

LIFE
OF BLESSED
MADELEINE SOPHIE BARAT

Foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart

1779 - 1865



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I

LIFE OF

BLESSED MADELEINE SOPHIE BARAT

MADELEINE SOPHIE BARAT was born at Joigny in Burgundy on December 12, 1779. Her birth, hastened as it was by an alarm of fire, nearly cost her mother her life, and for some time the child was delicate and fragile. She gained strength by degrees, however, and soon her bright wit and merry ways showed that an exuberance of life was there, while the unusual depth of her affections revealed a heart capable of intense and ardent love. Her earliest years were spent amongst

the vine-clad hills and richly-watered valleys that lie around Joigny, and in the simple occupations of a daughter of the soil, and the happy and loving surroundings of the home of her good parents, whose youngest child she was.

Her earliest lessons were learnt at her mother's knee, and a great horror of sin was soon implanted in her heart. Before she was thought old enough to make her first Confession, she, with other children of the same age, attended instructions given by the priest of the parish, who taught them how to make an act of contrition, and then gave them a solemn blessing. Sophie thought that to ensure the pardon of her sins, she must confess them aloud, and began to do so then and there, until she was stopped by the priest, amid the

laughter of the little group. At ten years of age she made her First Communion in the old parish church of St. Thibault. No one could see much of Sophie as a child without remarking her unusual powers of mind, good sense, clear judgment, and great love of truth.

Her brother Louis, who was also her godfather, after receiving minor orders, was sent as professor to the college of his native place whilst awaiting the priesthood; he undertook the task of Sophie's education as a mission entrusted to him by God. At first the books and lessons were a weary exchange for Sophie from the out-of-door occupations she loved so much, but there was no help for it, and we are told that even at seven years old she spent many hours a day at study.

A loft at the top of the house was given up to her use, and there she toiled over her history, her Latin, and her sums. Once Louis was to go away for three whole weeks, and endless vistas of enjoyment opened before Sophie's eyes. It was vintage time, which made it doubly delightful, and she carefully put by her books, promising herself long hours of happiness. However, after three days' absence Louis suddenly returned, and the lessons were sorrowfully resumed. By degrees, however, as her mind developed, love of study grew upon her ; she delighted in Virgil and, later on, in Homer. *Don Quixote* consoled her for the trouble of learning Spanish, and she learnt Italian with great ease.

The clouds which lowered over France at this sad time, and at length burst with

such fearful violence, were comparatively little felt at Joigny. We read neither of the devastation of armies nor of the excesses of the Revolution in the account of Sophie's early life, but when she was fourteen a cruel blow fell in the midst of the hitherto unbroken happiness of their home life. In May, 1793, Louis Barat was arrested in Paris and thrown into prison, where he remained, in imminent danger of his life, until the fall of Robespierre nearly two years later. The grief of his mother well-nigh cost her her reason, if not her life, but the tenderness and tact of Sophie saved her. In her sorrow the poor mother persisted in refusing to take any food, and yielded only when Sophie declared her intention of following her example. "At least,"

she said, "we shall die together." This seemed to break the spell, and the danger was averted. Sophie traced back her devotion to the Sacred Heart to this time, when she and her mother prayed often for her brother's safety before pictures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which he had sent from Paris.

Sophie's love for her mother was at this time one of her strongest characteristics, and it was the only obstacle which seemed insuperable when, on Louis Barat's release from prison, he urged his parents to allow his sister to live with him in Paris and continue her studies. Finally the arrangement was made, on condition that Sophie should return to Joigny every year at vintage time.

Louis Barat was now a priest, and he said Mass daily, though in secret, in the little house in the Rue de Touraine where he and his sister lived, under the roof of a good lady named M^{lle} Duval. There Sophie continued her studies, but, as her brother's aim was now to train her soul rather than to cultivate her taste for literature, he substituted for the poets, whose influence on her he feared, the study of Scripture and the works of the Fathers of the Church.

Sophie had probably never seen a nun or been within convent walls, but the desire to consecrate herself to God had been with her from her childhood. Her humility made her desire the life of a Carmelite lay-sister, though already another wish strove with this one—the wish

for an active, apostolic life, whereby souls might be saved. The sequel shows that both these desires were from God.

Father Barat's direction was very austere, and, to teach his sister complete self-control and detachment, he constantly mortified her natural affections and desire for innocent amusement. Sophie was an apt pupil, but it forced the tears even from her eyes to see a piece of needlework, which she had prepared in secret for her brother, burnt as soon as she had offered it to him, and a dress, which she had made for herself to replace the peasant costume she always wore, destroyed without pity. The treatment was rough, but it bore fruit, and Sophie every day grew in love for that Lord to whom her life was to be consecrated.

