

UNITED FOR THE HOLY WORK

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity
of the Good Shepherd
Spirituality Commission

UNITED FOR THE HOLY WORK

Four early companions of

St. Mary Euphrasia

*Presented by
The Spirituality Commission .
Mother House of the Good Shepherd
Angers - May, 1990*

My dear Sisters

**"TWO NEW STARS OF SANCTITY
IN THE FIRMAMENT OF THE CHURCH"**

This is the title which appeared in large letters in the Observatorio Romano on April 28, 1940 in Rome, announcing the ceremony of Canonization of Mary Euphrasia Pelletier and Gemma Galgani on May 2.

It was the first canonization held by Pope Pius XII at the close of his first year as successor to St. Peter, and within the first eight months of terror and anguish in the world caused by the second world war. The canonization, therefore, was a special moment of singular joy for the Church, for the world and for the Congregation.

The Vicar General of the Holy Father arranged that at 11 o'clock on the morning of May 2, at the moment they would be proclaimed "Saints", the bells of all the churches of Rome and surrounding areas, would be rung for at least half an hour.

"We decree and declare Saints..." are the words of the Pope that resounded jubilantly in the resplendent Basilica of St. Peter, and ratified the proven sanctity of our Foundress, Mother and Model.

While celebrating the 50th anniversary of this event, we would like to ask her what was the secret of her success. Let us plead with her to open her heart more and more to reveal to us the energy that enkindled her zeal which knew no limits

Perhaps this little book will supply the answers to many questions. It is the fruit of the work carried out with singular interest and love by the Spirituality Commission (COME), composed of Sisters Nora Keaney, James Wilson, Leticia Cortes, Amanda Gomez, Denise Deschamps and Bernadette Egozcue, and presented initially in the form of conferences for reflection during the Plenary Meeting of Provincials (PMP) in June, 1989.

With immense joy I want to put into your hands this valuable material. It is a part of our precious heritage which will help us to celebrate with joy the 50 years of glorification of our Foundress, to admire the beauty of her spirit and make our own her great love for Jesus Christ, her consuming zeal which made her commit herself to the most abandoned of the world.

Today, more than ever, we need St. Mary Euphrasia to be the "Star" from the "firmament" that enlightens and guides the paths of the New Evangelization for those of us below so that we will be strengthened to

continue her "Holy Work".

With my gratitude, on behalf of the entire Congregation, to the Sisters of the Spirituality Commission, and my love to each one of you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. M. Gema Cadena". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, decorative flourish at the end.

Sister Maria Gema Cadena
Superior General

Rome, May 2, 1990

INTRODUCTION

These essays, brief biographical sketches of four of the early companions of St. Mary Euphrasia, are presented as companion readings to the articles on our spirit and charism written for the 50th Anniversary of Mother Foundress' canonization. The materials were prepared by the Spirituality Commission in Angers.

In the course of "returning to our sources," it became apparent that the spirituality of St. Mary Euphrasia was inextricably linked with the spiritual gifts of her first companions and followers. There would have been no "Bon Pasteur" if there had been no "founding community"¹ - that first small group which "understood, identified with, and supported" the implementation of Euphrasia's vision of a Generalate.

Perhaps, then, it can be rightfully said that these four women shared in a "community charism." Cada describes a community charism as "that particular complex of personal charisms which interacted with the charism of the founding person."

A reading of the correspondence between Mother Foundress and these four sisters reveals a unity of mind and heart which made them trusted collaborators in "the holy work" and veritable "pillars" of the Congregation. But each one also had her own personal gifts and qualities which gave the community charism a mosaic-like quality and a richness of scope we can now appreciate at a vantage point of over 150 years.

Sr. M. Stanislas Bedouet, Sr. M. John of the Cross David, Sr. M. Louis Royne, and Sr. M. Therese de Couespel differed from one another in age, educational background and social status, as well as initial religious formation. Stanislas and John of the Cross entered in Tours - the former as a choir novice a few months ahead of Rose Virginie, the latter as a lay sister when M. Euphrasia had become the youngest Superior of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge. Louis Royne joined the Angers novitiate when already 34 years of age, while Therese de Couespel entered at 37, the widow of a well-known officer and a belle of Angers society. Truly a disparate "cast of characters" to play out the drama of the founding of our Congregation.

1 Cada, Fitz, et al. Shaping the Coming Age of Religious Life (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979) p. 177

But the Lord chooses whom He wills. And when he brought these women together in the Angers of the early 1830's, the interaction of their gifts and the vision of Euphrasia brought forth the Generalate and a new Congregation that would spread beyond France and Europe within a few years. Stanislas founded the first two off-shoots of Angers: Le Mans and Poitiers. John of the Cross was sent to Nancy, thence to Munich, which opened Bavaria and all of Germany to the Good Shepherd. Louis Roynet founded Grenoble, then Rheims - extending the work of the Generalate in two great French cities in less than three years after Le Mans separated from the "Bon Pasteur." And Therese planted the "tree of the Good Shepherd" first in Rome, then in Nice, and again in Toulon, which Mother Foundress called "the key to the entire Orient..."

Of course, they were not the only ones - others among the first companions would also play key roles in the founding and development of our Institute. Names like Marie Chantal Cesbron de la Roche, Sophie Lavoy, Joseph Regaudiat, M. Angels Levoyer, Dosithee Joseph, M. Angels Porcher, - these names and many others will forever be linked with the beginnings of the Good Shepherd in France, Europe and in the New World. And those who died young, who offered their lives generously for "the holy work" - Therese Carre and Therese Moreau (novices), Basile Joubert and Anselm Debrais (young professed in their twenties) - they, too, were part of the mosaic of the charism within the first ten years in Angers and were lovingly called by Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia "our saintly victims."

Hopefully, their contribution to the founding charism of St. Mary Euphrasia will also be explored in the future. At the moment we can offer these brief biographies of four early companions. Totally identified with Euphrasia in the realm of values, beliefs and symbols, each, however, was unique - not a single one was a carbon copy!

SISTER MARY OF ST. STANISLAS BEDOUET

Sister Leticia Cortes-Miranda, R.G.S., Province of Chile
(Original in Spanish)

SISTER MARY OF ST. STANISLAS BEDOUET

"Daily, yes, every day - you are in my thoughts. At each step along the way I am united with you in spirit. I remember your labours and feel your absence keenly. But the future consoles me. Oh yes, my daughter, you were chosen for the "holy work"; you will uphold it."

(August, 1834)

We know that during the Revolution, the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge, like all other religious, were dispersed. In Tours, after great difficulty, some sisters were eventually able to form a small community in 1806. Later, a class of penitents was opened in 1813 under the direction of Sr. Victoire Houette, a zealous religious who tried to make the work known and appreciated and to attract good vocations. Among the postulants who entered at this period were Anne Desiree Bedouet and Rose Virginie Pelletier.

ANNE DESIREE BEDOUET

Born in Tours November 17, 1795, her birth certificate indicated that her parents were Pierre Bedouet and Marie Guillon.

At the age of nineteen, on February 17, 1814, she entered the Refuge of Tours. After seven months of postulancy she received the habit and the name Mary of St. Stanislas Kostka on Sept. 27 of the same year. Only a year older than Rose Virginie, she would be the latter's companion in the novitiate, and from the beginning they were united in a friendship that would endure until death.

Sr. Stanislas made her profession on October 22, 1816, but we have hardly any facts about her life in the Tours Refuge. Her name appears for the first time in the Annals of Angers. She arrived here with Mother Euphrasia on June 3, 1829 to prepare the new foundation. She was appointed as Assistant!. On the arrival of Sr. Mary Paul Bodin, the elected Superior of the new fold, the two friends had to separate. Mother Euphrasia returned to Tours to resume her work as Superior and Mary Stanislas remained in Angers as Assistant¹. It was the first time in 19 years that the two friends were separated and from this moment began an intimate and loving correspondence which we can classify into three periods:

1 R-I-IV

First period: Angers, from Aug. 21, 1829 to July 1830. This period has 14 letters preserved in our archives.

Second period: Le Mans, from April 19, 1833 to June 1833 with 9 letters.

Third period: Poitiers, from Nov. 18, 1833 to the end of 1856. From this period we have 259 letters, making a total of 282 in all.

THE ANGERS PERIOD: Aug.1829-July 1830

The letters of this period reveal that for both, this was a time of darkness and of trials.

Sr. Stanislas suffered greatly to see the Angers foundation languishing. The Superior, Sr. M. Paul Bodin, was an excellent religious but during her two years in Angers, the new community which had seemed so promising made no progress. Stanislas had seen the wonderful beginnings and had collaborated enthusiastically with Euphrasie during the three months that the latter had directed the initial work in Angers and made the foundation known.

To this was added painful interior trials: dryness, fears and lack of understanding of her confessor. The following lines, from the letters of Mother Foundress during this period, gives us an idea of Stanislas' sufferings:

The affectionate sentiments of your dear letter touch me all the more because I see they are the expressions of a soul on the cross! . . . The afflictions you suffer should bring you to God alone. . . I also understand your difficulty in opening up to your confessor. . .

(Aug. 21, 1829)

Oh, I can feel how you must be suffering. I know your soul. . . its poverty, its struggles, its attractions. . . Your confessor is your cross, but it is the Lord who brings you to Calvary through mercy and love. . . Take courage then. I share, dear daughter, the profound sorrow that your painful temptations bring you. . .

(Oct. 2, 1829)

On the other hand, the situation in Angers was also a source of great suffering for Mother Euphrasia. She felt in the depths of her being that God wanted her in Angers, she was drawn to this foundation by a mysterious force that was inexplicable. But it seemed that not everyone was in agreement. In her letter of June 22, 1830, she confides to her friend:

What great pleasure your letter gave us, my very dear sister. How can I respond to such feelings and such thoughtfulness! I felt before God that the only way to please you was to answer Your Charity with an open heart. . . You ask me, dear Sister, if I have any presentiment that I shall go to Angers? Oh, yes! And if this foundation is dear to me? Oh, yes, again, and much more than I can put into words, but there is so much opposition on the part of creatures! Our Ecclesiastical Superior is openly against it; nevertheless, my beloved Sister, I am going to tell you what was told to me a few days ago by our Sisters of the Council, in secret. . . that all depends on the election. If Mary of St. Paul comes here, we will go to Angers, and if not, that they will never consent to it. And the election. . . Oh! how much we should pray. . My very dear Sister, if you could see things as I see them. .. I wish it would all be over; our hearts suffer very much on both sides; we all want the Holy Will of God but it seems to manifest itself in sacrifices and the cross. . . My position is so delicate that it is impossible to express, and to tell you frankly, I believe that if the divine Will is that I remain in Tours, I would like to spend some months with you in Angers. This would be, it seems, more prudent. Nevertheless, may the Lord complete His work. . .

Later in the same letter she adds:

I am deeply convinced that the good God's designs have not been accomplished yet, but the sight of my sins, various difficulties, and all I hear, weigh me down and frighten me. Never have I had such a painful year. Pray that this martyrdom may be lived alone with God alone.

On May 21, 1831, 'Mother Euphrasia went to Angers as Superior. From this time onwards their friendship would continue to grow as they followed Christ - in mission.

On August 28, a few months after her arrival, a community of Sisters Magdalens was founded with the help of Count de Neuville. Sr. Stanislas was named First Mistress of the new community.

Soon the vitality and drive of the new foundation became known and there began a flow of vocations and requests for other foundations

LE MANS

April 19, 1833-July 3, 1833

Early in 1832 a request came from the Bishop of Le Mans, Msgr. Philip Carron, for a house in his diocese. This request was accepted on the condition that the foundation would remain dependent on Angers. The Chapter Act of March 7, 1833 accepting the foundation includes, among other things, the following stipulation:

. . . the Superior, the religious and the novices shall be obliged to return to the Mother house at the first sign of obedience they shall also be free to ask to return, always with a humble submission and after exposing their reasons to the Superior of Angers, to whom they will have the right to express their doubts and difficulties. They will have the right and freedom to write to her whenever there is need, as also to preserve the close union which should reign between both houses. . .

Our dear Sr. Assistant will give to the house of Angers, jointly with the local superior, a clear knowledge of the state of the new community, as often as this will be necessary for the general good.¹

On April 18, 1833, Sr. Stanislas, together with two professed and one lay sister, left Angers to start the foundation at Le Mans. As the Assistant Superior at Le Mans, Sr. Stanislas would exercise a great devotion and solicitude for the community. In the beginning, Monsieur Moreau, the ecclesiastical superior of the new foundation, was greatly supportive. (Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia had words of praise for him in her letters during this period). However, it was not long before he manifested complete disagreement, not with the idea of the Generalate, but with the means of realizing the project.

. . . Our dear Sr. Mary Seraphim Houdin was chosen to be Superior (of Le Mans) but for the sake of prudence² the dear Sr. Assistant, Mary Stanislas Bedouet, remained there. Both were called Sister. Both had the right to receive the "couples" and to have the rule observed. . . . They also received parlor calls together, as Mother Euphrasia had recommended.

But this did not last long. A certain negligence in the observance of the Rule began to creep in due to the difficulties inherent in new foundations. . .

1 Chapter Book, p. 36

2 She was young and had just been professed; Sr. Stanislas had been professed 17 years.

Our dear Sr. Mary Seraphim who did not know yet how to be sympathetic with the others' weaknesses, exploded at the tiniest infraction of the Rule; and, instead of having recourse to our Mother, who by a word could have remedied matters, she wrote to the Ecclesiastical Superiors, asking them to demand from our Mother a new superior or have Sr. Stanislas changed. Otherwise, she (Sr. Seraphim) would immediately return to Angers. This indiscretion, caused by lack of experience, would perhaps have lost us everything without the devotedness, humility and wisdom of our dear Sr. Mary St. Stanislas. In this situation she showed what a religious, filled with the spirit of God, could be.

She repaired all the damage done with a prudence and skill which our worthy Mother could not help but praise and admire. She made heroic acts of virtue: established Sr. Seraphim with absolute authority, said her "couples" kneeling (before the Superior), called Sr. Seraphim "Mother", and offered to stay a while longer to her with her advice. . . .

But while outwardly everything seemed alright, in her heart Sr. Seraphim was already plotting with Fr. Moreau. They were in agreement about sending away this dear Sister who, by her firmness, was an obstacle to the destruction of the Generalate which he was planning. . . Fr. Moreau, who was determined to reach his goal, wrote to Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia that if she did not recall her assistant immediately he would destroy the foundation.

