

CHAPTER III

THE PEACEFUL YEARS

MOTHER SAINT POTHIN AND MOTHER SAINT EULALIE

Under Mother Saint Pothin, the rhythm of the foundations continues

With Mother Saint Pothin we leave the generation of foundresses. She is no more or hardly represented except by Mother Saint Bruno who survives in India. Nevertheless, the new Superior General touches it closely; born in 1806 in Château-Neuf near Rive-de-Gier, Antoinette Chollet entered the Novitiate in 1827, and received in religion the name of the first Bishop of Lyon; then she lived ten years with Mother Saint Ignatius. An eye witness of the riots of 1834 and of 1848, General Councilor since 1842, she took part in the tribulations of the Mother House as well as in its joys.

Foundress in turn, she was designated, in 1850, to introduce the Congregation in Spain. We have mentioned the cold, icy welcome or acceptance that she received, in the first place: she experienced the labor of a birth, the rebuffs or rejections, more serious when they came from the religious authority, the doubts, more disturbing when they had repercussion in Fourvière. Little was necessary that she was not called back; Mother Saint Therese finally came to arrange the situation. But it was necessary to suffer from poverty, the roof separated at the joints, which allowed the rain to go through, and the cold which made the pen fall from the fingers. It was necessary to go through the trial of sickness and of mourning; the death of a French Novice, Sister Victoire, who succumbed because of typhoid; the threat of cholera; temporary separation, because of illness, of Mother Saint Sebastian, the Spaniard on whom Mother Saint Pothin counted the most to help her. In this mission of Europe, she had to deploy the same energy, the same know-how as her missionary Sisters in India. Also the same abnegation; to allow her Spanish colleagues the necessary time for their teaching, she reserves for herself the domestic chores, and one sees the Superior, General Councilor, occupying herself of the wardrobe and the laundry. In 1857, she had founded a second Spanish house in Tarragona.

In 1859, she had been called back to Lyon as Mistress of Novices; a dream, in which her patron Saint Pothin invited her to struggle with him, at his side, he had encouraged her; it seems that

she willingly searched in the dreams the signs of the divine will, and it was thus that at the moment when she had to separate herself from Mother Saint Sebastian, she thought she had seen Our Lord reproaching her for not accepting this cross even when she had offered herself to carry that of Calvary. Spain will always remain for her, moreover, what India had been for Mother Saint Therese, the dear mission, the theatre of the first apostolate; and since the distance is less, she will have, happier in this, than Mother Saint Therese, the occasion to return. Her career, the same as that of her predecessor, initiates her successively in the work of the missions and to that of the general administration of the Congregation; she will be crowned by eighteen years of government as Superior General.

When she takes this charge, forty years of existence had rendered the Congregation solid. The difficulties of its birth fade away in the distance. She found her different orientations. She is going to be able to develop in peace during this nineteenth century without war. One only trial of this type awaits her almost immediately, a year after the death of Mother Saint Therese; the French-German war of 1870. Remiremont and Fourvière will be shaken. The Lorraine city is located on the road of arms; it serves as the general headquarter for those of Vosges; the day school is converted into a hospital where wounded soldiers and freelance snipers were installed. Then come the "Prussians", - in fact, luckily, Catholic Baden troops which requisitioned the recreation room to make their dormitory, but showed themselves correct. The religious will, nevertheless, go through hours of anguish, in so far as they continue to take care of the freelance snipers, running the risk of seeing the house burnt down if they were discovered, and that the invaders, as retaliation or reprisal of an attack of the irregulars, they would penalize the city and take the Parish priest as hostage.

In Fourvière, there are the Garibaldis who pretend to be lodged there, and of whom the indiscipline is feared; but the house of Fourvière has already been transformed into an ambulance. It has put up and lodged wounded soldiers who look out of the windows; and therefore, it is obtained that the Garibaldis withdraw; they are satisfied with leaving, during one night their luggage at the great gate and their flag under the care of the chaplain; an ex-vote – votive offering - will thank the Virgin for her protection. All these incidents without a future effect, and national disasters from which the religious suffer in their hearts as French but that they did not affect the destiny of the Congregation.

The Congregation continues to develop. And it is especially in Canada that it knows a new expansion. The seed grain thrown in this fecund earth could not fail to fructify. Already the House of Lauzon had established four filial houses, in Saint-Gervais, in Saint-Anselm, in Trois-pistoles, in Saint-Michel de Bellechasse. In 1869, to replace the Provincial Superior, Mother Saint-Cyprien who

had just died, Mother Saint-Pothin names Mother Saint-Cyrille, who up until then was the Superior of Tarragona. Thus, she prepares without knowing it, one of her more eminent successors.

As soon as she arrived to Canada, Mother Saint Cyrille decides to transfer the Provincial House to Sillery, Near Quebec like Lauzon, but on the same bank of the river, Sillery, the old residence of the Jesuits and of the Christian Huron people, would soon be transformed into a smart suburb; at that time it was only an admirably located countryside. The boarding school was opened in September 1870; the Novitiate follows three years later. It will not take long for it in turn to sow.

