



CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS
Circular Letter of the Very Rev. Superior General
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100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Brothers of St. Joseph

Reverend Fathers and Dear Brothers:

One of our worthiest Brothers, a religious whose long life has been characterized by uniform and continued devotedness thoroughly well understood and maintained, has written me the following lines:

It will be just a hundred years, on the 15th of next July, since the venerable Father Dujarié began his work, a work which as he conceived it, was to comprise the Brothers of St. Joseph and Missionary Priests consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Several confreres, remarkable for their devotedness and their talents---among others, the Reverend Father Hupier of blessed memory—joined him and sacrificed themselves for a project the success of which was prevented by opposing circumstances.

Nevertheless, Providence, always kindly, apparently wished to reward his generous efforts by permitting him to see, at Notre-Dame de Sainte-Croix, Le Mans, the work which he had so earnestly desired to establish at Ruillé, in association with the Brothers.

The foregoing lines summarize quite clearly the idea and the desire, perhaps I should say the inspiration, of the venerable Father Dujarié. They indicate to me, as Superior General, a real duty to be accomplished,—that of calling to your most cordial attention this notable anniversary.

A hundred years! It is a lengthy period in the duration of works undertaken here below, works so subject to change, so liable to deteriorate, so quick at times to disappear. This date, July 15th, 1920, is an honor to good Father Dujarié before God and men; 'tis an honor to our Congregation in its

entirety, and a very special honor to our Brothers. The anniversary should accordingly appeal, not only to our memories, but to our hearts, evoking sentiments of gratitude and piety.

We can scarcely exaggerate the measure of esteem, honor, and love, which we owe to our founders. They are our spiritual fathers. They were, as far as we are concerned, the workmen of Providence when they opened the road to which in the designs of God we were called for our sanctification. Theirs were the main hardships, trials, and troubles, for they lived in difficult times, when formidable breaches had been made in the City of God. If sometimes in the very high vocation which is theirs, they tasted ineffable consolations, they also experienced desolation, aridity, discouragement, fears, terrors, and anguish--trials which Providence not only does not spare His servants, but which He deals out to them in large measure, in order to try their faith, increase their merit, and give them a mark of intimate resemblance to our Divine Lord.

All these vicissitudes are visible in the life of Father Dujarié. He was born in the latter half of the eighteenth century, a century dominated by the truly diabolical spirit of Voltaire, Rousseau, and so many others who made it their study to rival one another in impiety and disdain of the Catholic Church. He must have deplored the evil spirit which was insinuating itself everywhere in France, and which was so pregnant with danger for the future. It was in the midst of such circumstances that he felt germinating within him the seeds of the ecclesiastical vocation. Such a vocation is always a signal grace; it was especially such in those years when reflective minds foresaw the coming of the storm.

He was engaged in his theological studies at the seminary at Angers when the terrors of the French Revolution broke out. Quickly, very quickly, the tempest grew and spread; the seminaries were closed, the seminarians and the priest-professors were forced to hide themselves.

Young Dujarié found refuge with a good Catholic family; but he soon discovered that he was spied upon; moreover, he did not want to compromise the good people who were sheltering him at the risk of their lives. He accordingly took a bold step, one that shows how clear-sighted and resolute was his nature. Instead of remaining in his diocese and hiding there until quieter times, he decided to go to Paris, the very center of revolutionary fury. It was no easy matter to make such a trip in those times, for at every step one incurred the danger of being arrested, suspected, and imprisoned. Our seminarian, however, made it with safety; Providence was watching over him. Once in Paris, it was less difficult to hide himself among the crowds of the great city and maintain himself there.

He made himself a man of the people, the common people, the working class, and he adopted a trade or occupation not at all likely to subject him to suspicion. He became an itinerant vender of a popular beverage, carrying his supplies in a barrel strapped to his shoulders; and he passed along the streets and among the citizens, advertising his commodity and selling a glass to this one and that. By this means, he earned his living and escaped any harassment from the revolutionaries.

Just as soon as comparative calm was re-established, in secrecy, very profound secrecy, he received Holy Orders; and, at the first favorable opportunity, placed himself at the disposition of the Bishop of Le Mans who appointed him pastor of Ruillé-sur-Loir. He was one of that phalanx of priests who consecrated their lives to the restoration of the faith in the souls of the people.

