundredfold in our lives of consecration to God and of service to his people.

**I have come so that they may have  
life and have it more abundantly.  
(Jn. 10:10)**

The End