In those years, 1870 to 1880, the Canadian agriculture was collapsing or failing, and the textile industry of New England, in full growth seizes the discouraged workers. They emigrate by thousands, ceding to the attraction of the emigration that goes even to Europe; the United States seem to be an immense void where the over-crowded of the whole world rush. Hard working people the Canadian working force, honest, docile, perhaps sometimes is exploited; also good Christians, with a faith that had sustained their environment, which was identified with their language and nationality.... But what will it become outside that milieu, in another country that speaks another language, and in addition of Protestant tradition, and where those who are not assimilated are willingly mocked and laughed at? And, above all, what will become of those children educated in the Anglo-American Schools and suffering all this mocking? Mother Saint-Cyrille was concerned, worried.

She travels for information to Fall River, one of the centers of Massachusetts where most of the Canadian-French workers established themselves. There she meets a priest from Montreal, Father Bédard, the sight of this exodus had struck him because of the mixture of resolution and anguish reflected on the faces of those leaving, and whom he had followed in order to give them in their exile the spiritual help. Together, they decided to found a school, which opened its doors in 1877, the first school of French in New England. Fall River is the eldest of a long series to which the Sisters of Jesus and Mary will add; during the life of Mother Saint Pothin, two other houses, in Manchester (New-Hampshire) in 1881 and in Woonsocket (Rhode Island) in 1884.

Thus, in this way their field of action is still enlarged: after Canada, the United States; never will the importance of this action will be exceedingly magnified or praised: essentially always remaining religious, this apostolate offers another aspect proper to enchant the French hearts. It was a question of knowing if these young forces that Canada had not known how to keep were going to be confused, mixed up in a mass or crowd where their ethnic and moral characteristics would be lost, or if they would preserve their individuality, in a new frame. Mother Saint Cyrille and the Congregation of Jesus and Mary under the Generalate of Mother Saint Pothin, helped to construct a Franco-American people.

The old missions were not neglected: in her beloved Spain. Mother Saint Pothin, in 1872 could add to the communities of Barcelona and of Tarragona that of Valencia; in India there are new boarding schools in two stations of considerable altitude: Murri (that the English spelled as Murree) in 1876, and Deha Dun in 1880, as well as in the great city of Lahore, in 1877. In England, where London since 1863, under Mother Saint Therese had followed closely Ipswich but where, because of the lack of an appropriate place, the displacements or changes from one place to the other succeeded one another at an excessive rhythm, the religious will take care to put an end to that nomadic life. Cardinal Manning oriented them towards the new neighborhood of Willesden. They will not live there until 1886, after the death of Mother Saint Pothin, but she had the time to interest herself in their first steps.

Age, which affected her sight, her hearing, and which was the cause of a fall in which she broke the clavicle or collar bone, did not take away her gaiety or cheerfulness or her punctuality. In recreation she encourages relaxation, and promises a penny to a religious particularly lively or dynamic, every time that she would make her laugh; she had delicate little treats for those who needed to be strengthened. She pleases, in spite of the coldness that she imposes on herself to avoid that the affection attaches to her instead of to God. She was always the first one in the exercises; she continued to go down to the refectory in spite of the darkness of the stairway. Later, in her room, not being able to move, she persists to rise and to go to bed according to the established hours, until the day before her death. A swelling in the chest, pneumonia took her at 79 years of age on February 15, 1885.

The six years of Generalate of Mother Saint Eulalie

That the substitute of Mother Saint Pothin is a child from l'Aveyron, and no longer from the Lyonnaise region, that is only very natural, since that underlines to what point the community born in Fourvière has from now on lost its local character. Mother Saint Eulalie, born Basilide Marcorelle de Roquefort, came into the world in 1824; she entered religious life in 1850, pronounced her Vows in 1852; like her predecessor, she carried out her apostolate in Spain, in Tarragona and in the Provincial House. Very cultured she was an educator of great value, and her prudence is highly praised. For her beginnings she saw the community of London complete its pilgrimages; the installation in Willesden took place in 1886, during the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi. Here is a Parish which has just been inaugurated fifteen days before, and where the Religious of Jesus and

Mary, once again find that they are pioneers; the liturgical ceremony allows them to begin by the adoration to the Blessed Sacrament, unknown and absent since the last three centuries.

The following year, the missions of Spain go down to the South. Already, since they were established in Valencia, they had gone from Catalonia. Now it is the small city of Orihuela in the plain of Segura, which calls them to the country of the sugar cane and of oranges, the first one of multiple foundations.

Simultaneously, Mother Saint Cyrille comes back to the charge. New England, which already has three houses, is asking for a fourth one. After the Franco-American Centers of Fall River, of Manchester, of Woonsocket, the important city of Providence is facing the same problem. It is necessary to create Parishes for the new arrivals from Canada. What is there more appropriate than to entrust a school for girls to the religious who have given proof in the neighboring locality of Woonsocket? And since their harvest increases, since their recruitment is abundant in that place of the New World, how would their Superior General not authorize them for this?

Thus, Mother Saint Eulalie, without knowing during these peaceful years, any serious difficulties, nevertheless, she had many questions to solve, in the North, in the South, in the West. She acts at world level. She fears not to have the force, since her health leaves much to desire. And this is why in 1891, she did not accept reelection. Rather than to fail in her work, she will withdraw to a less exhausting or overwhelming charge. At first she was named Superior in Remiremont; later she goes back to the boarding school in Fourvière, then she returns to Spain where the Mediterranean climate would be better for her. She is in charge of forming the young before their perpetual vows; very skillful with her hands, a skillful lace maker, she made and embroidered numerous Church ornaments. She died on October 17, 1910, leaving a great reputation of charity, mortification and of discipline.