

NEUILLY-SUR-SEINE, January 12, 1899.

*Reverend Fathers and Dear Brothers:*

The 11th of February will be the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Very Rev. Father Anthony Basil Marie Moreau.

This date is of the highest interest to our filial piety, and should not pass unnoticed by any one of us.

Before adjourning, the last General Chapter, on a motion made by the Rev. Father Lemarié, unanimously resolved that this centenary should be signalized by the public expression of our respect, gratitude and pious affection toward that venerated Father of our religious family.

As is well-known, the Congregation of Holy Cross, such as it stands, had a two-fold origin.

It first began with the Brothers at Ruillé-sur-Loir, Sarthe.

Its first founder was the Very Rev. Father Dujarié, an eminent and saintly priest, who, after passing through the frightful ordeal of the Revolution, without losing anything of his dignity or piety, had returned, during the first days that followed the restoration of order, to place himself at the disposal of his Bishop for the salvation of souls.

At the sight of so much ruin, both moral and religious, wrought by the French Revolution, which he saw with his own eyes all around him, and almost touched with his finger, his apostolic heart, open to divine illumination and holy sacrifice, was moved even to tears.

A man of initiative, because he was ever ready to devote himself to such a noble cause, he was not content

to bewail these immense evils. He forthwith sought for prompt and efficacious measures by which they could be remedied.

Without stopping to consider the difficulties that must inevitably arise, or to weigh the resources which were nowhere to be found, but, perhaps, mysteriously enlightened and guided from on high, he founded the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé, who are now so widely spread throughout France and the United States, and show themselves everywhere so zealous and so successful.

He did not stop there; but about the middle of the year 1820 he gathered together four young men in his presbytery, with the intention of making of them religious teachers for his own congregation and the neighboring parishes.

Such was the humble and pious beginning of the Brothers' Institute. The blessing of God was upon him. He succeeded, and his Institute extended even to the neighboring provinces.

The Very Rev. Father Dujarié had also intended to associate with himself a few priests who would take part in the good work, and support him in a task that was indeed too vast and too heavy for one individual.

"The Very Rev. Father Dujarié," writes the Very Rev. Father Moreau in the *Chronicles*, "had all the merit of the good work which he undertook to perform, and to which he consecrated himself. It is doubtless to reward the generous efforts of his heart that the Lord allowed him to see with his own eyes and before his death, in Notre Dame of Holy Cross, at Le Mans, the work which he proposed to found at Ruillé, united with that of the Brothers."

His long sufferings during the reign of Terror, even when he was compelled to hide himself, no less than the unheard of fatigues of a long and laborious ministry, had caused him many painful infirmities.

His shattered health led him to ask his Bishop for a successor in his work, and that successor, designated by himself, was the Very Rev. Father Moreau.

No choice could have given rise to greater hopes for the future. After completing at Issy his theological studies in the most brilliant manner, and on his return to the diocese, he was appointed Director of the Great Seminary at Le Mans, where he taught Dogmatic Theology with no less success than ability. Nay, being called by Divine Providence to most important works, and inspired by the idea of the good to be achieved, he had already founded in the city of Le Mans, at the cost of incredible labors, a Convent of the Good Shepherd, and had begun to create a diocesan association for sick and infirm priests. This high position as Director and Founder was but the prelude to a life as fruitful as laborious.

On the 31st of August, 1835, the Very Rev. Father Dujarié, during a general Retreat for his religious and in the presence of the Rt. Rev. Bishop of Le Mans, tendered his resignation, and at the same time asked for and obtained the Very Rev. Father Moreau as his successor.

On the following day, in the chapel of the Novitiate, after the benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament, the canonical transfer of his office took place. It was a most touching scene, and no one could refrain from tears, when the old priest, who had to lean on the corner of the altar to support himself, publicly handed

his resignation to the Bishop, and requested him to appoint officially the Very Rev. Father Moreau as his successor.

The emotion increased when, after the formal approval of the Bishop, the Founder directly addressed the Very Rev. Father Moreau and entrusted to his care his little Congregation. "I commit it wholly into your hands," said he with a voice choked by tears, "I entrust it to you with the certainty that henceforth you will be its protector and its father. Yes: I entrust my children to you. Kindly accept them as my dearest treasure and as a deposit for which you shall have to give an account to the Prince of Pastors. I wish that they should henceforth regard you as their Father, and show you all the love, submission and confidence which they owe you as such."

If the heart of the Very Rev. Father Dujarié was deeply moved, no less profound was the emotion of the young priest who was called on to succeed him. He was bound to accept this charge, because it was the will of God clearly expressed, and he did accept it. But from that very moment he understood and felt the great burden which this sacrifice placed upon him for the rest of his life.

Without doubt he foresaw the long train of trials which awaited him. Nay, more: his mind, perhaps providentially illumined, divined the bitterness of the last trial, a real agony of which there are but few examples in the lives of founders of Orders.

"God alone knows," he wrote later, "what I felt at that moment, while thinking of the labors and contradictions which were to be the outcome of my obedience."

This was an intuition, and for him indeed labors and contradictions began almost immediately, to be interrupted only at rare intervals.

The difficulties, which were of all kinds and continuous were never able to daunt his courage. He was armed with the strength of deep convictions, and determined by an indomitable spirit of faith to enter into all struggles even the most heroic, because his line of conduct was mapped out by duty. These difficulties only resulted in a complete annihilation of self and issued in his closer union with God. Far from paralyzing or arresting his activity, they but stimulated his energy, gave him a new impetus to go onward and upward.

