

Providence and the Cross  
Jacques Francois Dujarié  
(1767-1838)

2004-4

Jacques Francois Dujarié was born on 9 November 1767, at Rennes-en-Grenouilles, at the home of his mother's parents, although his own parents lived a short distance away in a hamlet known, prophetically enough, as "Ste. Marie-du-Bois."<sup>1</sup> He was the oldest of six children of pious, conscientious and industrious country people of moderate circumstances, living comfortably on their own small property. Early in his life, Jacques had the good fortune to come under the influence of a wise and zealous parish priest who directed him toward the priesthood.

Education under the French School influence

After three years of study at the college of Lassay near his home, and two at the minor seminary of Le Mans under the direction of the Vincentians, Jacque completed his classical studies with the Eudists at the seminary of Domfront.<sup>2</sup>

The founder of the Congregation of the Missions, commonly known as the Vincentians, St. Vincent de Paul, is renowned for manifold accomplishments; chief among these is the fostering of parish missions. After the French Revolution, Catholic parish life was either in a state of decrepitude or was defunct entirely. In order to re-evangelize the French people, the clergy organized a system of parish missions. Until Vincent de Paul, these efforts, while carried forth with enthusiasm, were scattered and somewhat unsystematic; to him belongs credit for organizing this admirable ministry as the major focus of a religious congregation of men whom he designated as the Congregation of the Missions.<sup>3</sup>

For Vincent, a three-fold plan of evangelization presented itself: the candidate for ordination must first become holy himself; then he must take the word to the people; finally and crucially, he must

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<sup>1</sup> Striking is the fact that the saintly Simon Bruté, first Bishop of Vincennes, named the wooded area near Terre Haute Saint Mary-of-the-Woods before the Sisters of Providence were called to Indiana. Tradition holds that at that time he remarked of this inconspicuous area, "You will see what great things will be done here."

<sup>2</sup> The author acknowledges her indebtedness to an unpublished manuscript, *Looking Back on Our Sources*, #3 "A Country Pastor" by Sister Joseph Eleanor Ryan, SP.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Deville, *The French School of Spirituality*, Duquesne University Press, 1994, 10-11.

minister to other members of the clergy, helping them to acquire the virtues of their state. The type of spirituality instilled into the early Vincentian seminarians can be deduced from that of Vincent himself. His spirituality was practical, basically one of balance and moderation. He had said of virtue: "It is always based on a happy medium."<sup>4</sup>

The young Dujarié went from his time at the Vincentian seminary to two years of classical studies at Domfront under the Society of Jesus and Mary, commonly known as the Eudist fathers. John Eudes had formed his society in 1643 for the purpose of educating the clergy and propagating the missions. These seminaries were more like novitiates than schools of theology, combining preparation for ordination with evangelization of the masses. In this sense, they closely resembled the seminaries operated by the Sulpicians. Not much is known about Dujarié's time at Domfront except that there he learned and put into practice the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus that he later passed on to the Sisters of Providence.

On 21 September 1787, Dujarié received the tonsure in the Vincentian chapel at Le Mans. He was then sent by his bishop to Angers, one of the largest and best administered of the numerous Sulpician seminaries, where he was to complete his theological studies. There he followed the strict regimen characteristic of Sulpician seminary life. Jean-Jacques Olier, founder of the Society of St. Sulpice, had been consumed with the need to reform clerical life through the establishment of seminaries which he called "schools of religion." The training was to last five years and was to include dogmatic and moral theology as well as pulpit oratory. Above all it was to be a "school of holiness." Such were the principles under which the priests of France as well as England, Ireland and later the United States were to be formed in Sulpician seminaries for the next three hundred years.<sup>5</sup>

These spiritual masters of the French School developed a profoundly theocentric, christological understanding of God and creation. Dujarié adopted this spiritual perspective and made it the foundation of his life, passing it on to the two congregations he founded: the Brothers of Saint Joseph (now the Holy Cross Brothers) and the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> One is struck by how much this counsel sounds like "common sense" teaching of Mother Theodore. "After prayer and mortification," she was accustomed to say, "comes common sense."