It was the Abbé Barat's wish at this time to join a society of zealous priests who, under the name of "Fathers of the Faith," or "Fathers of the Sacred Heart," followed the rule of St. Ignatius. Their first Superior had been Father Léonor de Tournély, a priest of marvellous piety, and on his holy death at the age of thirty, Father Joseph Varin was elected Superior in his place. This was a time when everything had to be constituted afresh after the social and religious overthrow of the Revolution, and Father de Tournély, not as it seemed without the sanction of inspiration, had fostered plans for the establishment of a religious community of women, whose work should be the education of girls both of the poorer and upper classes. When he died it became a

sacred duty for Father Varin to carry out his plans.

One day, in conversation with the Abbé Barat, Father Varin asked him whether any tie bound him to the world. The Abbé Barat answered that he had "a little sister," and when, after further questions, Father Varin learned that she was nineteen years of age, that she was highly educated, and that her great desire was to become a Carmelite, it immediately flashed upon his mind that she was destined to be the foundation-stone he needed. The impression was confirmed when he made her acquaintance and found that so many gifts of mind and heart were united to great gentleness and even timidity of manner and profound diffidence of self. Father Barat entered

cordially into Father Varin's views for his sister's future. Indeed, they were for him the visible goal to which Providence, by his means, had been leading her, and he made over to Father Varin the direction of her soul. It was not long before Sophie herself was convinced that God's will for her lay in the path that now presented itself. "I knew nothing and foresaw nothing," she once said later on, "but I accepted all that was offered to me." Father Varin then drew up a rule for Sophie and three or four companions of hers who had been in the habit of coming to hear Father Barat's Mass, and who now assisted with her at Father Varin's instructions and entered like her into his plans. Thus, in humility and poverty, were laid the first founda-

tions of the future Society of the Sacred Heart.

On the 21st of November of the year 1800, four postulants, one of whom was Sophie Barat, pronounced their consecration to the Sacred Heart. This date is still solemnized as that of the foundation of the Society.

From the time of her consecration to the great work to which her life was devoted, the history of Sophie Barat, as far as exterior events are concerned, is merged in that of the Society of the Sacred Heart. We must now see how this Society began its work.

Early in 1801 Father Varin went to preach a mission at Amiens. In the course of the mission he made acquaintance with two ladies, Geneviève Deshayes and

Henriette Grosier, who, when he told them of the newly-founded Society, offered themselves as postulants. Henriette Grosier helped her aunt in the management of a school which was not at that time in a flourishing condition, and it was to the complete satisfaction of every one concerned that its management passed by an agreement, signed October 15, 1801, into the hands of the new Society, which thus became possessed of its first foundation.

Its early beginnings were humble enough to satisfy those whose only desire was to imitate the poverty of Nazareth. The Sisters were extremely poor, everything beyond the barest necessities were wanting to them. The children were troublesome and often unmanageable,

many contradictions and trials from without tested their constancy, and M^{lle} Loquet, their first Superior, had not the spirit which Father Varin wanted to see implanted amongst them. During this trying time, Sophie's calm strength and deep union with God were the great support of her companions' courage, and when in the following year, M^{lle} Loquet, at Father Varin's suggestion, returned to Paris to resume there her life of good works, Sophie was appointed Superior at the age of twenty-three.

Father Varin tells us how this nomination was made known to her. "After Mass," he says, "I went to the convent with Father Roger, and assembled the nuns. I talked to them for a while, and then said I was going to ask them some

questions to judge of their competence for teaching. After a few questions on various points of Christian Doctrine to the others, it came to sister Sophie's turn, and I said to her: 'As you are the youngest I must give you the easiest question—Why did God make you?' 'To know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him,' she answered. 'What is *serving God*?' I continued. 'To serve God' she replied 'is to do His holy will.' 'You wish to serve Him, I suppose?' 'Yes, Father!' 'Well, His will is that you should be Superior.' It was a terrible blow. She fell on her knees, burst into tears, and implored to be let off; but we were inflexible. No one can say what it cost her: it nearly killed her." At a later time he added: "All know what this seed

brought forth. Mother Barat's *humility* was the only obstacle to be found in her, in the way of good. For ten years from that time it was a struggle between us, on her part to be released from the task of government, and on mine to make her understand that she held it from the will of God." In this spirit she carried her burden, until sixty-two years later death relieved her of it, and her cross became her crown.

The wisdom of the choice was soon made manifest. In a few months the school had increased so much that removal elsewhere was necessary. In 1804 the community took possession of the house in the Rue de l'Oratoire which has always been looked on with special veneration as the "cradle of the Society." One by one, in

these early years, Mother Barat's life-long companions and sharers of all her toils and labours, joys and sorrows, gathered round her, almost all of them having passed through the fiery ordeal of the Revolution by which the faith and courage of God's servants had at that time been tried. One of the first to arrive was Catherine de Charbonnel. The Revolution had deprived her of almost all her near relations, whose singular attachment to their King and their faith had marked them out as victims of its fury. Her strong faith had inspired her with a courage in misfortune which, in spite of great natural timidity, won her the respect and admiration of all who saw her over and over again expose her life in the service of religion. Félicité Desmarquest

was of another stamp. Her character had acquired strength and maturity in ministering, even from a very early age, to the Confessors for the Faith in the prisons of the Republic. Others, like Mother de Charbonnel, might be of more use in the work of education, but no one helped Mother Barat more than Mother Desmarquest in making the life of the Society of the Sacred Heart a faithful copy of that of the Holy House at Nazareth. Mother de Charbonnel's practical good sense and knowledge of business matters made her invaluable in the work of foundations, whilst to Mother Desmarquest for many long years the formation of the novices was entrusted.

