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THE FOUNDING OF BROTHERS OF SAINT JOSEPH**

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Inflexible of Character and Semper Fidelis:
The Relationship between Andre Mottais and Jacque Dujarié

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In order to form any impression of or insight into the relationship between Andre Mottais and Jacque Dujarié one needs to read Mottais's extant letters and interface their content with what has been written about Dujarié not that written by Dujarié. There is not much source material for either man. Brother George Klawitter has translated 44 of the 51 Mottais letters and written the history of the Brothers of Saint Joseph in which Mottais is given more space than in any other source. The Cotta brothers, Henri Bergeron, Edward Smith, Ephrem O'Dwyer, Philéas Vanier, Marcel Lafortune and Joseph Santo are among those who have written biographies of Dujarié. They offer up little, if any, detailed insight into the personal relationship that developed between the Founder of the Brothers of Saint Joseph and Andre Mottais.

My reflection on their 18-year relationship from 1820 to Dujarié's death in 1838 will be based upon a few phrases dropped here and there throughout the above-mentioned sources. When the two men met in 1820, there was a 33-year age difference between them. Jacque Dujarié decided to enter the seminary when he was 20, and Andre Mottais showed up in Ruillé-sur-Loire when he was 20. For each it took only 20 years of living to realize God's call and respond to it. Once their hands were put to the Lord's plow, there was no turning back—*semper fidelis!* Their deferential, yet honest fraternal relationship dramatically shaped

the earliest years of the now 200 years of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

Persons who study relationship building agree that to develop a deep bond with another, one needs to take time to get to know the other, listen effectively to that person, show genuine interest in the other, and be accepting of what the other has to offer to the relationship. There must be an active and mutual desire to understand what motivates another to act which differs for each individual. Obviously, building relationships takes conscientious effort and concerted empathy. More so, relationships are much more challenging when there is a wide age difference between two persons because the relationship can be weakened or stifled if there are unresolved trust issues.

It is apparent to me that Brother Andre Mottais and Father Jacque Dujarié had no lack of trust in each other. Andre was the spiritual son and Dujarié was the spiritual father, mentor, and confidant. Both men maintained a fraternal bond as members of a religious community. The younger man came to the Brothers of Saint Joseph to serve in whatever way Dujarié desired. He must have had a great deal of intestinal fortitude, self-assurance and resolve to take on the role of teacher/administrator when still 20, untested and a member of the community for only three months. Coming from a farming family formed in that tenacity demanded of those who rely upon their brawn and brain to deal with the ferocity that Mother Nature might summon on any given day, Andre was well tested in the ways of patience, disappointment and resilience. Arriving at Ruillé armed with a “rudimentary” education in reading, writing and numbers, Mottais so impressed Father Dujarié that he had him start a school in the village.

Because he had no formal training as a teacher and only that “rudimentary” education, just what is it that Dujarié, so early on, saw in Andre that convinced him that he would be an adequate teacher, and that he could be put in charge of a new school? There must have been early evidence of what in 1856 Basile Moreau would write about in *Christian Education* as the “call to be a teacher”.

Mottais must have manifested virtues like faithfulness to the duty to form citizens for the state and citizens for heaven. Brother Andre demonstrated enough knowledge to teach rudimentary reading, writing and numbers. He must have proven his zeal for the performance of the various tasks he was assigned as part of living in community that confirmed that he possessed the discipline for the relentless work of daily class preparation and consistent and timely assessment of student work. Moreau writes about the virtue of vigilance to be ever watchful for the welfare of students and for oneself. Brother Andre also possessed a seriousness that usually comes from the mental maturity and wisdom of one far older than 20. He must have been a young man of a gentle nature. And with this quality he would become a teacher whose authority is grounded in meekness and empathy. It goes without saying that he was a man of patience “which is the only thing that permits a teacher to rise above the difficulties inherent in educating youth.” If these virtues were practiced by Mottais, then I assume, too, that he was a prudent man, possessing a virtue that informs the “best practices” for the classroom. Finally, Moreau writes about firmness which allows for the creation of a learning community that conditions students for success.

All of these virtues, in varying degrees of development, must have been manifested in not only the way Brother Andre lived his life but also how he related to the other brothers and their founder. These were the qualities that Mottais would take to the Christian Brothers for refinement. In 1823, just three years after he entered and in his 23rd year, there were 30 Brothers of Saint Joseph and about ten schools. Brother Andre Mottais, acting as one of the four assistant brothers for Father Founder, was given rule over all.

Father Dujarie was 57 years old when Andre arrived in Ruillé in 1820. From his early years, he wanted to be a priest, and he lived through some very terrible times during the French Revolution to achieve ordination. His various biographers use adjectives like capable, pious, honest and sincere to describe the boy Dujarié. He grew into a young man who did not shy away from danger and personal

sacrifice to obtain a goal. In a word he was tenacious to do the work of God.

He traveled among French villages disguising himself as a simple peddler of lemonade, sometime weaver and shepherd with the intended ministry to assist priests of the underground. After secret ordination, he celebrated mass and administered the sacraments under cover of darkness, and at the risk of being exposed, imprisoned and perhaps executed. He was unintimidated by impending death if his priesthood was discovered because he was imbued with a resilience that was undaunted by any set-backs no matter the magnitude.