<sup>5</sup> Henri Daniel-Rops, *The Church in the Seventeenth Century*. (London, England: J.W. Dent & Sons, 1963) 789.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

## Role of the French Revolution in Dujarié's Formation

The French Revolution, in its turn, would play a critical role in the formation of the priestly character of this country pastor. Dujarié was still a student at the Angers seminary when on 19 March 1791, the diocese received a Constitutional bishop. The Sulpician directors of the seminary protested, and having refused the schismatic oath, terminated their courses and dismissed the seminarians.<sup>7</sup>

Dujarié then began a way of life reminiscent of that of the early Christians. He lived in hiding, first at Lassay, then with his priest uncle, the Abbé Dufals at Cantenay. Supporting himself by working as an itinerant worker, he served the persecuted priests of the area.

After the General Amnesty of 1794 followed by the Law of May 1795 ordering the reopening of the churches, Dujarié asked to be ordained, and was sent for formation and direction to the Abbe Jacquet de la Haye, who from his hiding place in nearby Ruillé-sur-Loir was laboring in the villages of La Sarthe. On 26 December 1795, Monsignor de Maille de la Tour Landry, Bishop of Pampoul secretly ordained Dujarié in Paris. Eight days later, he celebrated his first Mass in the cellar of La Fosse-Garnier, home of the Aubry family. These devoted friends have left the following description of the subsequent life of the young Dujarie:

He slept sometimes in stables, sometimes in barns, in attics or cellars. He was usually in the company of the venerable M. de la Haye. They led a rugged and austere life, making long trips by night in bad weather and over bad roads to console the sick by bringing them the helps of religion and administering their sacraments, as well as baptizing children. They had to carry everything with them—the sacred vestments and other things necessary for the celebration of Mass.<sup>8</sup>

### Pastoral Ministry

After several years of this underground ministry, Dujarié was able in May of 1803 to assume openly his charge as pastor in the extensive parish of Ruillé-sur-Loir. Charged now with the responsibility for the wide spread parish, Dujarié looked about for

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<sup>7</sup> "A Country Pastor, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Catta, 30.



some assistance among the pious women of the neighborhood. About two and half miles north of Ruillé was a small hamlet comprising about fifteen families and there he built a a little stone house which he called "La Petite Providence." With the help of two humble women of the district, he began a work "of which he himself could not see the extent."<sup>9</sup>

By 1812, Dujarié had built a small stone chapel next to Little Providence where he said Mass two or three times a week for the growing number of "generous women whose lives rivaled in poverty and inconvenience [those] of the people they served."<sup>10</sup>

#### Foundation of the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé-sur-Loir

As new recruits continued to arrive, swelling their numbers, the women whom the people of the region already referred to as "the sisters," were asking Dujarie to form them into a congregation of women religious. In nearby Baugé the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Mary agreed to take in the seven young women from Ruillé and form them into religious life along with their own novices.

In 1818, there arrived at Little Providence a postulant who seemed to have been specially prepared by divine Providence to bring to the fledgling community the stability and direction it needed, Mademoiselle Julie Josephine Zoe du Roscoat of Pléhedel, daughter of a family of the minor nobility which had endured indignities and hardship as victims of the Revolution. A woman of noble character as well as noble birth, Zoe du Roscoat was destined to live a mere four years as a Sister of Providence. Before her death in 1822, she suggested as her successor, Aimee Lecor, a simple working girl whom she had come to know and admire when they worked together as Third Order Franciscans. Aimee had joined Zoe at "La Petite Providence" in 1820. Taking as her religious name, Sister Cecile, she would later be known as Mother Mary. She would be retained by the sisters as their General Superior for almost fifty years. In her position as leader of the congregation, she would send Sister St. Theodore and her companions to Indiana to establish there an American foundation of the Sisters of Providence.