This dear Sister who received this unexpected order wrote several letters of direction to Fr. Moreau. She let him know of the order which she had received from Angers and which had greatly distressed her, saying that he could request a postponement if he wished. . . He dissimulated, promising to do what he could, adding that if the Bishop were not absent, the Superior of Angers would not have so much power. He then passed on all the letters of this dear sister to our very honored Mother saying: "See in what an embarrassing position I am in. Command her in the name of obedience to depart." God who wished to purify his servant and to detach her from all human consolations made use of this betrayal to render her capable of accomplishing his design. She submitted to all and, bowing her head to the yoke of obedience, she came back to our monastery of Angers, having spent only three months in the foundation of Le Mans. To replace her, it was necessary to send our dear Sr. Mary of St. Ignace, Mary of St. Louis de Gonzaga and two novices.¹

Sr. M. of St. Stanislas returned to Angers on July 3, 1833.2,

¹ *Annals R-I -I*, p. 46

² *Le Mans separated definitively from Angers in August 1834*

POITIERS: Nov. 18, 1833 to 1856

On Nov. 12, 1833, the Poitiers proposal was presented to the Chapter which gave its approval. An act was drawn up, similar to the one for Le Mans, which stipulated that all postulants should come to the central house (Angers) to make their novitiate and that sisters to be sent to Poitiers would be named by the house of Angers, etc.¹

Mother Foundress, knowing the unshakeable adherence of her "eldest daughter" to the Generalate, named her superior of the new foundation. On Nov. 13, the faithful "Kostka,"² left for Poitiers accompanied by Sr. Chantal de la Roche, economer, and a touriere sister to prepare the house for the other foundresses.

On their arrival at Poitiers they were told that the Bishop was away and had left orders that they were not to go to the house destined for them until his return. They therefore sought shelter with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart who received them most hospitably. There they remained for three weeks. They finally entered their own convent on the feast of St. Francis Xavier, December 3rd.

Sr. Stanislas would remain in Poitiers until her death on Nov. 1st, 1868, just six months after the death of her own "dear Mother", Mary Euphrasia.

It is in the letters of this period that we can appreciate how much Stanislas meant to our Mother Foundress. We can say that she was a friend, a confidante, and a counselor of Mary Euphrasia. Mother Foundress could share with her the joys as well as the painful and difficult moments of the way towards the realization of the "holy work". The eagerness of both to "save a great number of souls and to extend the glory of God" (letter of Sr. Stanislas to Cardinal Odescalchi, Dec. 3, 1834) created between them a special affinity. This bond expressed itself in mutual understanding; support and strength - sharing joys and aspirations for the "holy work".

". . . Come, I have so many things to share with you. . ." was the repeated call of Mother Foundress to her "eldest daughter", her wise and prudent counsel often being a source of light to Mother Euphrasia:

I believe before God that you are needed here, your experience, prudence, and the attachment you have for us, make your presence indispensable.
(Aug. 12, 1845)

How I wish I could have you to help me for two days! We could take this occasion to discuss important affairs of our Congregation. (June 12, 1835)

1 Annals R-I-IV, p. 67

2 An endearment often used by Mother Foundress

Oh, what tribe is dearer to us than Poitiers? Should it not be the first in everything? I must confess to you my weakness: I would be greatly saddened if you were not always one of the first. It is you who have always helped and sustained me. See, my daughter, all men together cannot separate me from you. . .
(May 16, 1839)

It is quite touching to read the letters written by Sr. Stanislas to Mother Foundress. How she cheers her up and shares her moments of trial, of darkness and doubt. How she offers her wholehearted support:

. . . Continue, my dear Mother, to promote the works of the Lord. . . found more houses; you must do it, I have seen it in God. Please do not waver, we will help you. Do with us all that you wish. (Sept. 8, 1836)

"We will help you. Do with us all that you wish." These beautiful words would not remain only on paper but would be realized in the Poitiers community and beyond.

In her community

Mother Foundress could be at peace about the Poitiers community as Stanislas gave it an admirable apostolic dynamism. The penitents' class reached more than a hundred. The Community Letter of 1845 reveals that for Kostka, the penitents were her preferential option:

In general our penitents are good. They have a great attachment to the house and a great interest for work. In justice we should say that the care and tender solicitude of our good Mother, whom they love, contributes in great measure to this adherence. She satisfies all their desires, as well as their good mistresses who give themselves totally

Sr. Stanislas opened a preservation class and wrote Mother Foundress on August 16, 1839:

For a long time now, my very worthy Mother, we have greatly aspired to have a preservation class. Many persons seem to desire it. The greatest difficulty we encountered was the lack of quarters; but when God desires the end, He gives the means and the light; for without too much trouble we have found all that is needed to begin provisionally.

On August 28, 1847 she founded a community of Magdalens for whom she felt a special predilection, they being the crown of her apostolic efforts.

Searching for ways and means to support the works, she organized an association of benefactresses, an initiative which M. Euphrasia approved enthusiastically and encouraged Stanislas to describe the project to the community at Grenoble. In her letter of May 23, 1834, she told Stanislas:

Did you realize that the two letters you wrote to Grenoble would be communicated to a large number of ladies, who, touched by the zeal of your Sisters in Poitiers, exclaimed while weeping with compassion: "We wish to do as much!" Tell those dear benefactresses that they have saved the two houses. . .

Her anxiety over each Sister is also a constant theme in her correspondence with Mother Euphrasia, especially where it concerned the sisters' fidelity to the Generalate and to the Congregation. She informs, justifies, pardons; she gives the sisters other chances, accepts them as they are and sympathizes with them in their sufferings and weaknesses with a spirit of mercy.

By they as they are. . . I assure you, my good Mother, that I love them sincerely and tenderly. Oh, yes, I carry them in my heart as my dear daughters; besides, union and charity reign in our little family, and with the grace of God, we try to maintain it there as much as is possible for us. There is the true happiness of a religious house.

(Letter of Sf. Stanislas, Sept. 12, 1835)

Regarding the sick, I have nothing with which to reproach myself; I can say confidently before God, dear Mother, that I make myself their slave, so to say, so much am I concerned that the sick in the Community and in the classes be relieved of their sufferings.

Moreover, in doing so, I do nothing more than follow the inclination of my heart which has always loved to sympathize with great tenderness with those who are ill.

(Letter of May 12, 1841)

Mother Foundress called Poitiers her "Avila" and when she was able, she visited it every year.

Never, my dear daughter, will I forget your devotedness and attachment. Oh, how you have relieved me! May Heaven bless you! This Poitiers - it is my Avila!

(1856)

And in another letter, after one of her visits to this community, she wrote; "Never will you convince me that you were as happy as I was with my trip to Poitiers; it is impossible. How I enjoyed the peace!" (Nov. 3, 1841)

Beyond Poitiers

Mary Stanislas was of delicate health but this did not make her shut herself up in her little community. This limitation of health was no obstacle "to make the good God loved by many souls who do not know Him." (Aug. 16, 1839). On this date we find her making the first contacts for a possible foundation in Africa. She went to Bordeaux in 1837 on the request of Mother Foundress to try and save this foundation which was in difficulty: "My God, I come again to you, my daughter, my heart pierced with pain; I beg you with tears in my eyes, that if Your Charity could, by a miracle, save the work of Bordeaux. . . Oh, if you could go there! Please help us! I have full confidence in you. . . The Council puts this delicate affair into your hands." (Sept. 13, 1837)

Returning from Bordeaux, she passed by Angouleme to greet the Bishop. She spoke with such ardor about the Mother House, the new foundations, their apostolates, that the possibility of establishing a Good Shepherd house in Angouleme was entertained by the Bishop. (The foundation was eventually made in 1846). With great enthusiasm, Stanislas wrote to M. Euphrasia:

"See, dear Mother, how extraordinary are the ways of Divine Providence! We only need to wait for Jesus and Mary to accomplish it; it is God alone, my dear Mother, who has done everything!" (Sept. 30, 1837)

Her zeal, her apostolic openness, are evident in the following lines to Mother Foundress, written October 15, 1841:

Yes, my very worthy Mother, it seems to me that we should always raise hymns of thanksgiving to the Lord for all the goodness He deigns to grant our holy congregation. Ah, one feels impelled to work with new courage for the conversion of a great number of poor unfortunates who are abandoned! One would wish to fly to the ends of the world if necessary to win them over to Jesus Christ. One regrets not having enough strength and the health to traverse many distant lands. At the sight of this dear Canada and America, one is led to say with the great Apostle: "The charity of Jesus Christ urges us." Let us run quickly, very quickly, my venerated Mother, to the aid of these dear souls who called to us by the voice of these holy and worthy prelates.

WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE WILL
YOUR HEART BE ALSO (Matt. 6:21)

Her fidelity, her certainty that the generalate was "the work of God" , her affection for Mother Foundress - all was spontaneously shared not only in her community but also in the other foundations.

In her community she exhorted the sisters to union with Mother Foundress and with the Mother House. In the Community Letter of 1846 we read:

"Our good Mother gives us the instructions in community; in this way it is as if our worthy Mother General speaks to us - the heart of her daughter (Sr. Stanislas) being so closely united to hers, we can say that we feel guided by Mother General herself. . ."

In another community circular, written by Sr. Stanislas herself, she tells the sisters of the other foundations? "My God; dearest sisters, what gladness we feel on seeing the fulfillment of the words of the holy Prophet: 'How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity.' In my instructions I repeat how good and pleasant it is to live under one law, with one Mother, and by the precious Generalate, the daughters form but one heart."
(December, 1836)

If Mother Foundress found in "Kostka" the sister, the counselor, the confidante, "the true and sincere friend," the sisters saw in Stanislas, at the same time, a model to imitate:

"In Metz our sisters follow you in everything: the same spirit, the same devotedness to their house, with such admirable modesty and obedience." (Letter of SME, Dec. 17, 1834)

Writing to Grenoble, Euphrasia shares her thoughts with the Superior, Sr. Louis Royné:

"Oh, my dearest daughter, how much the Lord has favored us these days through the consolations the house of Poitiers gives us. . . I return to the Superior of Poitiers: ever since the great work, she has also become great in everything. She makes the work known but with such wisdom and uprightness that she wins all hearts. Oh, how much good she does the Generalate. . . . !
(Feb. 9, 1834)

In the necrology of Sr. Stanislas there is a passage which sums up what her life had been:

"Our good Mother had as the sole purpose of her life the glory of God, the salvation of souls, the living out of our rules and Constitutions, perfect loyalty to our dear congregation and to our worthy Mother Foundress for whom she would have given her very life. Her piety, abnegation and religious spirit, her prudence and wisdom were also known by all."

(Necrology, November 3, 1868)

Another description of Sr. Stanislas was found among the notes of Sr. M. Nazareth Escoffier:

. . . Mother Stanislas came to Angers from time to time. . . She was a religious who looked rather serious but was very affable in conversation. . . She seemed to have a kind of veneration for all the sisters, a beautiful courtesy for all.

She maintained exact observance in her community; all the Customs were faithfully adhered to. Keeping order, watching over the economy, instructing the sisters, directing and arousing their gratitude towards God and towards our venerable Mother Foundress, making all hearts attached to the Motherhouse, that was Mother Stanislas. . .

Great was the sorrow of Sr. Stanislas at not being able to go to Angers in 1868 during the last illness of Mother Foundress. She herself was suffering from a serious heart condition. This, coupled with her advanced age of 73, prevented Sr. Stanislas from running to the bedside of her "dear and tender Mother." We can imagine her profound sorrow on receiving the news of Euphrasia's death. The grieving daughter was the first to send a marble plaque to be mounted near the tomb of Mother Foundress. On it we can read the endearing title, the name Stanislas was so proud of: "eldest daughter". The plaque sent from Poitiers had engraved on it, in letters of gold:

To her venerated Mother
Mary of St. Euphrasia Pelletier,
who fell asleep in the Lord
the 24th of April 1868
from her eldest daughter,
Mary of St. Stanislas Bedouet
and the community of Poitiers.
Our only consolation, tender Mother,
is the hope of remaining faithful
to your teachings
and to be reunited with you in heaven

To conclude, we wish to quote a paragraph from a letter of Sr. Stanislas to our holy Mother Foundress:

"Lord, the zeal of your house consumes me."

These words of the holy Prophet-King, my dear Mother, can very well be applied to you. Oh, yes, the zeal for the glory of God devours and consumes you; your beautiful soul aspires to nothing else! Thus, you are for us, dear Mother, an ever-renewed model and example. Yes, through you we see in our dear Institute the religious spirit in all the glow of its first fervor. You know how to imprint in the hearts of all your daughters and in the entire Order, a principle of spiritual strength, an energy and incomparable devotion. For isn't it admirable to see our young sisters crossing the seas without any fear of danger in order to run after the lost sheep?
(Aug. 16, 1839)

I ask myself then, if I, daughter of Mary Euphrasia, also have a love as great as hers. I do not mean a superficial affection. I mean the love which brings me to a concrete identification with her. I ask myself if this love really inspires in me that spiritual vigor, that energy, that abnegation, which makes of me a daring apostle, fearless and available to respond with freedom to the urgent calls of the Lord to manifest His mercy in the midst of His people.

And with admiration, I say to our "eldest sister",

BLESSED ARE YOU, SR. MARY STANISLAS
BECAUSE YOU RESPONDED TO WHAT YOU SAW
AND HEARD.

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 - to Sr. M. of St. Stanislas Bedouet I.CB-112
 - to Sr. M. of St. Louis Royne I.CB-3

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SISTER MARY OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS DAVID
1808 - 1878

Sister Denise Deschamps, R.G.S., Province of France
(Original in French)

SISTER MARY OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS DAVID 1808 - 1878

Blessed be ... the God of all consolation...
(2 Cor. 1:3)

My faithful Anne of Saint Bartholomew,
God has given you to be my consolation.
(Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia, 1837.06.01)

Honorine David was born on February 2, 1808, at Sarge.¹ She entered the "Refuge" of Tours on October 20, 1826, when Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia Pelletier was superior of this house. She took the habit as a lay novice on June 3, 1827, and was given the name, Sister Mary of Saint Gertrude. On June 1, 1829² the Chapter of Tours named her and five other sisters for the foundation of Angers. She left Tours on June 3, and experienced the difficulties of the early days (in Angers).

. . . on June 6, when they returned from mass, our dear foundresses discovered they had nothing to eat for lunch. They exchanged looks and asked one another, 'what are we going to give our Mother?' They looked in the basket of provisions which they had brought from Tours for the journey and found only a chicken which was not very fresh. Our dear Sister Mary of Saint Gertrude hurried to the garden to collect some fire-wood to re-heat the chicken and arrange it as best as she could.³

Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia declared:

. . . . We were so poor at the beginning that we had to sell bundles of carrots in order to buy meat. . . .⁴

During three months our sisters lived on beetroot leaves and beans; this proved injurious to their stomachs. . . .⁵

Sister Mary of Saint Gertrude made profession on September 8, 1829, the first to pronounce her vows in Angers.