Once the rights of the French Church began to be restored, Dujarié was assigned to Ruillé sur Loir where he would minister for the remainder of his life. The state of everything ecclesiastical was so deplorable that where to begin restoration could be easily overwhelming. Not so for the Abbé of Ruillé who was undaunted by it all.

He started with education. In 1806 he gathered his women religious who would teach young women, and then in 1820, he collected the first of his men who would take care of the educational needs of young men. The years of personal privations were taking a toll upon his health by 1820. Gout would impose cruel rule over his body often confining him to bed for months on end. Though the body progressively diminished in its ability to rise to the needs of his two communities, his mind remained able as he continued to recognize the marvelous abilities of his four brother directors, and specifically, the potential of Brother Andre Mottais to march the Brother of Saint Joseph forward.

It is mutual trust that is the bedrock upon which Brother Andre and Father Dujarié live out 18 years of ministry. Very quickly they began to think as one individual. As early as July 1826, the father founder gives Brother Andre a very important task. "Our very reverend Father, having left on July 16 for a trip that will not end until mid-August, gave me before he left this job which I'm fulfilling with this circular letter, that has

as its purpose to invite you to profit by days of grace and mercy that the Lord is going to shine on you in a few weeks.” This circular letter was sent to all of the Brothers of Saint Joseph for Father Dujarié, but with Andre’s name attached as author. In this same letter, Andre advises each brother to “[o]ffer our respects to your parish priests and tell them that the intention of our superior is to send Brothers back to them if they fulfill exactly the conditions of the contract.” He speaks for both of them with OUR respects, and he is determined to get the day’s wage for the day’s work as stipulated in the individual contracts. The 26-year old is, for all practical purposes and by today’s titles, acting as the first assistant superior general. He holds the position of being the first among the four brother assistants, two of whom are far older than he. In order for the founder to give over the leadership of the group for two-plus months to such a young man means that he was convinced that Andre would only provide what he himself might offer.

Extreme solicitousness is another trait that characterizes the relationship between the two men and between them and all the members of the young community: their sincere concern for and care for each other. In the letter of 1827 from Brother Andre to Brother Aiden Legeai, Andre writes, “You will want to tell us in the next letter that you write to Ruillé if you need anything else...our good Father’s intention and ours [the Brother directors’] is to take care of our dear Brothers in all their needs and to supply them so they can perform their duties well.” Brother Andre is well aware that for this army of Christ to be optimally effective, the members must believe that those in charge have their very best interests at heart, especially when all are living and working in conditions of extreme hardship.

One more trait that cemented the trust between Brother Andre and Father Dujarié is Mottais’s penchant for exactness in all things. This attention to the small details is best described in the letter of May 7, 1829 in which Andre provides a detailed inventory of all the items related to the school in Milly. Not one toothpick was unaccounted for. Today, Andre would be described as obsessive compulsive. Yet a

young man with Brother Andre's need to attend to the life and working of this new community makes him an essential cog pin for any operation that wishes to run efficiently and to be financially in the black.

Father Dujarié died on February 17, 1838. In the memoire for him written by Brother Andre, he describes the three weeks prior to the founder's death. Dujarie suffered physical agony, then rallied, only to do so several more times. The founder lived those last weeks with an indomitable good will toward all, imbued with "zeal for the house of the Lord".

Oh! How many laborious nights I saw him spend in this way! He made himself read almost continually the lives of the saints; he had a particular affection for this type of reading. ...However, except during the gout crises, *he was always charmingly happy*. On his bed of pain, when he walked with his canes, and when he was carried in his chair, *always happy*. When we asked him how he was, *he responded pleasantly* that he was on his bed, that he was lying down, seated, etc. People in his house had to be very cunning to get news from him about his health. *He replied to us almost always with some pleasant, happy, and enigmatic expressions that left us in doubt*. It seemed that *he did not wish to let it bother him nor that anyone should be bothered about him*. In bed he responded to letters that he received in abundance from all over; he received those who came to see him and dealt with matters with them, he gave obediences to the Brothers and Sisters; he himself gave them money, making up the itinerary for a trip. Finally, he undertook enterprises, began them, continued them, and led them to their conclusion, *as if he had the most robust health*. *His courage never seemed to stagger, and I can say that he was truly worthy of admiration because he often came in unexpectedly, in the middle of all this confusion, into new troubles, like disorder in some establishment, or some subjects, persecution or evil from local people, enemies or awkward people against him: his patience in the middle of all that never left him in spite of his lively and bubbly*

character. His resignation was proof in all events, and zeal for the house of the Lord devoured him. I saw all that in our Father for nine consecutive years, the first nine years. I'm not counting the seven other years when he was under the weight of the most serious sicknesses and momentary upset of his spirit from attacks of apoplexy. And I was very edified by it. [Italics added by the writer.]

The 18-year relationship between these two men was not necessarily extraordinary. What is extraordinary, however, is Dujarié's capacity to extend his hand in trust to a man 33 years younger than himself. Without Dujarié's desire to engage Mottais in significantly important ways for the development of the Brothers of Saint Joseph, the young man might have taken upon himself the self-effacement of simple tasks. Mottais's potential was not only seen but nourished and honed and held in honor for 18 years. Maintaining an unbroken bond of fraternal comradeship and mutual leadership, the two men relied upon each other to meet a need of the times—providing educators to train boys to become good citizens not only of this world but also of heaven.