One year after the death of Zoe du Roscoat, Dujarie purchased with his patrimony a piece of land next to the church and rectory in

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<sup>9</sup> Ryan, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ryan, 2.

Ruillé. There he built with the help of the newly founded Brothers of St. Joseph a fine new home replacing "La Petite Providenc" in the country area.<sup>11</sup> That same year Anne Therese Guerin, known at Ruillé as Sister St. Theodore, was admitted to the postulancy.

### Foundation of the Brothers of Saint Joseph

In the meantime, Father Dujarié had been engaged in establishing "the foundation of a society of teaching brothers to provide for the young boys of France the benefits the sisters were bringing to the girls. He called his new Institute the "Brothers of St Joseph."<sup>12</sup> Preoccupied with the formation of the brothers, Dujarié left the administration of the sisters' community to Mother Mary. First

[he] had succeeded in obtaining government authorization for the sisters [1826] who, now firmly established, in possession of their own property, and under competent leadership made such steady progress as to evolve within the next decade from a source of consolation and encouragement to one of painful renunciation for its founder.<sup>13</sup>

The Brothers of St. Joseph were not yet as well established as the sisters and were not as well equipped to face the economic and political pressures which threatened their very existence, especially during the revolutionary upheaval of 1830. An uneasy relationship between church and state jeopardized the prospects of any religious group that was not self supporting. Formal authorization by the government did guarantee some degree of stability and Dujarie had obtained this recognition for the sisters but not yet for the brothers.

During all this time, the finances of the sisters and the brothers had been held in a common fund.

The sisters were now self supporting, and the community was increasing and prospering. The same, however, was not true of the brothers. They were not as yet firmly established and as they were not obliged, as the sisters were, to furnish a dowry and yet were very numerous, their maintenance was a heavy financial charge which was borne almost exclusively by the sisters. The latter alone could borrow money, as they alone were incorporated, and they saw their debts increased

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<sup>11</sup> Brother Ephrem, CSC, The Cur\é of Ruillé. Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1941, p.98..

<sup>12</sup> Ryan, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

by heavy loans made by Father Dujarie in their name. Faced with complete ruin, the superiors in 1827 begged Father Dujarie to separate the finances of the two communities, thus far held in common and administered by the founder, but in vain. By 1830 their debts amounted to many thousand of francs and were rapidly increasing. The existence of both communities was menaced. Finally the sisters appealed to Monsigneur Carron, Bishop of Le Mans. . . .the result of the inquiry into the circumstances was that the sisters assumed all the debts of both congregations, something more than twenty-five thousand francs and their finances were declared from 1827 separate and independent.<sup>14</sup>

For some time the two congregations remained under Dujarie's direction but in 1834 Bouvier, having succeeded Carron as Bishop of Le Mans effected a complete separation between the two groups.<sup>15</sup>

The brothers' situation had worsened after 1830 and they had survived only through heroic fidelity on the part of some of the brothers and that of the founder. Finally, on the evening of 31 August 1835, the founder, aged, infirm and broken in spirit, presented his beloved congregation of brothers to Bishop Bouvier, asking that he in turn confide its direction to Father Basil Moreau, Assistant Superior of the Seminary, in whom he professed to have every confidence.<sup>16</sup> At the same time he resigned from his pastorate at Ruillé and retired to spend his last years with his brothers. At his departure, the sisters assumed his considerable debts and paid him a yearly pension until his death.

Between her entrance at Ruillé in 1823 and Dujarié's death in 1838, Mother Theodore's contact with Dujarié was necessarily limited by circumstances. Nevertheless, she held the founder in the greatest reverence and referred to him always with respect. Dujarié had remained in Ruillé until 1836 when he went to live with the Brothers of St. Joseph. In the summer of 1837, the sisters invited him to be their guest and spend a month among the familiar scenes of the quiet countryside at Ruillé. Possibly it was during this summer that an encounter between Mother Theodore and the founder took place.