1 It appears to have been SARGE-SUR-BRA YE, a village of Loir et Cher about 25 kilometres from Vendome.

2 Annals RI IV, page 6: As Mgr. de Montblanc had gone to Rome with Rev. Fr. Dufetre, it was the Rev. Fathers Fustier, Dugier and Boullay who signed the obedience dated June 1, 1829.

3 Annals R I IV, p.8;

4. Idem. p.15.

5 "Noviciats de N. V.M. ", I. CC 2b. p.156 (French only)

At the time of the foundation of the community in Le Mans, on April 29, 1833, Sister Mary of Saint Gertrude, the lay sister, became Sister Mary of Saint John of the Cross, a choir religious.

This change of status was the consequence of an "act" of the Chapter,

which is quoted in full here:

On April 29, 1833, our dear Sister Mary of Saint Gertrude passed from the rank of the Lay Sisters to that of the Choir Sisters. Being endowed with the necessary qualities; she took the name of Sister Mary of Saint John of the Cross; all with consent of the Chapter.¹

Sr. M. of St. Euphrasia Pelletier, Superior

Sr. M. of St. Stanislaus Bedouet, Assistant

Sr. M. of St. Ignace Charon, Councillor

Sr. M. of Chantal of Jesus de Cesbron, Assistant

Sister M. of Saint John was sent to Le Mans as "Mistress of Penitents". She proved herself a good educator. Sister Mary Stanislaus wrote to Father Perche on June 29, 1833²

We have six penitents, who do not cause any trouble. Sister M. of St. John of the Cross works well with them. These poor children love her; among them are three orphans, two six year olds and one eleven year old.

Sister M. of St. Stanislaus arrived in Le Mans to help the young superior, Sister M. of the Seraphim. But the ecclesiastical superior, Father Moreau, wished the sisters to abandon the customs and observances of their rule and to separate them from the house of Angers. At the beginning of July, 1833, he insisted that Sister M. of St. Stanislaus be recalled to Angers and then set about winning over the young superior to his own way of thinking.³

On July 3, 1834, Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia wrote to Sister M. of St. Louis Royne:

. . . Saint John of the Cross and the young (sisters) knew nothing. Father Moreau played on their simplicity. . . .

And on July 27, 1834:

¹ Chapter Book, R 25

² Rev. Fr. Perche had been the chaplain of the convent in Angers during the year 1831

³ Saudreau, Canon A: "Graces et Fidelite", 1929, Monastere General de N.D. de Charite du Bon Pasteur, p.52. (French)

. . . Mary of Saint John of the Cross is faithful and submerged in sorrow; nearly all the young (sisters) have similar sentiments. . . .

Then on August 21, 1834:

. . . Saint John of the Cross was locked in, and forbidden to appear in the parlour or to write; efforts were made to force her to sign against us; she resisted everything.

Sister Mary of Saint John of the Cross was of simple origin. She was barely literate and her letters teem with mistakes. She herself wrote to Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia, in the second letter which she sent to her from Nancy, dated December 8, 1835¹

. . . if Mister Nageotte (*) saw this letter, no doubt he could not count the mistakes in it for they are too numerous. How I wish there were none in it.²

Meanwhile, Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia who "excelled in discerning vocations and the aptitudes of the sisters for government and for the different charges"³ knew how to disclose the exceptional qualities latent in Sister Mary of St. John of the Cross, qualities which continued to develop all throughout her life, thanks to the trust placed in her by Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia. On March 29, 1835, the latter wrote to Sister M. of St. Stanislaus:

. . . Mary of Saint John of the Cross. . . has great aptitude and a very upright heart. She is truly good and solid. . . . Sister M. of St.' John of the Cross is precious.

Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia was likewise aware of her fidelity and generosity. On September 6, 1834, she wrote to Sister M. of St. Louis Royne, after Sr. M. of St. John's return from Le Mans:

1 This is the second letter written from Nancy, judging by the number of letters which are now available for study.

2 See appendix.

3 Apostolic Process

() A benefactor*

. . . she returned faithful and generous. . . . Father Moreau had tormented her.*

She was also a prudent and virtuous counsellor:

. . . . I have spoken to Sister Mary of St. John of the Cross. . . . I am (as) sure of her as of both of you. . . . She is an excellent counsellor and solidly virtuous. . . . (1834.12.24)

Nevertheless, Mother M. of St. Euphrasia was lucid about the sister's shortcomings:

. . . . Sister Mary of Saint John of the Cross. . . . Well, would you believe it, my dear daughter, I have not been able to get her to be tidy - and this gives her a very common appearance. . . . Still, she is precious, we must overlook these little miseries. (1835.03.29)

From March 1835, Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia had been considering sending her as superior of Nancy. In this connection she wrote to Sister M. of St. Stanislaus:

. . . . Our sisters councillors have an idea which I share with you to have your opinion on it. They think Mary (of Saint John of the Cross) could found Nancy or replace you in POITIERS. (1835.03.29)

And to Sister M. of Saint Sophie Lavoye:

. . . . It is our well loved Sister Mary of Saint John who is named superior (of Nancy). She is very dear to us because of her generous devotedness and solid virtue.(1835.11.04)

On November 4, 1835, Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia named Sister M. of S1. John of the Cross superior and sent her as foundress to Nancy. She was then only twenty seven years old. She set out with Sister M. of Saint Benedict VRAIN, as Assistant, and Sister M. Marguerite DESMOULINS, as "Mistress of Penitents."¹

* The French original has "made a martyr of her" .

1 Council Book, BE -la, p.23

Mother Mary of Saint John of the Cross and her companions stopped over in Paris where they met Msgr. de Forbin Janson, who had been obliged to leave his diocese for political reasons. He received the Sisters very cordially. In NANCY, they stayed with the Sisters of the Christian Doctrine, who accompanied them next day to meet Msgr. Donnet¹, Co-adjutor of Msgr. de Forbin Janson.

Msgr. Donnet gave them a very cold reception. On November 19, 1835 Sister M. of St. John wrote:

. . . his (Msgr. Donnet) manner of speaking to me was very hurtful . . . The most urgent matter he had to discuss was the Brief of the Archbishop of Tours, who, he told us was sick. . . in very sharp words he accused us of being responsible for his illness, because of the struggle waged against him by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; he said we had rebelled against him and sent ambassadors to plead against our bishop. You can imagine that I was not silent. . . and he will say this to Msgr. Dufetre² and will bring him (here) . . . I am lost, I will be recognised. . . I am going to have many crosses . . . ready to suffer all with the grace of God. . . .

In her reply of November 22, 1835, Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia reassured Sister M. of St. John:

. . . . Oh! You do well to tell me everything! But my dear daughter do not fear anything.

1 Msgr. Donnet was from the diocese of Lyons. As a young priest, he devoted himself to the preaching of missions in various French towns. He knew Fr. Dufetre and was a friend of his. They found themselves together when Msgr. Donnet was named Vicar General of Tours. See short biography in the Appendix.

2 Fr. Dufetre, a priest of the diocese of Lyons was charged with the preaching of parish missions in France. He was called to Tours to help the diocesan missionaries of this diocese. In 1826, he was named ecclesiastical Superior of the Refuge of Tours. He was an enemy of the generalate.

Meanwhile Mother M. of St. Euphrasia shows how clearly she understood the situation:

Fr. Dufetre together with Msgr. Donnet will be a source of suffering for you. I see how difficult your situation is. Fr. Moreau will join them and I fear you will be unable to do all the good that God asks of us.

She remained steadfast:

. . . . Herewith is a copy of the Brief. Show it to Msgr. Donnet. Tell him, very respectfully that you hold irrevocably to this Brief; that if his Lordship does not wish to receive you in the spirit of the Generalate, you are ready to leave. The Chapter begs of you to fear nothing for yourself personally.

She assured her of her support:

O certainly, we will always uphold you.

Subsequently, Msgr. Donnet developed better sentiments. On March 23, 1836 Mother M. of St. Euphrasia could write:

. . . . Oh, the Co-adjutor is a father, a protector, a founder! How admirable. Yes, my daughter, it is his work, his house. I would like him to know how grateful I am to him.

In the early days of the foundation, Mother M. of St. Euphrasia wrote frequently to Mother M. of St. John of the Cross.

She advised her:

. . . . Sr. M. of St. Paul. . . leave the kitchen to her, my daughter. I would prefer you to work in the Class one or two hours per day. St. Anne will be very helpful to you. (1836.11.30)

She formed her in her role as superior, and spiritual animator of the sisters, and taught her ways to maintain unity, organise the house and relate to Bishops, benefactors etc.

1 Msgr. Donnet, who knew Fr. Dufetre, had received the sisters with extreme coldness at the time of their visit. But he made them forget this reception as after a short time, he was extremely kind to them. He helped them financially, visited them frequently and never came without paying a visit to the penitents. Annals R.IV.

Mother M. of Saint John of the Cross who was very attached to the Generalate and the Institute was profoundly marked by this formation. Mother M. of St. Euphrasia wrote to her:

The Lord has given you the spirit of the work to such an extent that I cherish you with great tenderness; you help me and console me. (1837.11.23)

Mother M. of St. John of the Cross appears to us as a woman of great strength, good in relations, gifted with the qualities and aptitudes needed to govern. After the initial difficulties, already mentioned, she succeeded in establishing Nancy firmly and it became a flourishing foundation:

. . . . Bless the Lord with us for the rapid progress and religious spirit of those (the houses) of the North. I do not know which of them I should praise the most. In these "hives", the "mother bees" are indeed true daughters of the work:

Mary of the Angels (PORCHER),
Mary of St. Helen (BAUDIN),
Mary of St. John of the Cross (DAVID) delighted me in God. . .

As for Nancy, I assure you, my daughter, that there is nothing so magnificent; the classes and the penitents' dormitories are admirable; then the woods, the enclosure, the ponds! The chapel and the sacristy are magnificent. . . .

(To Sr. M. of St. Stanislaus, 1839.06.27)

Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia displayed great trust in her. Of all her daughters, Mother Mary of Saint John of the Cross was one of the closest: "her eldest daughter", "her apostle" as she liked to address her:

Through you, God accomplishes such marvels that his adorable designs unite my soul to yours. (1837.04.09)

For the foundation of the house of Strasburg, she relied on her to undertake the necessary negotiations with the Bishop of the city, find premises suitable for the work etc.; all the time keeping her advised by letter. Everything worked out very well:

STRASBURG, 'your daughter': a real marvel!
(1837.06.01)

When one or other of the foundations was in danger, Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia did not hesitate to send Mother M. of Saint John of the Cross to help out; in this way, she was successful in strengthening the communities of Metz and Reims, to the great satisfaction of Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia:

. . . . I am happy about your mission at REIMS. I received all your dear letters. Oh how you have freed me from a heavy burden. How I bless you for it. It appears that already things are better, thanks be to God. (1839.02.27)

Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia also sent her to accompany and uphold the sisters who set out to found the house of SENS:

O God, what relief you bring me, my daughter who are so generously faithful and devoted; Oh, how you are dear to me, in God, my companion of crosses and of joys. (1839.02.12)

She gave her the permission to found the Magdalens:

. . . . Yes, my beloved daughter, we permit you in the name of Our Lord and of the Council to found the Magdalens. (1839.02.03)

Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia looked to her faithful collaborator, Sister Mary of St. John of the Cross for support:

. . . . I am not Saint Teresa, my very dear daughter but you are my faithful 'Anne of (Saint) Bartholomew'¹ God has given you to be my consolation in my enormous undertakings. . . . Oh! may he protect you! (1837.06.01)

Mother M. of Saint John of the Cross felt called to be a missionary:

. . . Sister M. of Saint John of the Cross. . . studies from morning to night; learns a little German and believes that God calls her to be a foundress outside of France.²

1 Anne of St. Bartholomew was the faithful companion and helper of Saint Teresa of Avila. Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia gave this name to Sister M. of Saint John of the Cross.

2 To Sr. M. of St. Louis Royne, 1834.12.24

And four years later Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia suggested to her the possibility of going as foundress to a foreign country. Did she not call her "Xavier", "Missionary", "Apostle" in her letters? (1838.03.18)

Make a note of what I say: you will surely leave France. Just now the Bishop of Ratisbon is begging for us . . .

The following explains why the Bishop of Ratisbon asked for the Good Shepherd Sisters. A young girl, Amelie de Baligand, and a native of Ratisbon had entered the novitiate in Angers on January 26, 1839. She maintained a correspondence with a certain member of her family, a man of piety holding a certain rank in Bavarian society. He asked her for precise information on the end: ". . . of the Institute and on the administration of the Congregation." He told the Bishop of RATISBON of his desire to see a house of the Good Shepherd established in the latter's episcopal city. The bishop read the documents and acceded to the request. He wrote to King Louis I of Bavaria to request the necessary authorization. Having studied the documents, LOUIS I was struck by "the existence of a work so charitable and so useful for society." He appointed the court chaplain, Rev. Fr. EBERHARD to get further information. This he did by visiting the Good Shepherd convent in STRASBURG. He gave such a satisfactory account that the king asked the sisters of the Good Shepherd to come to MUNICH to discuss the possibility of a foundation with him.¹ Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia felt herself incapable of undertaking such a mission:

It is you, my dear daughter, who should accompany me to BAVARIA for discussions with the court, a mission which causes me to tremble, seeing my sins and incapacity. (1839.04.18)

Finding herself prevented from going:

I am unable to absent myself from the Mother House at present, on account of the pressure of work which has increased considerably due to the vacancy in the episcopal see. (1839.09.22)

She wrote to her:

In the holy presence of God we have chosen you, my dear daughter and our dear Mary of St. Helen to treat of this important matter. May the Holy Spirit enlighten you. May the Blessed Virgin protect you. May the Holy Angels accompany you. (1839.09.20)

Let us try to grasp the extent of the trust shown by Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia to her whom she affectionately called "my faithful Anne of St. Bartholomew" when she sent her to undertake these negotiations.! Let us not forget that she entered to be a lay sister, was barely literate, had a very ordinary external appearance and that she went to negotiate with a king:

. . . . You know my beloved daughter, how much the court of Bavaria has urged us to come to MUNICH. We have submitted these matters to the Roman court which by a most secret design of Providence recommends this work to us in a most special manner. In the space of ten days we have received three letters. . . . We have full confidence in you. (1839.09.22)

She arrived in MUNICH on October 8, 1839, accompanied by Sr. M. Helen BAUDIN, superior of Strasburg. The king received them with extreme goodness and decided with them to establish a house of the Good Shepherd in his capital. In keeping with a request made by Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia, she gave an account of her mission, most probably in writing. The sisters of the Council sent the following reply:

. . . . It would be hard for us to describe to you the admiration and joy we experienced in reading your interesting letter. What a prodigy of grace and blessing is this mission which you have just accomplished. My dear sister, how agreeable it would have been for us to hear from your mouth the account of what happened there. I admit that we waited for it with such eagerness that during several days, each time the enclosure bell rang, our hearts beat with joy at the thought that it was our dear missionaries of BAVARIA coming to give an account of their apostolic undertaking. Why then did you not come, beloved sisters. You had ample permission; how is it that you did not understand it that way? (1839.10.26)

1 She was young and had just been professed.

We see that Mother M. of St. John of the Cross made a success of the delicate mission confided to her. Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia wrote to her:

. . . . We have just received the precious details of your holy mission. With what joy you fill our souls my dear daughter. At the moment, I love Germany tenderly in Jesus Christ my God. If you had come, bringing the little treasure of which you spoke to me, you would have given me much pleasure. Try at least to ensure that this charming child will come soon; I am keeping the lovely name of Mary of the Sacred Heart for her. . . .(1839.10.27)

A pleasant surprise! This woman who radiated the joy of her consecration, returned with a postulant.! Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia continued:

. . . . Let us try to finalise next Spring for the work in Germany. Our German (sisters) here are charming. Several will form part of the colony; Mary Gonzage (BALIGAND) is a saint. (Idem)

It was in a letter dated April 8, 1840, that Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia announced to Mother M. of Saint John of the Cross that she would leave NANCY "for the distant shores" of BAVARIA.