Father Dujarié succeeded wonderfully well in the field of activity committed to his charge. He was dowered with notable piety and with distinct authority in the eyes of his parishioners, since he was

able to tell them, and in fact did tell them, that he had more than once braved the scaffold before becoming their pastor. As part of his pastoral work, he gathered together a group of young pious women, and built for them, of stones picked from here and there, a small house to which was given the name of "The Little Providence." There, under the directions of their admirable pastor, the group brought together the children of the parish and of surrounding parishes to teach them the catechism and the practice of Christian virtues. The Little Providence was the humble cradle of the Sisters of Providence, a community, which is highly appreciated in France, and which has very fruitful branches in the United States.

Father Dujarié saw everything growing and prospering under his vigilant hand and eye. His parishioners were pious, his community rapidly increased in numbers and soon laid the foundations of a fine Mother-House within the confines of the parish. His ecclesiastical superiors and his brother priests now asked him to found a Congregation of teaching brothers, the urgent need of whom was universally recognized. In the true spirit of faith, he saw in this invitation an appeal addressed to him by our Lord Himself. To the already heavy burden of pastor of a large parish and Superior of a growing Community, he accordingly added the work of a second foundation. Needless to say, he had to confront unnumbered difficulties in both the temporal and spiritual order. One has only to understand truly the Christian and religious life in order to feel and comprehend these difficulties. The devil, the world, men--often enough good men—never fail to place obstacles in the way of such works of reparation and reconstruction.

Despite all obstacles, however, he succeeded in establishing a group of pious, devoted, eager men who ranged themselves at his side to do good, and who soon, under the blessing of Providence, increased notably in number.

In 1835, after a career so varied, and so religiously devoted to the service of God and of souls, the holy priest, overburdened, aged, and crippled with infirmities, begged the Bishop of Le Mans to support his successor. It was the Very Rev. Basile Moreau, who was chosen to take up the work, the works rather, that Father Dujarié laid down. The transfer of powers took place in the church of Ruillé and under conditions really touching. Equal humility was displayed by him who retired from the struggle and him who received the mission to continue it. Hearts were moved and many eyes grew dim as the exchange was effected.

The site of the Brothers' Institute was moved to Le Mans where the material resources necessary for its subsistence were more available and where the name of the Very Rev. Basile Moreau was held in great esteem. Good old Father Dujarié retired to Le Mans to live among his brothers, and it was there he died, leaving behind a gentle memory of profound piety, of resignation in suffering, and of a kindness altogether fatherly. His precious remains were deposited in the cemetery of the Community; and when, owing to lamentable circumstances, our Congregation was forced to leave Le Mans, the Sisters of Providence at Ruillé made it their care to have them transported to their own home and to assign to them the most honorable place in the grounds of their splendid Mother-House.

In honoring the centenary of our first birth, we are accordingly fulfilling a duty of genuine filial piety. The General Chapter, which is to be held at Notre Dame, will furnish an appropriate occasion for the performance of this duty. To the memory of Father Dujarié, we shall add that of Father Moreau, who continued and completed his work, that of Father Sorin who founded and so meritoriously

propagated the same work in the United States, that of Father Rézé, who filled the same mission in Canada--the memory of all our Fathers and all our Brothers who, on both sides of the Atlantic and in Bengal, have collaborated with these founders so valiantly and in so large a measure.

I leave it to the Reverend Provincials to determine the congruous character of the celebration: but I desire that it be purely a family affair, and that everything be carried out on in a spirit of recollected joy and prayer. We are living in times when any flourishing of trumpets would be out of place.

I should not forgive myself if I did not link here, and link very closely, to the name of Father Dujarié that of Father Hupier, of whom mention is made in the first part of this Circular, and who was one of Father Dujarié's first companions. It was my good fortune to have him during some months as my Master of Novices. I have never seen a priestly figure so angelic as was his, when he knelt without any support, and for hours at a time, before the Holy Tabernacle. Heroically faithful to his religious vocation, at a period when all around him occurred so many backslidings, he set out alone, and without doffing his clerical attire, for Canada. He died at Memramcook on July 4, 1873. Our confreres at the University of St. Joseph's College and the faithful of St. Thomas' Parish will never sufficiently appreciate the treasure they possess in his remains that repose in their cemetery. It seems to me that by invoking the name of this holy priest they would obtain miracles.

Let me, in conclusion, take advantage of this occasion to thank you collectively for the good wishes which you have so generously proffered me on my name-day.

Be pleased, Reverend Fathers and dear Brothers, to accept the expression of my most religious affection in Our Lord.

G. Français, C.S.C.
Superior General

Notre Dame, Indiana, Feb. 10th., 1920.