Seeing him one day sitting alone and disconsolate in the little wood, Sister Theodore went quickly to the kitchen and

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<sup>14</sup> Borromeo, 16-17.

<sup>15</sup> Ephrem, 167.

<sup>16</sup> This same Father Bouvier was to become, as Bishop of Le Mans, the Ecclesiastical Superior of the Sisters of Providence and faithful friend and support of Mother Theodore in her trials in America.

made for the aged priest a bowl of strengthening broth. Was this the tiny circumstance, interpreted as disloyalty to the superior's decision to separate from Dujarié's direct rule, which brought about the rift with Mother Mary?<sup>17</sup>

By nature, Mother Theodore was outspoken and straight forward. In a letter to Mother Mary, she openly accused herself of this as a fault. Thus it is perhaps that Mother Mary may have misconstrued an innocent remark as a criticism of her decision to seek a separation from the brothers. The relationship between these two strong women was marked by continued strain for many years even at a distance of hundreds of miles.<sup>18</sup>

Dujarié's death took place at Our Lady of the Holy Cross, 17 February 1838 at the age of seventy-one years.

### Transmission of the Spirituality of the French School

In tracing the spiritual influence of Father Dujarié on the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé and subsequently upon Mother Theodore Guerin and the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, one needs to understand the wide spread prevalence of a religious movement that Cardinal Henri Brémond, a writer of religious history, popularized as the French School of Spirituality.<sup>19</sup> This school of spirituality gets its name, not from some purely national characteristic, but from the teaching and the practice of those individuals, primarily French men and women, who fostered it through the establishment of schools and seminaries as well as by the propagation of missions, both in the local parishes and in foreign countries. Many of the missionary priests in the Midwest were Eudist or Sulpician priests.

This period in church history has been referred to as "the golden age of spirituality in France."<sup>20</sup> Among its leaders, Vincent de Paul, Francis de Sales, John Eudes, John Baptist de la Salle and Louis Grignon de Montfort have been canonized giving credence to another name given to this era: a "century of saints."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Borromeo, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Borromeo, 23.

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, 89.

<sup>20</sup> Raymond Deville, *The French School of Spirituality*. Duquesne University Press: Pittsburgh, 1987, 10.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.



Although time does not permit us a complete explication of the French School, covering as it does several centuries of evolving church history, we of the pre-Vatican II generation may recognize traces of the teachings of the French School from our own formation in religious life.

Among these are the following:

- A sense of God, that religion of loving adoration that invites us to an interior recollection of the presence of the Trinity and to a fully aware and active participation in the liturgy.
- A personal relationship with Jesus centered in the Eucharist. The Incarnation is the pre-eminent mystery in the theology of the French School.
- The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the risen Jesus, the same Spirit poured out at Pentecost and received in Baptism.
- The apostolic spirit. The men and women of the French School could not separate an authentic spiritual and mystical life from a total, unconditional apostolic commitment.
- Devotion to Mary that was profoundly theological and mystical. Mary was never separated from Jesus; it was the reflection of the holiness of her Son "living in her" that was the object of their contemplation.<sup>22</sup>

Although Dujarié was nearing the end of his life when Anne Therese Guerin entered the French congregation in 1823, she was formed in religious life by women who had in turn been formed by him. In the days at La Petite Providence, he customarily gave daily instructions to the early sisters. Once the little chapel at "La Petite Providence" was completed, he said Mass there for them three times a week and doubtless included spiritual instruction in the form of sermons or homilies. Indirectly, Dujarié thus passed on to the first sisters at Ruillé as well to the Brothers of Saint Joseph all that he had absorbed during his own formation under the Vincentians, the Eudists and the Sulpicians, congregations strongly imbued with the spiritual doctrine of Cardinal Pierre de Berulle, considered the founder of the French School, Saint Vincent de Paul, St. John Eudes and Jean-Jacques Olier.