1 This is a reference to Auguste Muller. She was born in Munich and entered religious life on November 1, 1839 at the age of twenty six (220). She received the Habit on November 17, 1839 and was given the name of Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart

(222). It would seem that during her stay in Germany, Mother Mary of St. John of the Cross, who was such an unassuming person, had been instrumental in fostering another vocation, that of a lady of the Bavarian Court: Baroness de STRANSKY. Fany de Stransky entered on September 17, 1840 (220). At her Clothing she took the name of Mary of Saint Teresa. She changed to Mary of Saint Philomena, before her departure for Algeria where she founded three houses: El Biar, Misserghin, Constantine (232)

She was named Superior of MUNICH and set out on June 4th with Sister Mary of St. Helen STEINTZ. They were accompanied by Rev. Fr. EBERHARD and arrived in MUNICH on June 22nd. Madame SCHOSO undertook to lodge the sisters and they spent fifteen days with her. On July 7, 1840, they took possession of their house, the small castle of FREISING. Situated in the suburb known as HAIDHAUSEN, it was a rather old building surrounded by a large garden. This castle was a gift from the king but the installation could take place only on November 9. Between these two dates many were the trials that succeeded one another. Problems abounded at the beginning of the foundation. Fr. EBERHARD, "who, after God, was the only one to occupy himself with the future of the work fell seriously ill with typhus". On the other hand Mother M. of Saint John of the Cross and Sister M. of Saint Helen feared that their rules and customs would not be respected.! Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia sent them clear and precious instructions:

. . . . Stay in Munich. Try to be free and poor if God wills it. But do not bind yourselves and do not abandon this divine mission . . . unless you are forced to do so. (1840.07.08)

Mother M. of Saint John of the Cross and her companion traversed this period of trial valiantly; they lived in extreme poverty, suffered from the cold and spent three days without food. Nobody came to their aid, so persuaded were all that the King let them want for nothing. Some of their best friends advised them to leave. Faithful to the directives of Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia, Mother M. of Saint John of the Cross did not wish to abandon "this divine mission"; subsequently other crosses which threatened the work did not prevent its triumph and continued development. In December Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia sent help: on the 11th, three choir sisters and two lay sisters arrived from Angers. Sister M. of the Sacred Heart MULLER was among them and was destined to be Assistant. Here is an extract from a letter written by her on December 17, to a priest in Angers:

. . . . On arriving in our little monastery we were surprised by the great regularity with which all had been arranged, thanks to the indefatigable zeal of our good Mother Saint John of the Cross. . . . (1840.12.17)

This "indefatigable zeal" of Mother Mary of Saint John of the Cross would continue to increase in the Kingdom of Bavaria. On January 1, 1844, that is to say, three and a half years after the foundation, there were twenty six choir sisters, four extern sisters *, eighty penitents, seventy children in the preservation Class and one hundred and fifty boarders in the monastery of MUNICH.¹

Mother Mary of Saint John of the Cross was both zealous and attentive:

to CRIES OF DISTRESS

. . . . In the month of August (1844), cholera, that terrible scourge, caused great ravages in Munich; three thousand persons died, three hundred of them in the suburb where we live. . . this scourge brought great misery in its strain. Many orphans are left on the streets. How often, our dear Mother, whose heart is so compassionate said to us, 'Oh sisters, if only we could gather all these poor children and form a class with them. But our means do not allow it. Nevertheless, we do what we can be preparing clothes for them.
2

to REQUESTS FOR FOUNDATIONS

God knows, my dear daughter, with what delight I read your letter where your sentiments of frank submission mingle with those of your apostolic zeal. My God, my dear daughter, how I desire to second your efforts and, in God, I hope for it; union gives strength. Your generous devotedness makes me hopeful. Dear Poland will be established and our dear Germany will have a large number of houses. We are going to make new sacrifices for Vienna; this mission is magnificent and rich in promise.

(1855.03.28)

* "Touriere" sisters

1 Munich Community Letter, 1844 2 Idem

COURAGEOUS, she opened her house to:

. . . six hundred little girls. . . Oh! what a consolation for my soul. It is a divine work. Tell these dear little girls that I wish to be their mother. . . .
(1850.-.28, No 136)¹

. . . . In God, I love this work with great tenderness; you will be very pleasing to our Mother, the Holy Church; you will rescue so many souls from heresy. . .
(1850.01.29)

With the arrival of these six hundred girls, aged between six and eighteen, the "Good Shepherd" became the local school in the HAIDHAUSEN suburb. It already possessed three classes, penitents, preservation class and boarders. That year the Good Shepherd convent of MUNICH counted eight hundred persons.²

A second Angers!

ATTENTIVENESS towards her sisters:

. . . our church is very cold and very damp particularly in Winter which is very long here; our dear Mother was distressed to see the community spend a third of its life in a place so injurious to health. Her charity asked our Superior, if we could not have the Blessed Sacrament in a large hall during the Winter. . . . It is there our Divine Saviour will take up abode until April 1.³

particularly towards the lay sisters:

. . . she showed special affection for our good lay sisters, interesting herself in their work and facilitating its execution.⁴

Mother M. of Saint John of the Cross was not only a faithful collaborator of Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia, but also her friend. The friendship between them deepened throughout the forty years of "crosses and joys". We can listen to Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia:

1 The date of this letter is incomplete

2 Munich community letter, 1850.12.22

3 Munich community letter, 1852

4 Necrology of Mother Mary of Saint John of the Cross David, DJ-5.1

. . . . My dear daughter, God has united us for his glory; neither men, nor hell, etc. can separate us! (1841.01.30)

. . . . Never, my well beloved daughter, has your absence cost me so much. Never have I been so laden with business, graces, work, crosses, which I would love to pour into a strong and friendly soul. (1860.10.16)

On July 21, 1855, she was named Provincial of the Good Shepherd communities in Germany. She who had known how to establish the work in BAVARIA became a promoter of unity between the different establishments in the country. At the time of her nomination, Sister M. of the Blessed Sacrament, Provincial of France, wrote to her:

. . . . The community is very pleased about your nomination for the Province of Germany, as everybody knows of your religious spirit and your attachment to the Generalate. (1855.12.01)

Mother M. of Saint John of the Cross visited the houses of her Province regularly:

. . . . As she had done last year, this year too, Our Very Honoured Mother carried out the visit of the different houses of our German Province. On her return this dear Mother rejoiced our hearts by telling of different edifying incidents, . . . of the spirit of sacrifice and regularity of our loved sisters. . . . These encourage us to be united to our good sisters and the consolation of our venerated Mother General, following the example of the one whom her Charity has given us as guide.¹

Mother Mary of Saint John of the Cross had a tender devotion towards the Blessed Virgin and had a chapel dedicated to "Mater Admirabilis". In the garden of the Provincial house she had an alter erected in honour of the Immaculate Virgin and this was inaugurated on August 15, 1857. Each year, on this same date, the entire household was consecrated to the Most Holy Heart of Mary.²

1 Munich community letter, 1859.12.18

2 Necrology of Mother M. of Saint John of the Cross David DJ-5.1

The feast of the Immaculate Conception was also a day of Marian fervour:

. . . . On December 8, our dear Mother had the statue illuminated with coloured lights. Here is our place of pilgrimage, where we make novenas, etc.

Always, Mary shows herself our Mother. ¹

On April 23, 1878, at 14.30, ten years after the death of Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia, Mother Mary of Saint John of the Cross David ended her mission in the service of the Good Shepherd. The most fitting eulogy that could be given to one who was the well beloved daughter, the "faithful Anne of St. Bartholomew" of our Saintly Foundress, was expressed by the Good inhabitants in the neighbourhood of the convent:

The good Mother would have been received with mercy by God; she who was always so merciful! . . . ²

1 Munich community letter, 1857.12.29

2 Necrology of Mother Mary of Saint John of the Cross David DJ-5.1

APPENDIX

1. Letter of Sister Mary of Saint John of the Cross David to Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia, dated December 8, 1835, and written from Nancy.
2. Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia's reply, dated December 17, 1835
3. Letter dated April 20, 1866, written to Angers by Sister Mary of St. John of the Cross DA VID, during the illness of Mother M. of Saint Euphrasia.
4. A few biographical details on Msgr. Donnet.

Sr. M. of Saint John of the Cross David to Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia

V.J.M.

From our Monastery of Nancy
December 8, 1835

Lord, purify my lips that I may worthily proclaim your blessings.

My very honoured and most worthy Mother,

How can I convey to you all that God in his bounty has done for the least worthy of his children! Truly we are dumbfounded and I do not know how to give you an account of all that happened yesterday.

Your charity knows that Monsignor was to come and celebrate Holy Mass, he came and enriched us with the greatest gift of all, for up to then we had (not) been able to have the most Blessed Sacrament. He left it with us and we went to communion. This was a great joy for us, for, dear Mother, we would be very ungrateful were we to complain.

Nevertheless, to lie to your charity would be wrong, and I think it is a duty to let you know our sufferings, our sacrifices, so that you can see clearly, he who distributes the favours is also the one who moderates them and affirms them through the cross. I assure you that I would fear if privations did not come side by side with the help received and you, my dear Mother, who bring forth children only on Calvary, you could tremble. I will tell you therefore, though the daughters of the Generalate be destined to found houses relying only on Providence following the example of our divine Saviour and of his apostles, to find themselves always most happy and to suffer voluntarily, what is most advantageous are the various disappointments which arrive in the foundations. *
Here are ours:

** The first letters written by Sr. M. of St. John of the Cross, at a time when she was barely literate contained many mistakes. In the case of certain passages, one can only guess at the meaning which makes translation difficult.*

First, today, feast of the Conception, we had no Mass. Nothing. Though up to now we have been ready to "present" our poor consciences to anyone who would listen - fortunately we are not scrupulous - we have been deprived of spiritual help all Winter. You see that it is the most painful cross which God could require his spouses to carry.

For material matters, we have many privations, but that is all for our good; I do not wish to dwell further on this; and perhaps the Blessed Virgin would not be pleased, for she has such care of us. It would be to offend her. Nevertheless she also wishes that I tell you everything.

But, my very honoured Mother, let us come back to all that took place on Sunday. It had been announced in all the parishes of the city that Monsignor was coming to celebrate Mass for us. There was a large crowd, including several persons of distinction. Monsignor had brought with him a packet of handbills which he distributed to everybody after Mass. He made a very moving exhortation, using the most touching passages taken from the handbill. He spoke of the sublimity of our vocation and how the region needed such an establishment, of all the good done by our houses and of all they would do. He did not forget the establishment of the Prefect of Angers and the foundations which have been requested of you.

Dear Mother, I do not know if I have done well to say all that about our Mother House. You see, when I am obliged to speak I pray to the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin. I tell the sisters that while I speak they are to pray so that I may say only what our Mother would say were she asked to speak.

In this meeting, Monsignor asked everybody to help the good work in all possible ways, according to their means. He said we would gladly accept all that would be offered to us. Turning to us, he encouraged us, with words full of goodness and trust, to continue the work. He repeated several times that we should trust in Providence. "Yes", my sisters, have confidence. I say to you on behalf of God, this community will become the help and the consolation of the entire region (province) and of the whole of society." A collection was made; we received 149 francs and 200 which Monsignor had given us before Mass. After the ceremony he told me he was coming to visit the house. I said to him: 'Will your Lordship not take some refreshments?' for the Sisters of the Doctrine had had the extreme kindness of preparing and offering us

what was needed. He contented himself with taking a little dry bread and that very joyfully. Several other ecclesiastics, all very favourably inclined towards the house, were also present. In his short sermon, Monsignor also said that Monsignor de Janson had the greatest interest in the work, explaining how he had received us, and that he himself undertook to do something. It can be said that he overlooked nothing to arouse the interest of the public. I accompanied him everywhere and he gave me very good advice on the government of our house.

I was very frank with him, for I must tell you that on Saturday I was a little concerned about the young persons who had requested admission. The burden of being superior made itself felt and as I am so weak and imperfect, I wished to be discharged of it. I cried much in secret. Here is the source of my anxiety.

Mister Marguet said I should receive two young persons from a very good, even rich family, but at our expense.

Personally, I felt that the parents could well afford to pay the 200 francs; that it would be to deprive of a place some poor penitent who may present herself later, and who has nobody to help her. I remained firm and agreed to accept applicants only in keeping with the "prospectus". For, Mister Marguet is good and extremely zealous, but perhaps not sufficiently prudent. I both feared and foresaw that he would frequently send us such persons (perhaps who could pay?). Hence I felt obliged to say a word on this matter but very moderately, to Monsignor. Throughout, I showed my esteem for all that he (Mister Marguet) had done for us. This esteem should continue eternally. Monsignor who is very prudent replied: 'My daughter let him be for a few more months and then I will arrange everything. But I advise you to be very prudent;

to govern your house well;
be the master in your own house;
be firm with Mister Marguet, he could lead you too far.'