Without means or resources at his disposal, he transfers the seat of the Brothers' Institute from Ruillé-sur-Loir to Holy Cross, near Le Mans. There he receives a very small piece of land with a little house. Then he creates a French boarding-school, which soon becomes a College with a complete classical course, the fame of which spreads far and wide. To this Institution, thus transplanted, he joins priests, according to the well premeditated plan of the Very Rev. Father Dujarié. Besides, he founds for the wants of the College, Sisters who have become the Sisters of the Holy Cross, well-known in France and in the New World. He builds a chapel adapted to the wants of the future as he foresees it for his own Community. He sends his subjects to Algiers, to the United States, to Canada, to Guadaloupe, to Bengal, to Italy, to Dalmatia and to Poland to establish new houses. For each of the branches of his religious family thus propagated he erects a Novitiate, writes out Constitutions,

Rules and a Directory, wherein he lays down the treasures of his long experience, and which he was fortunate enough to see approved by the Holy See.

Each of these improvements represents an amount of energy and untiring efforts of which it is difficult for us to form an idea.

The times were evil. Liberty had to be gained step by step. It was necessary to overcome many obstacles, triumph over inveterate prejudices, contend with obstinate jealousies, listen calmly to the blackest calumnies, often bear with rebukes and renew the fight in other forms and with fresh forces.

He succeeded in all his undertakings owing to a strict integrity in his dealings, to an unconquerable firmness, a keen and deep insight into all the questions at issue, an indefatigable industry, and especially owing to his admirable piety which in many instances was truly heroic.

Amid these manifold labors which required all his watchfulness, he found time to preach retreats with the greatest success, and to attend all alone to a vast correspondence.

Thus it is that he was very actively identified with all the great questions of his age, such as the freedom of education, the restoration of the Roman Liturgy and the pure doctrines of the Church, the devotion to St. Joseph; and, for the happy solution of all these momentous questions he made the best use of all his mental and physical energies.

A theologian of safe and profound learning, an eminent orator, a zealous missionary, learned and eloquent, an educator of consummate experience, a priest in the full significance of the word, a religious

the more deeply versed in the intimate secrets of spiritual life because he read them in the daily practice of his own life, a man of admirable faith, of a tender, generous heart, it is no wonder that, being gifted with all these eminent qualities, he met with so many contradictions and was reserved for the most painful of all trials.

After spreading throughout the world his work culminated in the Community of Holy Cross, at Le Mans, where, under his guardianship everything had developed as though by a miracle.

There, for more than a quarter of a century, year after year, day after day, and even hour after hour, was realized the fruit of his thought, of his heart, of his soul, of his whole life, slowly brought to a perfect maturity at the price of hard labor.

A catastrophe forever to be deplored, the painful circumstances of which filled all hearts with grief, drove him, together with his children from the home he loved so well.

During that dreadful crisis wherein everything appeared to be swallowed up by the abyss, did he ever despair of the work which God had founded by his hands? Plunged into an ocean of sorrows he had to drink to the very dregs that chalice of bitterness.

Like Jeremiah, bewailing the ruins of Jerusalem, he wished to sit down there, outside, it is true, but at least in the sight of and very near the old home and those walls which reminded him of so many works achieved, so many sufferings nobly endured and so many fair hopes that were now forever blasted.

As to what concerned him personally, his soul remained calm and serene in the midst of the ruins caused by the storm. But still it is easy to imagine

how much his heart, though peaceful and resigned, was crushed by the ever present sacrifice which he bravely carried and of which he felt the oppressive weight.

After so many labors, which had gradually exhausted his strength, in spite of his advanced age and the infirmities brought about by the most austere mortifications, he did not find it difficult to continue to live always as a simple religious, nor even to resume the hard life of a missionary. He was again to be seen going from parish to parish, preaching the Word of God. People loved to call for him, they were eager to hear him, as he had preserved the gift so rare of thought and language, clear, pious, strong and full of persuasion. His old age added to all this a special charm derived from a profound emotion, and he wore on his large and noble brow the halo of a great ever-enduring sorrow. During the course of one of his missions he was struck with the blow that was to carry him away.

He found himself ready like a saint to open the door for the Master Who knocked.

More than once, and in terms of an exquisite familiarity, the venerable Pontiff, Pius IX., had publicly expressed the pious and ever affectionate esteem which he felt for the Very Rev. Father Moreau. He wished to comfort his last moments by his Pontifical blessing.

Honored with that benediction, and strengthened by the grace of the holy Sacraments, our venerated Father gave up his soul to God on January 20, 1873.

Death closed his life, the grand and beautiful life of an apostle. God, I hope and firmly trust, hastened to reward and crown the long labors, the bitter trials and the profound piety of his good and faithful servant.

His body rests in the modest cemetery of the Holy Cross, in a corner of that spot which he never wished to leave or to forget.

May he rest in peace!

On the 11th of February, all the priests of the Congregation will offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the repose of the dearly beloved soul, the memory of which let us all forever cherish. For the same intention, all the brothers will offer up a holy Communion and make the Stations of the Cross.

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

G. FRANÇAIS, C. S. C.,

*Superior General.*

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NEUILLY-SUR-SEINE, April 23, 1899.

*Reverend Fathers and Dear Brothers:*

I have just received the ratification of the Acts of the General Chapter, with certain most wise modifications, all of which I hasten to set before you. I know that you have long been awaiting this message, and I understand your impatience to know what the Chapter had enacted for the common good, but I could not send you this sooner. The Court of Rome proceeds slowly in all things, and we have aught to be grateful for it, because this slowness gives the more weight to whatever it approves, modifies, or decides.

Appended to the Acts of the Chapter are the observations made and the modifications suggested by the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda. These