With the advantage of hindsight, we can trace the development of Mother Theodore's intrepid apostolic spirit to the teaching and example of Dujarié. In her unceasing labors in a country hostile to her faith, she followed his heroic example of self-gift in the service of others. His dedication to the spread of the kingdom allied with a deep

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<sup>22</sup> Deville, 243.



devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Mother of Christ, she in turn passed on to her sisters. The primacy of the Eucharist and the liturgy, the sacred nature of the priesthood, the personal love of Christ can all be seen reflected in her journals and correspondence and even more in the example of her life experiences.<sup>23</sup>

“The work of Providence is evident even when the purposes of Providence are hidden.”<sup>24</sup> Father Dujarie was first laid to rest in the brothers’ cemetery at Holy Cross. In 1873, circumstances caused the brothers to lose the property at Holy Cross, and his remains were transferred to Ruillé. There the Sisters of Providence placed them in the crypt of their mortuary chapel at the motherhouse.<sup>25</sup> In 1977, Dujarié was laid to rest at last in a side chapel of the convent church at Ruillé near Zoe du Roscoat and Mother Mary Lecor, the two early Sisters of Providence who were destined by Divine Providence to become both his cross and his pride, furthering in time his vision in ways of which he never dreamed.

Sister Mary Roger Madden, SP  
June 11. 2004

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<sup>23</sup> Among the books brought to Indiana by Mother Theodore and her sisters were a number imbued with the spirituality of the French School: several by John Baptist de la Salle including *Conduct of Christian Schools*, for many years a *vade mecum* for the sisters teaching in the schools; four by John Eudes, books that were originally part of the library of Father Corbe; one by Louis Grignon de Montfort; *Treatise on the Love of God* by Francis de Sales; the life of Louis Lallemant, a Jesuit follower of the French School, a special favorite of Mother Theodore. (See Appendix A)

<sup>24</sup> Daniel-Rops, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ephrem, 225.

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Raymond Deville, *The French School of Spirituality* (Duquesne University Press: Pittsburgh, 1987).

Mary Theodosia Mug, SP, *Life and Life-Work of Mother Theodore Guérin* (New York, 1904).

Joseph Eleanor Ryan, SP, *Positio Super Virtutibus ex officio Concinnata* (Rome, 1987).

\_\_\_\_\_ "A Country Pastor--Father Dujarié," from *Looking Back on Our Sources, unpublished mss., n.d., ASMW*.

William M. Thompson, ed. *Bertulle and the French School* (Paulist Press: New York, 1989).

## Appendix A

Books Reflecting the French School of Spirituality  
Original library of the French Sisters of Providence  
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods Library, Rare Book Room

### Anonymous

Nouveau choix des cantiques de Saint Sulpice

### Champion, Pierre

La vie et la doctrine spirituelle du pere Louis Lallemant de la  
Compagne de Jesus

### Clement (Abbé)

Elevations de l'ame a Dieu

### De la Salle, J.B.

Les douze vertus d'un on maitre De Montfort  
Cantiques des missions' Conduite des ecoles chretiennes

### De Sales, Francois

Traite de l'amour de Dieu

### Eudes, J.

L'Enfance admirable de la tres-sainte Mere de Dieu, Clermon-  
Ferrand, Rion, 1834.(signed J. B. Corbe)

Lettre de Leonie

Vie de Leonie

Jesus Maria la vie et la royaume de Jesus dans les ames  
chretiennes, Caen. 1642/ (sign. J. B. Corbe)

### Grignon, Louis-Marie

Abrege de la vie et des vertus de la Soeur Marie-Louise de Jesus

### St. Augustine

Sermons sur le nouveau testament

De l'imitation de Jesus Christ

Reglement pour la Societe des enfants du Coeur de la Mere  
admirable

Le Nouveau Testament de notre Seigneur Jesus Christ

Les soliliques, le manuel, et les meditations

Religious philosopher

**Les confessions**  
**Elevation au sacre Coeur**

**Surin, Jean Joseph**

**Les fondements de la vie spirituelle**  
**Sophisms et mensonges**  
**La guide spirituelle pour la perfection**