There, you see what I decided, and, now I am at peace. I also made clear to Monsignor, that I desire to follow his wise counsels in everything.

I spoke to him about a confessor. He immediately mentioned the matter to our Parish Priest, who accepted the charge. He is a very good priest in his forties.

He told us that he will give us a chaplain later. I can say that he is all in favour of the work. He shows the greatest interest in all that concerns us. I think Mother, that it is necessary to have some of our sisters come (here). Would it be good to ask him to request them or to permit us to do so. I have noticed that he appreciates being trusted. We will do what you tell us. When you can do so, send (them) to us.

Our class has begun. We have three, Mother, but, a preservation class for young persons of good families seems unavoidable. But if your charity thinks well of it, I suggest waiting until next Summer. For our "penitents", would you kindly allow their headdress to be changed. Could they use a head-band (kerchief) instead of the bonnets? This is because of the region where there is a strong dislike for those of Angers; bonnets being unknown in Nancy. It is a minor matter.

When your charity can do so, we will be pleased if you send us some lay sisters. In spite of my desire to do the cooking I cannot do so regularly and our meals are not well prepared. Then I find myself obliged to cook. A good young lady, named Celeste, whom you met at the (Sisters of Christian Doctrine) gives us wheat. Mister Marguet wishes to give us a cow. See, if your charity does not come to our rescue, I will be forced to be cook, milkmaid, baker, and care for the poultry, for I forgot to tell you how our community had increased. Mister Poirret gave us his dog and Madame six baby chicks; if your charity wishes to pay us a visit next Summer you can eat some of "my pupils".

Dear Mother, must we write to Monsignor de Janson and to Monsignor Coadjutor for the first of January? I do not know what to do. Could you kindly instruct me and also for all other persons. If we should write to our Bishops, could your charity kindly send us a draft (letter) and tell us how to proceed in all matters. I wish that your charity should be informed of everything either by me or by the sisters, whom I would wish to tell you whatever they like. I told Sister Marguerite to write to you. She should do this on Sunday to tell you about her penitents, and to ask you to bless her and her little flock whom we recommend to your prayers. We likewise recommend all of us to your prayers, for we do not doubt that the graces which flow abundantly on this flock are the result of the crosses and prayers of your Charity and of all the dear sisters whom we do not forget.

Nothing equals being close to you, my very dear Mother, in the land of the living. Dear Mother, I do not know why, but the further I go the worse I write. Soon you will not be able to read my letters. However, I wish to have lessons when I get the time. And mother, I feel so happy when I write to you that I have a thousand ideas in my head. I tell our Sisters that our worthy mother has the gift of deciphering handwriting and that she will be able to read ours. Dear Mother, we have just sung the Office for the feast of the Immaculate.

Dear Mother, Mister Nageotte's feet still trouble him. He told Mary Augustine that he had received a letter from Angers, but that it had not been written by you, that he had been offended by this, especially as the letter contained many mistakes and that he had been surprised that such a letter should come from the Mother House. He compared it with yours, saying there were no faults in the ones you had written. He added: "it is fortunate that the letter fell into my own hands. I fear it was the same person who wrote to Mister Poiret". Pardon me, dear Mother, but I was so hurt by it, that I cannot resist telling you about it, so that our sisters will be more careful. It is a real suffering to be unable to write, and at the same time to know you are under close observation.

Now, dear Mother, if your charity permits, could our sisters prepared two books, one for the community and one for the benefactors. We will pay for them and our sisters can bring them here.

Our dear Sister Saint Augustine wrote us a letter of one page (only); she obliges us to pay the postage for blank paper; as penance she should send us six pages, covered with writing.

I must leave you once more. What a sacrifice! We all kneel to receive your blessing and we make bold to embrace you and all our dear sisters whom we love. We want to have news of you, as we have not had any for a long time.

Dear Mother, if Mister Nageotte saw this letter, it is certain that he could not count all the mistakes, for they are too numerous. I am the first to wish that there should not be any.

I am, with deep respect, my very Honoured Mother, your unworthy daughter,

Sister Mary of Saint John of the Cross
Religious of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd.
D.S.B.

Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia to Sr. M. of Saint John of the Cross David

Live Jesus and Mary!

From our Monastery of Angers,
December 17, 1835

My Beloved Daughter, I fear, from the anxiety expressed in your letter, received this morning that our letters must have been lost, for my poor heart has often spoken to my children at Nancy. Your hearts are in the wine-press of privation. I see your troubles, and have known them too, and I pray our Lord to give you light and grace. You are deprived of all holy consolations, my very dear daughters. Oh! courage. I see in God that these crosses are the very roots of the work which shall flourish in Nancy. Yes, it will be a great work; yet a little while, my eldest daughter, and you shall see great things. Once the worst of the cold is over, the Mother House will send you help in both choir and lay sisters. I have the sweet confidence that God will do everything, through Mary, our Mother. Oh, my dear daughter, we shall indeed most gladly receive your first-born. The dear postulant is received upon the conditions you made, which are good. Try and send her to us. It will be a joy to all the Chapter, which loves you tenderly, and beseeches you to continue your sweet cordiality, for it rejoices Sion. The Paris postulant is just what you thought: very good, happy, quite contented. Oh, please tell the Bishop Coadjutor¹, that if she perseveres, she shall have his name, and be sent to him after her profession. No, I shall refuse nothing to him - talk everything over with him: he is very prudent. Write to him for New Year's Day. Ah! how happy for us that he is devoted to us, for with regard to Mister Marguet the prejudice is so great that we cannot succeed. Try to remain neutral in all that. Let us pray much.

Our dear Sister Marguerite has not said anything about her penitents yet. Have you any news of them? And you, my dear Saint Benedict, as a good treasurer will you soon send me a long list of the gifts you have received? Courage my three Xaviers! Be true apostles, humble of heart, interior, pious, zealous; make his work triumph. Our sisters are writing to you, and will tell you of the

1 Msgr. Donnet

graces God has poured out upon us. The Benediction, the Coadjutor Bishop's sermon, the collection, and the help given, all make us humble ourselves before God. How many graces! We are waiting for your community letter. For the house in Turique, it is certainly not too expensive. Listen, we must do good and let (people) say what they like. Good bye my dear daughters, good bye. I am in union with the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary, with deep tenderness,

Your attached,
Mary of Saint Euphrasia.
D.S.B

Sr. Mary of St. John of the Cross David to Sister Assistant of the Mother House

V.J. et M.

From our Monastery of Munich
April 20, 1868

My very honoured and dearly loved Sister,

Oh! yes we give news to Etmansdorf; we have done so several times. What a terrible illness. What does the doctor call it? No one has yet told (us) the name. We must still hope that God will preserve our revered Mother for us; I am continually preoccupied with this and it seems to me that the dreaded blow has been avoided. Alas! It is the hope and the desire to share this worthy Mother that gives me this confidence. This morning again, we offered Mass and communicated for our saintly patient. All we can do is to pray. Concerning the vows and the promises, for all that is in our power, we associate ourselves with your charities, both now and in the future. Our venerated Mother is for us a treasure and a sermon.¹ According to the custom we have sent three donations to a Church which is a place of pilgrimage, asking for prayers, especially for the grace of a cure. We have asked all the priests we know for a remembrance in the sacrifice of the Mass. My God, if only we could see our Mother once more. It is a great sorrow for me. I know well I cannot do much. If only God would accept our sacrifices for the cure of our good Mother, so that we could at least save her life and free her from extreme suffering. Let us make a novena to Father Eudes. I know that the cause for his beatification has been introduced in Rome. Perhaps God wishes to make known the sanctity of his servant, and that he will acknowledge in our Mother the instrument which has accomplished the projects dear to his heart, for the work and the aim which he had set himself on earth and which persecutions and crosses prevented him putting into execution as he would have wished. Also, that we are his daughters.

Please tell our saintly Mother how closely we remain united to her in her sufferings. If it was in our power to give her some relief we would gladly do so. In these sentiments, I am in union with the divine Hearts of Jesus and Mary, my very worthy sister,

Sister Mary of Saint John of the Cross,
Superior of Our Lady of Charity of Munich,
your unworthy sister and servant in Our Lord.

1 Here, the French original has the word "preche".

MONSEIGNEUR DONNET

Francis Auguste, Ferdinand DONNET was born on November 16, 1795 in BOURG-ARGENT AL in the diocese of Lyons. He was Parish Priest of IRIGNY and later Vicar General of TOURS. In 1827 he was named Parish Priest of VILLEFRANCHE on the SAONE (Rhône):

. . . . Father Dufetre, who had not forgotten his old friend, Father Donnet, recently appointed Parish Priest of VILLEFRANCHE, decided to profit by the free time imposed on him as a result of his exile, to visit him in his new parish. ¹

In 1835, Msgr. de Forbin Janson who knew Father Donnet, asked to have him as Coadjutor in his diocese of NANCY:

. . . . In what concerns the title for my auxiliary, I would prefer that of Coadjutor with the right to succession. It is this (title) which I beg your Paternal indulgence to confer on Father DONNET, who is Parish Priest of VILLEFRANCHE on-Saone, Vicar General of TOURS and honorary Canon of BLOIS. He is now forty years of age. ²

. . . . It was during his travels in the district of Lyons that he (Msgr. de Forbin Janson) had had the opportunity of appreciating the Parish Priest of VILLEFRANCHE. Though not attached to any particular society, Father DONNET had given the best years of his life time as a young priest to visiting the churches of France, giving pastoral retreats and missions in the various towns.

He was recalled to his diocese by Msgr. de PINS. In the parish of VILLEFRANCHE, as previously in IRIGNY, he ³gave proof of a rare talent for reconciliation joined with other precious qualities. . . . Soon a close friendship existed between these two souls. . . .

1 Msgr. Crosnier. "Life of Msgr. Dufetre" Tolba & Haton Paris, 1868

2 R.P. Philpin de Riviere. "Life of Msgr. de Forbin Janson" J. Leday & Co. Paris. 1891

3 Idem

The venerable Priest of VILLEFRANCHE showed little hesitation when there was a question of rendering a service to the Church. He accepted. . . (and) he became Bishop of Rosa and Coadjutor of NANCY with the right to future succession. Msgr. de JANSON wished that the (episcopal) consecration of the man he had chosen be carried out by himself personally. . . .

The ceremony took place in PARIS in the church of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. . . .¹

Father DUFETRE noted:

. . . . May 31, 1835; consecration of my friend the Coadjutor of NANCY²

and in 1837 he continued:

. . . with Msgr. DONNET, a journey, planned a long time ago. The two friends left NANCY during the month of May. Together they visited BADE, Karlsruhe, Darmstadt, Aix-la-Chapelle, Liege Anvers, Brussels, Gand, and several other towns.

On May 19, 1837 he was promoted to the arch-episcopal see of BORDEAUX, which had become vacant at the death of Cardinal de Cheverus.

On March 15, 1852 he was promoted to the rank of Cardinal priest with the title of "Santa Maria in Via".

He died on December 23, 1882.⁴

1 R.P. Philpin de Riviere. "Life of Msgr. de Forbin Janson" J. Leday & Co. Paris, 1891

2 Msgr. Crosnier. "Life of Msgr. Dufetre" Tolba & Haton Paris, 1868

3 Idem

4 Archives V2-01 a.

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 - to Sr. M. of St. John of the Cross David I.CB-6
(189 letters from 1835 to 1861: 85 to Nancy
104 to Munich)
 - to Sr. M. of St. Louis Royme I.CB-3
 - to Sr. M. of St. Stanislas Bedouet I.CB -1
 - to Sr. M. of St. Sophy Lavoye I.CB-4
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SISTER MARY OF SAINT LOUIS ROYNE

1797 - 1858

Sister Bernadette Egozcue, R.G.S., Province of France
(Original in French)

SISTER MARY OF SAINT LOUIS ROYNE 1797 - 1858

. . . draw your strength from the Lord and his mighty power. Put on the armor of God. (Eph. 6: 10-11)

Your great St. Louis comes full of good news, she is the warrior of Israel, she always has the shout-of victory. (SME, Aug. 21, 1834)

My dear Warrior,
My God, what a letter, how it consoles me. (SME, Nov. 8, 1837)

These quotations give us straightaway an idea of the personality of Sr. M. St. Louis Royne - its richness but also its pitfalls!

On May 23, 1797, Victoire Royne was born and baptised in the parish of Saint Maurice, Angers, department of Maine and Loire. Her parents were Urbain Royne and Marie Fouquet.

She would be among the first postulants received by Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia in Angers:

. . . a young girl, native of Angers also presented herself at the same time.¹ She later became our dear Sister M. of St. Louis. The young girl was rich and had a fund of good will at her disposal. The difficulty was on the side of her parents who were vigorously opposed to her becoming a religious. They threatened to cut off her inheritance, but she preferred spiritual goods to those of this world and entered our community which received her with joy, though she was peniless and we were at the time living in extreme poverty.²

Sister Mary of St Louis pronounced her vows on March 8, 1833 before Fr. Jean, parish priest of St. Laud³ She was then 36 years old. According to Portais, she had a firm and resolute character, great maturity of judgment and a remarkable business acumen.⁴

1 The reference is to the arrival on June 10, 1831, of the little orphan of "The Providence".

2 R-1 I11a

3 2-1, p.33

4 M. le Chanoine Portais. La Venerable Mere M. de Ste. Euphrasie Pelletier, Germain and Grassin, Angers, 1989 - Volume 1, p.182

She would become first economé of the Mother House and by the end of the same year (1833) would be named Superior of the new foundation of Grenoble.

There was in Grenoble a community of the Refuge which, due to poor management, had fallen into utter poverty. Msgr. de Bruillard, bishop of the city, wrote several times to our very honored Mother to ask her for subjects capable of governing this House and reestablishing the Rule.¹

The beginnings were difficult and filled with all kinds of conflicts: "The beginnings of our dear Monastery of Grenoble were a tissue of sufferings, humiliations and all kinds of crosses."²

The sisters of the Refuge changed their mind and refused to receive the new arrivals. Sr. Philippe Mercier, meant to be the Assistant of the Grenoble house, lost her temper to the extent of seeming disrespectful to the Bishop. She had to leave Grenoble and the foundation seemed to be in jeopardy. Mother Euphrasia wrote to Sr. M. of St. Louis:

Jesus Christ is my life and to die is gain.

Oh, yes, my very dear daughter, death will be sweet to me if I could give you the support for the holy work. . . In the name of obedience, send back Sr. Philippe. . . My daughter, save the work. . . Try to soothe the holy prelate, talk to the priests. . . You, my daughter, with your capable character, do something; may the good God enlighten you.
(1833.12.29)

From the earliest days what was at stake was the future Generalate.

Msgr. Teston, Vicar General of Grenoble, gave the reason for the Refuge Sisters' change of mind in a letter to Mother M. of St. Euphrasia

1R-1 -III

2 Idem

I must tell you that the correspondence of Sister Seraphim with Caen and several other houses of the Order gave rise to a scruple which she has communicated to all in her house. She claims that by uniting with the House of the Good Shepherd of Angers (would mean separation from) all the old houses of the Order, which she believes she cannot do in conscience. . . Otherwise she finds nothing wrong with your daughters who have made profession according to the Rule and the Customs. . . ¹
(1834.01.03)

Despite the difficulties the "warrior" remained confident. Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia wrote to Sr. M. of St. Stanislaus:

I believe, my daughter, that Mary of St. Louis strides along like you, Constitutions in hand. She wrote me that even prison itself will not make her change.(1834.01.07)

Monsignor (of Grenoble) is all for them. He has read the Constitutions. . has said: It is you whom I will keep as my daughters.(1834.01.30)

For the Bishop the problems seem to have been resolved. But Mary of St. Louis was not so prudent. Carried away by her great desire to please her beloved Mother and also by her zeal, nothing seemed to be too beautiful or too grand for her. Without funds, she began building on a grand scale; she forgot only one thing: to submit an estimate to the Council!

. . . why have you put the laborers to work without making an estimate and sending it to us? . . . You are wrong but God sees your uprightness.
(1834.02.12)

The same day Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia wrote to Sister M. of St. Stanislaus:

. . . Grenoble! Ah, my daughter, what darkness! My soul is suffering . . . Poor St. Louis has put us into debt, goes too fast, has built choir, grills, chapel at our expense, writes that she fears for the work, . . . it is not sustained by prudence.

¹ EA-5.0J(l)

But despite all this, Mother M. of St. Euphrasia's support never failed:

God helping, we will uphold you till the Cross. (1834.02.12)

Although you have been amiss, you have my trust always. (1834.03.11)

The following account, which throws light on the above quotation is found in a letter of March 3, to Sister M. of St. Stanislaus:

Our worthy Assistant having warned her with a sweet and humble charity was so badly received that we have been broken-hearted by it. .

Perhaps it is not with ill will. . . We all pray and hope that God will give her the true religious spirit. She is good and virtuous, that is much.

But greater problems were not long in surfacing. The unity within the community - perhaps never very strong - was threatened. And the Superior's character did not help to settle matters.

. . . Mary of St. Louis has just written asking me boldly... . (1835.05.21)

. . . her sad moments of discontent. . . . (1835.07.04)

are some of the expressions employed by Mother Saint Euphrasia in her correspondence with Sister M. Stanislaus.

Despite the poignant letters of Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia calling on each one "to this intimate union which is the only joy of our exile," (1835.02.08), Sister M. of St. Helen, Mistress of the Class violently opposed the superior who sent her back to Angers without having received the formal order to do so. The situation was such that in August, 1835,

. . . our worthy Mother General went to Grenoble where she was awaited as a consoling angel. Her presence was urgently needed in this Monastery due to various matters it was necessary for her to resolve.¹

1 R-J-III

The only available alternative seemed to be to change the superior. Mother Saint Euphrasia brought back Sr. M. of St. Louis to Angers; a few months later she was named Assistant of the new foundation of Amiens:

Our dear Sr. M. of St. Louis Royné was named Assistant of this new foundation and she left Angers on April 12, accompanied by two of our Sisters. The installation and the ceremony of enclosure took place on the 25th of the same month.¹

Her stay at Amiens was quite short as We find her Assistant of Lille in September of the same year.² Afterwards she would be sent to found Rheims. Her correspondence with Mother Foundress during her term as Superior of Rheims has been preserved and there are 22 letters from June, 1837 to February 1839.

As at Grenoble, the hardships of the early days did not daunt M. Louis. She wrote:

. . . your courier's one desire is to do what you wish, always assured that while being ready to travel again if you wish it, we are not the less decided, as faithful warrior of our worthy Mother General, to fight generously. . . St. Louis will not abandon the place. . . If it is necessary to fight, we will fight, if we must struggle, we shall struggle; what are the efforts of men to stop the Holy Will of God? (1837.08.06)

Was it to make amends for the mistakes of her early religious life that she began to account so meticulously for the money and other gifts received during this period? For instance, she writes:

The preacher took the collection for this day and that of the Octave, adding up to a total of 61 francs. The same day, a lady came to visit us, not in a small cabriolet . . . but in a big beautiful cart. Without hurting her, one can call her "The Kind Bouru", being of a height and voice like a man's and with an utterly rural simplicity. . .

Then follows a list of farm products and various gifts given by several people. Everything was told with much humour:

. . . what a pity to be so far from her Father de Neuville, St. Louis could also send him fresh eggs even though this poor economé has no more chickens, but we have a cock we are fattening up for the end of Lent. (November, 1837)

1 R-I -III, p.101

2 R-I -IV, p.188

Mother St. Euphrasia certainly appreciated this sense of humour in her correspondent:

. . . I must admit that being by myself, your letter made me laugh till I cried!. . . I counted six mischiefs in your letter, is that pardonable? In the refectory I could not get over them and I laughed out loud. (1835.03.08)

With her business sense, Louis knew how to profit from her "economies" to provide for the needs of the house which had "34 young persons" in February, 1838. She also knew how to "detect" and get in touch with possible benefactors:

. . . a lady I did not know was standing at the door with our chaplain. . . Fortunately, at my greeting, I realized that she could not see clearly so I brought her a candle which was on our prie-dieu. She was so touched by this little attention. . . a thoughtfulness at the right time can entice a gift. .
(November, 1837)

This was realized in fact for in the next letter we read a list of the gifts which this lady brought two days later. Mother M. of St. Euphrasia was amused and wrote back:

. . . but you will always be at the head, won't you, my St. Louis? Without that, watch out for the purse! Our young economies will not go to bring the light to good devout ladies, etc. . . The ladies in carts will no longer bring milk and cheese; in short, my dear courier, remain economer, but surely I will send you a helper. (1837.11.20)

Sr. M. Louis was a woman who could relate easily to many people. It was a trait she herself noted when she wrote on Sept. 15, 1837:

. . . you will learn with pleasure that your courier who knows people everywhere has just renewed a good acquaintance. . . Monsieur Firmin . . Superior of the Seminary. . . brother of my mama's baker whom I knew well in the world. . . (he) was not sorry to find an Angevine. . . he never comes to see us without bringing us something.

Many times in her letters Sr. M. of St Louis calls herself the 'courier'. Mother Foundress sometimes calls her "my Gospel messenger. "
(1837.11.01)

With great freedom, Louis gives her opinions regarding persons and events:

. . . I believe, dear Mother, that Troyes must be given up. . .
(1837.07.09)

Sens. . . I have no doubt that Your Charity would have much to suffer from this foundation. Mary of St. Eulalie is good but allow me to tell you, I believe she does not have the talent to win the benefactresses. She is so meticulous, says a hundred words without saying anything, which will be the martyrdom to be suffered by the subjects who will be with her. I assure you, the time I spent there seemed so long to me. . . I really feel sorry for Sr. Placide for she is going to suffer much. . . I assure you, she is very fine and devoted to the work which makes it doubly hard.
(1837.07.02)

She uses this same liberty of expression to make her suggestions:

We approve, very dear Mother, the resolution of the Council to recall all the dear novices to our dear Novitiate. . . A thought has come to me which I communicate to you regarding Marie of the Saints. I don't know if my fears are founded but, worthy Mother, I am always afraid that having a Visitation Convent here of which M. Gros is the Superior. . . that seeing her professed will be a surprise. . . I so greatly fear that would compromise the Congregation for nothing.

If there have been people nasty enough to have written to Rome that you advance the profession dates, perhaps there are those who would dare to harm us still more for admitting her to profession without passing through our novitiate. (1837.09.23)

Also, her own foresight made her anticipate possible objections:

. . . As for the novices, you can be perfectly at peace. Not one of these gentlemen have found fault with those you have sent here. I have taken care to foresee any possible complaint as I do not want them to think that you are sending novices because of the lack of professed sisters. We said that because of our 4th Vow we must let them spend their second year in the classes and that having a considerable number in the General Novitiate, you believed you should send them to the foundations. . . They found this quite right.(1838.01.09)

Faithful warrior that she is, she is ready to give her life for the "holy work", encouraged by the trust Mother Mary of Saint Euphrasia showed her inspite of everything:

The vehicle of Monsignor will pick us up to bring us to our house to begin our great work. Pray much, then, my most worthy Mother, for your poor daughter whom you have placed at the head. . . that she may fulfill all your desires, satisfy your heart, and respond to the trust you have deigned to repose on us, unworthy though we are. St. Louis, despite her misery, wants to sustain the honor and the glory of the Generalate for which she would give her life if need be. . . (1837.03.09)

She was ready to give her life but what was harder was the separation from her beloved Mother. With simplicity, she kept repeating her affection for Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia and also her need to be loved:

. . . St. Louis, that which costs her more are that which is the daily sacrifice of her heart is to be so far from her Mother - in body. For in heart and in spirit I am always close to your Charity. . . You know the need I have (to be loved) (1837.07.09)

Think, dear Mother, what a long time your fighter, your messenger, has not seen you, embraced and talked to you, she who so loves and cherishes her Mother. Come, then, loved Mother, come. I am consumed by the desire to see you. (1838.09.23)

Her desire would be granted for we read in the Community Letter of December 18, 1838:

The 1st of November. . . we had the joy of seeing the arrival of our very honored Mother General in our little desert.

But some stormy discussions took place: Sr. M. of S1. Louis felt the need to reassure her beloved Mother:

Our dear Sr. Assistant seemed to fear that we have not taken well the advice Your Charity has deigned to give us. . . We have not lost the calm and the peace which we have enjoyed in the midst of all the woes for which they blamed me before our Mother. (1838.11.20)

Nevertheless the situation did not improve. We can see this in a letter of February 3, 1839, written by Mother M. of St Euphrasia to St. M. of St. John of the Cross David:

We are in distress about the house of Rheims We are obliged to change the Superior. The ecclesiastical Superiors have been requesting this for the past four months.

We are sending M. St. Louis to Nancy. We would greatly wish, my daughter, that you make her your Assistant and economer.

A little later, on April 18th:

If Sister M. of Louis is bored at Nancy, we will offer her (the option) to go elsewhere as Assistant.

She must have left Nancy soon after as we find her signature in the Vow Book for the renewal of vows in Angers on November 21st. In 1840 she was economer at Strasbourg but only for a short time.

It would be important that you train a young sister for the accounting so that this beautiful Monastery of Strasbourg may not perish; afterwards I have thought of taking back my old economer; she will cheer me up a little in the distress that is inseparable from great works. (1840.08.14)

In November 1840, she was named Assistant in Paris, where she remained only for a short time.

In 1841 and 1842 she renewed her vows in Angers so we may suppose that "the old economer" has returned to the Mother House. This stay will again be of short duration for she will be named for Aries in 1843. The difficulties were immense: Mother Saint Euphrasia wrote to her Oct. 18.1843

"The truly obedient will not perish."

You live with God alone because all abandon you except us . . . Do you believe you can succeed? Humanly speaking I feel it is impossible but God is there and you are so brave. .

A year later, the situation was much better:

God be blessed in all, my dear daughters of Arles, but you are indeed spoiled children! It is enough to say Mother St. Louis wants this or that for all hearts to fly to her.

Our two sisters set out on December 1. travelling slowly as far as Bourges . You will, nevertheless see them very soon . We are sending you some pretty little gifts my very dear daughter. But woe to you if you do not prepare a lovely monastery for me. I give you six months...

(1844.11.28)

In a letter written by a secretary dated Jan. 21, a small note was included naming Sr. M. of St. Louis Assistant for the south

Be my Assistant for the whole of the south. Once more I have a heavy cross - Perpignan . . . Puy . . . is in a state of desolation.

At the same time the foundation of Alger was being prepared:

. . . my good daughter, if you could help our sisters to set out for Africa.
P.S If only I could find out if our sisters have left for Africa.

At Arles, prosperity seems to have dried up:

You have a lot of trouble with your acquisitions. . . you were doing so well last year; courage! (1845.12.17)

Community problems also began to accumulate. The ecclesiastical Superior asked to have two sisters changed.

. . . send them to Perpignan, my dear daughter. Nevertheless they were so good and loved you so much.(1846.04.04)

The discouragement of her "faithful fighter" made Mother St. Euphrasia write successively on May 10 and May 26, 1846:

You will cheer up again, won't you, my St. Louis? Not a letter for your poor Mother! You are cross then, my naughty daughter. You will pay for it: you will not know three great secrets I would like to tell you as to my Assistant. Oh, yes, you lose it; it was a good one. When you will be in good humor I will really make you laugh. . .

In God, rekindle your zeal; revive yourself and come out of your distress. A little bit of courage, Mother St. Louis. . . At least you are not giving up?

The troubles of the Revolution of 1848 were a great trial to Mother St. Euphrasia and she shared her sorrow with Louis:

Our sorrows are so great that we can hardly breathe, but submissive to the Holy Will of God. . . God and your letters console me. (1848.05.08)

I have a great need to be consoled. I am in an abyss of sorrow. The tears of the Sovereign Pontiff break my heart. . . (1848.05.26)

After some time Sister Mary of St. Louis fell ill.

You are sick, my daughter. . . (1850, July)
. . . it increases my martyrdom to leave you suffering: a little more patience and I hope to be able to relieve you. . . (1851)

It would seem that a shortage of sisters had made Sr. M. of St. Louis fear that she would be unable to leave Arles to take part in the Chapter:

Do not change your old friend for a new one (Wisdom)

Listen, I will be deeply pained if you do not come for the election, for the big reunion. Oh, if God wishes to grant me the grace of finding two suitable subjects soon, I will send them to you immediately. You will come back to console us; you will tell us your combats and your victories. You need an Assistant. If she and the two sisters were able to set out, only after the election, would you come all the same? I desire ardently to see you. But perhaps it is not possible for you (to come)? . . . (1851.07.15)

On July 31, Sr. M. of St. Louis took part in the election in Angers.
The end of the combats was soon to be - just three years later.

Returning to the Mother House after leaving Arles. . . this worthy sister found her joy and happiness near our venerated Mother who surrounded her with esteem and maternal affection. Suffering from a heart ailment for several months, she never lost her usual gaiety. . . Sister M. of St. Louis Royne went to appear before God on Sunday the 10 (January, 1858) at one in the morning. Her death plunged our worthy Mother General into profound grief. She had lost one of her first daughters, a friend. . . (Necrology)

"I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race. . ."
(2 Tim. 4:7)

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SISTER MARIE THERESE DE JESUS DE COUESPEL

(1799 - 1848)

Sister Mary James Wilson, R.G.S., Philippine Province
(Original in English)

SISTER MARIE THERESE DE JESUS DE COUESPEL

(1799 - 1848)

"My faithful and beloved missionary"
(SME, July 24, 1841)

Among the early followers and supporters of St. Mary Euphrasia, one of the most colorful personalities seems to be Marie Therese of Jesus de Couespel. Although she entered after the Generalate was already established, she shared with the sisters of the founding community a personal attachment to Mary Euphrasia as well as a fierce loyalty to the "holy work", such that Mother Foundress always considered her a pillar of the Congregation.

Her friendship with SME began when she was still in the world, the wife of an army officer, a nobleman from Brittany. Born in Angers May 16, 1799, Melanie Paulmier came from a highly respected family. Her father, Charles Paulmier, had been a mayor of Angers.

Only three years younger than Euphrasia, she had much in common with Mother Foundress: both were born soon after the French Revolution, both were strong-willed, courageous, vivacious and intelligent. And when Melanie joined the Good Shepherd, she, too, developed a great love and loyalty to the Institute and its great aim of saving souls. In this common love for the Institute, she and Euphrasia were truly "soul-mates."

It is interesting to note how Mary Euphrasia nurtured the spiritual life of this society woman, particularly during the two years prior to 1836. Melanie was then nursing her ailing husband who had retired to Angers in ill health. Being a friend and benefactress of the Good Shepherd, it was natural for her to turn to the congenial Superior of the Bon Pasteur. Pasquier, a biographer of Mother Foundress, claims that Euphrasia "encouraged her in various spiritual practices, pious reading, patience and submission to the will of God and gradually, while still in the world, formed her to the religious life. "¹

1 Pasquier, H. Life of Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia Pelletier (London: Burns and Gates, Ltd., 1893), Vol. 1, p. 290

Such an assertion may seem strange now to 20th century sensibilities but Melanie Paulmier de Couespel and Mary Euphrasia lived in a different era. Melanie came from a devout Catholic family and as a child had received an excellent education from a Calvairienne nun. The sister had been hidden in her parents' house during the Revolution and later became her teacher¹ The grown up Melanie had to take her place in the "worldly" society of her time but she had already received a solid Catholic education and been trained in the devotional practices of the period. The two years spent caring for her husband Claude before his peaceful death must have also given her ample time to reflect deeply on what truly matters for eternity.

Claude de Couespel died on December 28, 1835. Melanie was now alone after eight years of childless marriage.² In her bereavement she came to the Monastery and found peace in the silence of prayer and recollection. Actually, the seed of a vocation had already been sown in the depths of her heart. There is an account in the Angers Annals that when Monsieur de Couespel told his wife his distress at leaving her alone after his death, Melanie had replied that the world no longer held any attraction for her. If he died, she would enter the Good Shepherd whose work for souls was most appealing to her. It is related that Claude exclaimed, "God be blessed! I will die happy!"³

In the meantime, Euphrasia, watching her guest during the three weeks that Melanie stayed in the convent, had also perceived the stirrings of vocation and saw in the young widow a possible collaborator for the "holy work." With her characteristic decisiveness, and trusting in God's power to call whom He wills, Mother Foundress made this vow which is recorded in the Book of Chapter Acts:

1 Annals R-I -IV, p.163

2 In the manuscript Annals, there is a story probably recounted by Melanie herself of a pilgrimage she made to the shrine of Notre Dame du Chene to beg Our Lady for children. Later in a dream, she saw Our Lady place her hand over her head saying, HI promise you, my daughter, that one day you will have a big family, but the time has not yet come. This prophetic dream seems to have been fulfilled in the numerous children that Therese cared for in the monasteries of the Good Shepherd in which she exercised her ministry of spiritual motherhood.

3 Annals R-I - IV, p.164

On the First Friday of this year, 1836, in honor of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, I, Sr. Mary of Saint Euphrasia Pelletier, Superioress General, vow, in the presence of our sisters of the Chapter, to say every day for a year the Stabat, the Sub Tuum, and three times the invocation to St. Joseph, if the Blessed Virgin should obtain for us the entrance into our Congregation of Madame de Couespel.¹

Melanie herself describes her last-minute doubts and indecision:

At the end of three weeks I returned home, to set my affairs in order. When I re-entered that house, all the old anguish . . . rushed in upon me again, nor did I recover peace until once more in that holy dwelling. Before I went back to it, I wanted to consult Monsignor Flaget about what I was passing through interiorly. I went to the Bishop's house and opened my heart to him. At the close of an hour's conversation, my fears were still not altogether overcome. Within me a strong voice seemed to call me to the religious life; but on the other hand, I felt so utterly unworthy of forming part of such a holy company, it seemed so presumptuous of me to think of becoming the spouse of the King of Glory, like those virgins of spotless purity.

O my God, I was humbled; crushed, overcome; I could not think; I could not decide. At last I told the Bishop, who answered, quite simply, that it was God's will that I should be a religious. I rose and threw myself at his feet, saying to him, "My good father, then may God's will be done. Give me your blessing." He stood up and blessed me, saying, "May God, my child, bless you and be glorified in you." After those words all my indecision vanished, and I asked at once to be received into the noviciate of the Good Shepherd.²

The young widow entered on Feb. 7, 1836, eve of the Feast of the Most Holy Heart of Mary. Ever after, Mother Foundress used to say, "You were given to me by the holy Heart of Mary." Later, she would admit in a letter to Therese: "It is really you, my dear daughter, whom God showed me, in spite of my sins. In His light I recognized you as the one who would be my support." May the Lord grant you a thousand blessings and favors.³ With such a light illuminating St. Mary Euphrasia, need we wonder why she could make such a vow asking for the entrance of a particular person?

1 Books of Chapter Acts (Historical Archives, R-25)

2 Annals R-I -IV, pp.166-167

3 Letter, April 1839

Mother Foundress always regarded this entrance as one of God's benefits to the Order. In a letter to Sr. Sophie Lavoye, the young superior of Metz, Mother Euphrasia confides:

. . . The Lord has just given us great graces. O God, my beloved daughter, what a blessing for our Mother House and for all the tribes. Mme. de Couespel entered yesterday, filled with joy, conducted and directed by the holy Bishop of Bardstown who will also come to give her the holy habit. (February 8, 1836)

Many times in the Conferences and Instructions, Mother Foundress cites Therese de Couespel and Sr. M. Chantal de Jesus Cesbron de la Roche as two of the greatest benefactors of the Institute. She praises them not merely for their material gifts but even more so, for their true religious spirit and life of abnegation and humility.

Melanie's religious spirit was already quite marked from the first days of her religious life and echoes the teachings of her beloved "Mother Euphrasia." Barely a week in the postulancy, she writes Sophie. Lavoye:

Here I am, a postulant for nearly eight days. It is the Heart of Mary that has received me as a daughter; there I want to live forever and there I hope to die. What graces, what mercies! I do not know how to show the Lord all my gratitude.

. . . I am sure you do not forget your Mother House. In the midst of your work, your spirit must give it a thought, your heart, perhaps, a sigh, but always in thanksgiving to God. The foundations constantly deprive our good Mother of some of her beloved daughters. The Heart of Mary has consoled her very much this year. Very promising subjects have come to the postulancy. Four entered during the octave. I am the fifth and I hope the Lord will help me for I have such a great longing to labor for His glory. (Feb. 13, 1836)

A few weeks later, on March 10, 1836, Melanie received the holy habit and the name that Rose Virginie had wanted herself years ago in Tours: Theresa of Jesus. Almost all of Angers high society came to the ceremony; the church was packed. Bishop Flaget of Bardstown officiated and Sr. M. Euphrasia rejoiced in now having the gifted woman among the ranks of her daughters. Again to Sophie Lavoye, she mentions this consolation:

At last we have the consolation of having the charming Mme. de Couespel who is a model of virtue for us. Msgr. the Bishop of Bardstown gave her the habit the 10th of this month. This ceremony has been most touching. She showed great courage. The Lord has fulfilled our wishes. . . (March 16, 1836)

As soon as she became a novice, Mother Foundress entrusted Therese with the task of econome. A dispensation of the second year of novitiate was obtained and she was professed the following year on March 11, 1837. This time, the Therese as a most staunch defender of these Constitutions - even to the point of incurring the anger of Monsignor Angebault and being "banished" from her beloved Mother House. But on this day of her profession, there were no clouds to mar the joy of vowing herself to the Lord. As Mother Foundress wrote to Sr. Stanislas Bedouet in Poitiers ". . . everything proceeded perfectly. Our worthy Therese of Jesus. . . was a model of piety and love, a true religious." (March 11, 1836)

It is obvious from the details that Therese de Couespel was quite "special" to Mary Euphrasia. In the new recruit she had found a mature friend, a dedicated ally and loyal supporter of the great and "holy work" of the Good Shepherd. Therese, now a fully professed member of the Order, was 38; M. Euphrasia, almost 41. Two women in their prime, both ardently in love with the Divine Good Shepherd Who had led them to the work of expanding St. John Eudes' zeal for souls through the structure of the Generalate. Therese was to live only eleven more years after profession. But within that short span of time, she was to give her all to "the holy work" and be a true and loyal collaborator of Mother Euphrasia.

In our archives are 80 letters written by Mother Foundress to her "true and zealous missionary" and almost 100 from Therese to her "tender mother." Through this correspondence we catch a glimpse of the great and holy friendship that united these two valiant women in the Lord. Through these letters, too, we can follow the mission and journeys of Therese, a wide-ranging itinerary dictated by Mother Foundress' great trust in her daughter, and ably seconded by the zeal and initiative of Therese.

In some way, her life before becoming a religious had prepared Therese to be the quick-acting, decisive emissary whom Euphrasia could send to start negotiations for new foundations or to be a "trouble-shooter" in convents under-going crises or difficulties. Having been the wife of a military officer, she was used to frequent

moves as she followed her husband's career from garrison to garrison. Her social standing as well as her experience in social and military circles enabled her to relate with ease and equality to people of all ranks - bishops or businessmen, priests, society women, or lady patronesses of the various foundations.

These "journeyings" often characterized the rest of her religious life as she moved from one monastery to another at the voice of obedience. Let us follow her through the letters of Mother Foundress who herself followed Therese through France and Italy with these very personal and affectionate messages. In equal measure, although in a different style, Therese returned the affection and avowed:

Dear Mother, your letters are our happiness. . . Your precious counsels and loving thoughts come to console and encourage our souls. It is our Lord who inspires you with them. These letters often serve us as points for meditation, followed by holy resolutions and good fruits. My God, how sweet it is to be your daughter!
(Aug. 6, 1839)

1837 – BORDEAUX

Soon after her profession, Sr. Therese de Jesus was sent as Assistant Superior for the foundation requested by Canon Dupuch of Bordeaux. There were such insurmountable obstacles, however, that the project had to be abandoned in October of the same year. But even before its closing, Mother Foundress was recalling Therese back to Angers for important business matters:

God's will is that you, too, my beloved daughter should return to the Mother House. Matters of the greatest importance compel me to recall you to the Mother House. I want you, in the name of holy obedience, to set out as soon as possible after you receive this letter. Take a postulant as companion.

Try not to stop along the way, dear Sister. I am sorry not to have given you more time, but it is impossible.

Goodbye, dearest Sister. Come, for mercy's sake. When you arrive I will tell you all the rest.
(July 27, 1837)

Therese returned to "the dear Sion" but not for long. For the first house of the Good Shepherd outside France was soon to be established - and in Rome! Mary Euphrasia had longed to open a house there and now at last it was to be accomplished. And she

knew she could trust Therese to be a foundress in the Holy City. This is how St. Euphrasia shared her feelings about the foundation with another dear daughter, M. John of the Cross David, Superior at Nancy:

Ah, our innermost being is stirred at the thought of being permitted to go and establish ourselves in the very heart of the Church! Think of it, my dearest Sister, the humble daughter of Our Lady of Charity in the capital of the whole Christian world. We are about to lay all our tribes at the feet of the Supreme Head of the Church. All the glory be to Jesus and Mary.

But what mercies! Are not these the beautiful days of our Institute its springtide, its glory? . . . But in the midst of all this delight, how many cares, tears, and separations! Our Roman sisters are admirable. I believe the good God has clothed them with His love and grace.

(April 13, 1838)

1838 – ROME

For her first foreign mission assignment, Mother Foundress named Therese Mistress of Penitents, knowing well her great zeal for the salvation of souls. In a letter during the early months of the foundation, Mother Euphrasia lauds her spirit of zeal in these burning words:

I am sure that your soul was plunged deep in the love of Jesus Christ. It is no longer you who live, it is He who lives in you. Then you channel this divine life to your dear sheep; you distribute the bread and milk of divine grace to them. O God, how happy I am with the Shepherd and the dear shepherdess. Continue the good work, my daughter; instruct all the Roman tribes in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Oh, give, give many children to our Mother the Holy Church.

(Sept. 11, 1838)

However, Therese's health, apparently never robust, was declining rapidly in the heat and humidity of the Roman summer and the chill of winter in their unheated quarters. By the end of the year, Mother; Foundress wrote her a touching letter telling her to return to Angers and naming her Assistant in the Mother House:

O my God, how can you blame yourself for having complained to me of your sufferings, difficulties, anxieties and sorrows! It was your duty to do so and I must tell you that I fully realised what sufferings

you were enduring. If you were to die now in Rome, my dear daughter, it would be the death of me. In God's presence, this is my advice to you: come back to France, yes, my dear daughter, come.

You have done all you could, a younger person will take you place.

You will be our Assistant here in France and the support of the Congregation. Open your heart to our good Fr. Vaures; ask him in all simplicity to make the arrangements of this obedience.

Have courage. Come, come; rise above whatever people may think or say. Do not worry about your temporal affairs, my dearest daughter. Everything is in order. M. Hebert has paid the interest that was due. . . .

Oh, how you are loved by the novices, appreciated by the professed and desired by my heart! It says: Come! I can imagine how racked with pain you are and how uneasy your conscience. Another summer and you would have succumbed. . . no doubt about it! You can travel by sea or overland, as you wish. Don't spend too much time on the way, however, because it would make us anxious. Write immediately, dear daughter.

(Dec. 19, 1838)

It was a bittersweet parting from Rome: Therese was happy to return to "the dear Sion" of the Mother House but she also loved Rome and the work she had started at Santa Croce. She wrote St. Mary Euphrasia Feb 16, 1839, five days before leaving the Eternal City:

With what joy I will see once more Your Charity and the cradle of my religious life! We leave for Civita Veechia on the 21st. Nevertheless, I will confess to you, my Mother, that on leaving Rome my soul feels such a sadness that I cannot overcome. It a gratitude that if inspires it; all my life I will never forget the abundant graces that the Lord has given His unworthy spouse here.

. . . We will disembark at Genoa and stay with the Sisters of St. Thomas. From there we will take the diligence for Nice. I have written Msgr. Galvano today to inform him of my arrival.

Msgr. Galvano, Bishop of Nice, had asked for a Good Shepherd foundation as early as 1836. Now, on her way back to France, Mother Foundress asked Therese to make the side-trip to Nice and reopen negotiations with the Bishop. It was a side-trip that was to last three years!

1839 – NICE

"Now that I finally have a Religious of the Good Shepherd, I will not let her go until she has first started a house of her Order in my Diocese." These words of Msgr. Galvano were supported strongly

by Bishop Flaget, then vacationing in Nice, and Rudolph de Maister, governor of the city. This concerted demand for Therese to remain as superior of the new foundation was accepted by the Chapter in Angers. And the two friends had to make the sacrifice of not seeing each other for another long period of time. Mother Euphrasia wrote:

Therese, I had chosen one of your sisters for Nice but God Himself names you today.

O dearest support of the work, may you be blessed a thousand times over. How precious Nice is to us! . . . As you say, my dear daughter, Mary, our heavenly Mother has given it to us, and what a sacred trust - 130 children all at once! But our two saintly bishops are very keen that you should be the one to initiate the work. This is truly my sword of sorrow, my cross, my chalice. Stay on there to get the work started, my dear daughter, because God has chosen you for this divine mission. At Rome He told you, "Set out, my daughter, souls are calling out to you!" Oh, how true that was. One hundred thirty were waiting for you.

. . . Yes, dear daughter, we will send the colony on its way tomorrow. I am doing all I possibly can. Oh, how can we leave you alone! As for your personal affairs, don't worry, everything is alright.

We are going to pray much for you. Goodbye, dear sister, most intimate support of the work. May Jesus and Mary bless you! (March 25, 1839)

Nice was a sunlit interlude in Therese's career, although even there, the cross was never absent. But within the three years that she was Superior in the "little earthly paradise" she had set up the apostolate with admirable vigor and left it in a flourishing state.

But another city was beckoning, another field of combat for the daughters of the Divine Shepherd: Toulon. Toulon, maritime city, naval arsenal, port of the galley ships and galley prisoners like Victor Hugo's famous Jean Valjean! And once more, Therese was asked to make the preliminary arrangements for a foundation because "never had a city a greater need for a house of the Good Shepherd than the city of Toulon." M. Euphrasia wrote to her in Nice:

If Monsignor of Nice who is so good and zealous would permit you, we greatly wish, my dear daughter, that you would make the little trip to Toulon. We are asked for in this city, so important for the work. and you know that we would get all permissions from Rome.

If you could absent yourself four or five days it would greatly please me as I believe this work is in God's designs and for His glory. I wish nothing but the Divine Will. . .
(April 17, 1841)

Therese arrived in Toulon May 4 and began the negotiations for the new Good Shepherd fold amid the usual deprivations and poverty of a new mission. Years later, Mother Foundress would describe this humble beginning in one of her conferences to the Novices: "Madame de Couespel, having gone to found one of our monasteries, was obliged to hire a soldiers mattress to sleep upon, and to use old newspapers as pocket handkerchiefs. But as she greatly loved her vocation, this did not discourage her in the slightest degree."¹

It was true. Therese was not daunted by the physical poverty and wrote to reassure Mother Foundress: "Don't fear for Toulon, it is the work of the Heart of Mary. This good Mother watches over it all will go well." And sure enough, despite the initial obstacles, she was able to open the house by July 10, a Saturday, "a day consecrated to Mary, vigil of the Feast of her Most Holy Heart which is to be solemnized here tomorrow with incredible pomp." (Letter to SME, July 10, 1841)

In a few weeks, Mother Foundress had sent a colony of foundresses to Toulon and Therese could return to Nice, her "little earthly paradise."

By October, Mother Euphrasia was considering an even more distant mission for Therese - North America, in the diocese of the great Bishop Flaget She wrote to Nice on October 22, 1841:

After having accepted the work in the name of the Holy Virgin and of the Institute, I named you Superior of the monastery of Louisville; I have given my word to your holy bishop, we promised him you will be there by next spring at the latest.

This nomination, however, was not to be realized. In the designs of God, Therese was not to found the first monastery of the Good Shepherd in the New World. Mary Euphrasia had another need for her in Europe while the transactions with Bishop Flaget were at a stand-still. The next mission for Therese would be Genoa, another great Mediterranean port city.

1842 – GENOA

February 26, 1842, Mother Foundress writes Therese:

I speak to you in His presence, my tender and devoted daughter; bring the work of Genoa to completion in union with the Sacred Work of our Redeemer. I am urged to believe before God that Genoa is worth ten little houses. But answer us with your usual frankness.

Adieu, my dearest daughter. You will have as diamonds in your crown in heaven, Toulon, Genoa and Nice.

With characteristic speed, Therese was in Genoa and by March 23 was established in a house with Sf. Eleonore Bonherbe, two postulants, three penitents and two tourieres. But in the meantime, the crisis in the Paris house and the formal orders of the ecclesiastical superiors made Euphrasia write urgently on March 20, recalling Therese to Angers:

You and I, my dear daughter, must submit ourselves, we must keep silent and adore. I know that Genoa is somehow begun, but Paris is ten times more urgent, ten times more important. You alone, my good daughter, could prevent its failure. My heart is broken for Genoa. . . but you must return here, my Therese of Jesus. . . You will not go to America, either, but to Paris; there you will accomplish a work as holy and as great as that of Angers. But come, come! Jesus calls you.

The "faithful and zealous missionary" was in a real quandary: desiring to obey immediately but held back by the Archbishop of Genoa who insisted that she remained until Angers had sent the sisters destined for his diocese! And she still had to get an "obedience" from Bishop Galvano of Nice allowing her to return to the Mother House. These were genuine problems in those days when Bishops had practically the last say on the religious whom they wanted to remain in their dioceses or those they wanted to be changed!

Therese wrote to explain her predicament but their letters kept crossing each other and Mother Euphrasia had to send two more urgent notes. The last one was brief but compelling:

"Walk in my presence and you will be perfect."

O my daughter, you who are in God, the heart of my heart, come to Angers Immediately, in the name of holy obedience and of our tender love. O come! If you could see in my soul what I am for you, you would come tonight.
(March 10, 1842)

1842 – PARIS

The Paris work, begun January 1841, was a particularly trying one for the founding sisters. The house was inadequate and relations with the lady patronesses created many difficulties. Mother Foundress felt that Therese's administrative abilities and personal qualities would meet both problems and establish the work on a firmer basis. Already, the first two Superiors had succumbed: Helene Baudin gave up after six months and Clement Pattin, her replacement (who had successfully founded Mons, Belgium three years previously) became so ill in Paris that she had to return to Angers in March, 1842. She died five months later.

Therese came to Paris in June and soon had made certain changes which Mother Foundress approved of. Almost twice a week she wrote to Mother Euphrasia, keeping her abreast of the developments and also the events, big or small, in the convent at rue Plumet. Therese was a voluble writer, and perhaps also, impulsive at times. At one point during this exchange of letters between Paris and Angers, Euphrasia was hurt by something Therese had said and she frankly told the later: "My soul desires to dwell in divine charity and in God, calm and submissive to the cross, yet I am not so invulnerable as you think. I cannot help but feel deeply the afflictions that are heaped upon me. I can assure you, my very dear daughter, that there are certain words, actions, reproaches that wound the heart to the very core!" (July 14, 1842)

Therese was quick to beg pardon for wounding her dearly loved Mother and it is characteristic of Mother Foundress to instantly forgive and even console her daughter: "I've understood only too well the counsel of the Holy Spirit and have compassion on you in your deep sorrow. I believe, like you, that *there are sufferings beyond comprehension at Paris*. . . . *I sense that in Paris* your soul is crucified, without help, without light. . . . I see only too well your sorrows, my beloved daughter, not to compassionate with you and to hear with the weaknesses which come from your irritation. Do not fear that this spirit of bitterness will accompany you here! This is truly a city of peace. . . . Come then, darling Sister, on whatever day you wish. Here you will always be received with affection and gratitude." (July 30, 1842)

This loving welcome brought Therese back to the Mother House on August 19, not only to regain her impaired health but to assume the post of Assistant General and Secretary:

For almost three years, Therese held this post and she was truly the great support that Mother Foundress had "seen in God." These were the trying years of the painful conflict with Msgr. Angebault, but also the exciting years of missionary expansion to the United States, Canada, Turin, Algeria, and Imola. Through all this, Therese was a worthy Assistant to the Mother General: accompanying her on her visitation of the houses, negotiating another new foundation (St. Omer), and constantly using her pen for the important correspondence entrusted to her.

But it was not to last. The mounting conflict with Bishop Angebault over certain articles in the Constitutions which Therese strenuously defended led the Bishop to require Mother Foundress to send Sister to another diocese "within five days." In great suffering, St. Mary Euphrosia obeyed and sent Therese as Superior of Amiens. To her other faithful daughter, Sr. John of the Cross in Munich, she opened her sorrowing heart:

It is only to God and to you, my very devoted and intimate daughter, that I come to open my afflicted soul. Except that I am not in prison, I have all other sorrows combined; without support, without help. The Bishop has just banished our dear Mary Therese of Jesus from his diocese, because of Rome. He wanted to dismiss me, too, but the tears of the Sisters stopped him.

. . . My soul, torn with sorrow, no longer dares to express itself, but it is in great peace! I still have permission to receive Holy Communion. His Excellency spends part of the day here, saying everything that is evil against me to each professed Sister; in short, I am an object of horror to him. God and Rome console me. Only that lightens my sadness. Up to the present our sisters here have been very faithful, but they are dying with sorrow. . .
(April 8, 1845)

Therese, on her part, went with dignity to Amiens, knowing that Holy Mother Church protected her rights as a religious. She had consulted the experts in Paris and she knew that a religious can be expelled from her convent of profession only for a grievous crime and only after due process. Thus she wrote Mother Foundress from Saumur, on her way to Amiens:

. . . If I keep silence it is because I do not wish to further aggravate your already difficult situation, my beloved Mother, and that of our sisters. Only ask the Bishop of Angers not to use the expressions "to banish" or "to expel" in my regard, which are uncalled for, in any case.

Please tell Monsignor my dispositions. I desire nothing else but the peace, the holy liberty of spirit and of conscience, the rest of the children of God in the accomplishment of my religious duties, in being faithful to my vows and my obligations. . . . My Mother House cannot be closed to me, I will return there each time that business or community affairs may require. Civilly speaking, my rights as an inhabitant are recognized there; I could very well assert them, but I will wait. . .

Bless me, my Mother, and believe in my filial respect, my devotedness and my inviolable attachment in the love of the Sacred Hearts.

(April 7, 1845)

Both Mother and daughter had been obedient even in this unjust situation. And their spirit of obedience bore fruit in Therese's work in Amiens.

1845 - AMIENS

This would be the last mission that Therese would have away from the Mother House. Her one year of "exile" in Amiens saved the house which was on the verge of collapse. Soon after her arrival she could write to Angers, "Be at rest. . . everything is going well here." And a few months later, "Be assured, dear and tender Mother, that all our solicitude, our prayers and watching, are offered for the conservation of this work of Amiens."

A year later, Mother Foundress was able to write that it was now time for Therese to return to the "dear Sion." One can sense her excitement over the coming of this dearly loved daughter in her letter of May 11, 1846:

What day will you arrive in Sion? Let St. Victor tell me which road you are taking; quickly, my angel If it is by Saumur, sleep there overnight. The carriage will go there immediately. You will delight our sisters of Saumur; we are writing to them right away. They, like us, will receive you in triumph. Courage, friend of my journey, let us go!

There was rejoicing in "Sion" when Therese arrived on May 18, 1846 as a circular letter describes it: "Everything here is life and joy since we have the consolation of having our very honored and beloved Sf. M. Therese de Jesus in our midst. This very dear Sister has returned because of our vows and prayers. Her Charity is quite worn out but we hope that the native air of Angers will heal her soon."

For the next two years Therese continued her work as Assistant and Secretary, her indefatigable pen transcribing Mother Foundress' messages to the local superiors and missionaries, especially at the time when Mother Euphrasia was too ill to write herself. But the almost incessant life-battles that she had fought had severely shaken the health of Therese de Jesus. She had also shared to the full Mother Foundress' sorrow and anxiety over the harrowing events of the Revolution of 1848. At the end of August that year, Therese was stricken and her strong heart finally gave way. There was time, however, for some final moments with her "bonne Mere Euphrasie" and to receive the Last Sacraments from Monsieur Vincent, the parish priest of St. Jacques, her spiritual director and the intermediary of her generous alms in the days of old.

On September 2nd, 1848, Therese de Couespel, the "dear and faithful missionary" departed this earth. She was 49 years old and had been in the Good Shepherd 12 years. The grief expressed by Mother Foundress perhaps is the best gauge of how much this sister meant to her: "Oh, my Therese of Jesus, treasure of my heart; here below what a friend, what a mother! What a life, what a death! O my God, my God I offer it to You."
(March 17, 1849)

This brief biographical sketch has followed the mission-itinerary of Therese de Couespel from state to state during the twelve years of her religious life. The inner journey of her soul is something just barely glimpsed here. But Mother Foundress knew her profoundly and tells us in one of her Conferences: "St. M. Therese of Jesus is particularly worthy to be cited as one well understands the spirit of our vocation. . ."¹

Let us allow the two friends to have the final words. . .

Therese to St. M. Euphrasia: "May the Divine Savior . . . allow that I be a little useful for our holy Congregation - be it in France or in America, or anywhere on earth. I have no country, I have but one place of repose while awaiting eternal rest: it is my Mother House of Angers."²

And Euphrasia to Therese: "Your heart is unceasingly renewed in the Divine love. It is nourished by grace, by zeal and sacrifices. It rests nowhere than in the adorable Heart of Jesus. It is there that my poor heart will find yours."³

1 Conferences. Chapter 4. p. 28

2 Letter of Sr. Therese to SM E. April 15. 1841

3 Letter of SME. June 6, 1841.

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