A third vocation at this time proved to be of great importance to the future of

the Society, that of Philippine Duchesne. She was at this time a novice of the Visitation, sorely tried by the failure of her efforts to gather together the scattered members of the community she had entered, and who had been dispersed by the Revolution. She was cast in heroic mould, and all the intensity of her will was set on serving God in religion. The deserted Visitation convent of Sainte-Marie-d'en-Haut at Grenoble belonged to her, and when, through Father Varin, she made acquaintance with Mother Barat, she offered herself and all she had to the Society. In her new Superior she found all her heart could wish, and in the Society of the Sacred Heart a spirit that satisfied even her aspirations, and a field for work that gave full scope to all her burning zeal.

A few years later, in 1818, the great mission was given her of helping to spread the devotion of the Sacred Heart in the United States and Canada by carrying thither a little colony of Mother Barat's nuns, and there, after seeing convents of the Sacred Heart established in all directions, she died thirty-five years later with the reputation of a saint.

The convent of the Sacred Heart of Sainte-Marie-d'en-Haut was therefore the second foundation which Mother Barat made, and the joy this addition to the Society caused her was only lessened by the sorrow of seeing herself shortly afterwards elected Superior General. A foundation at Poitiers soon followed, and here in a venerable building, the Abbaye des Feuillants, founded by Louis XIII. but

devastated by the Revolution, she established her first house of noviceship. Here Mother Barat herself trained her novices in that humility and obedience of which she was so consummate a mistress. Amongst her novices at this time were Sisters Thérèse Maillucheu and Joséphine Bigeu, model novices in this model noviceship, who afterwards carried with them into active life the spirit of prayer learnt at Poitiers. Poitiers was said to have been in some ways the “Manresa” of Mother Barat. Everything in the old monastic building favoured her love of solitude and silence, and during her sojourn there the Society of the Sacred Heart, still so small, was being formed within her heart.

In 1807 the Emperor Napoleon gave the formal approval of the civil authority to

the Society, and in this and the following years several foundations were made.

As the work grew it became more and more necessary to consolidate its organization. The urgency of this need was made more manifest from a sad experience which, but for Mother Barat's courage and perseverance, might have had a disastrous ending. When after four years of absence she, in 1808, returned to Amiens, she was painfully struck by a change in the spirit of the house. This was chiefly owing to the austere rule of the Superior, Madame Baudemont, and to the misguided zeal of the confessor, M. de St. Estève, who wished to usurp supreme authority not only over the convent at Amiens but over the whole Society. He had drawn up and imposed upon the community a

rule compiled from those of other Orders which changed the spirit and form of the new congregation. The Mother General saw at once the state of the case, but she decided to accept the existing state of things as far as she conscientiously could. She knew that it would be worse than useless at that time to act in opposition to the ruling spirit of the place, and she showed only unconquerable patience and gentleness. She knew that confidence must be won, not forced, and her deep contempt of self easily persuaded her that others were more deserving of confidence than she was. The school was prospering—peace and union reigned at that time in the community. She feared to compromise all by trying then to set things right, and although her authority was

disregarded, although M. de St. Estève claimed the title of Founder and was imposing Constitutions on the young Institute not in the spirit of St. Ignatius and without the devotion of the Sacred Heart which Father Varin had breathed into it, she waited God's time, and left the house where her authority was only nominal to foster the spirit of unity in the other houses, and maintain in them at least that devotion to the Sacred Heart which should make them worthy one day to bear its name. Several years passed before the crisis came and the wisdom of her conduct was justified. In 1812 M. de St. Estève was arrested by the Imperial government, and the time seemed then come to put forward the true Constitutions of the Society. Those drawn up by M. de

St. Estève had in the meantime been sent to all the houses then existing, and had been universally disapproved. All felt that the spirit of the Sacred Heart was not in them.

Father Varin was then living in exile at Chevroz, near Besançon, in a country house belonging to his sister. Thither Mother Barat went, accompanied by Mother Deshayes, and there, in prayer and consultation, the Rules and Constitutions were drawn up. But all trouble was not yet over. The fall of the Empire set M. de St. Estève at liberty, and on his release he went to Rome, whence he wrote to say that he had founded a convent there which was the only one the Holy Father recognized, that his rule had been approved, and that he was acknowledged

as Director and organizer of the Society. Mother Barat wrote for advice to the Provincial of the newly re-established Italian Province of the Society of Jesus. Her letter was answered by an unknown secretary who, writing in the Provincial's name, informed Mother Barat that the Holy Father had recognized M. de St. Estève as sole Superior of the Society, that it would be impossible for her to withdraw without incurring excommunication, and that the Pope had declared that in case any of the houses refused to submit, they would be suppressed to avoid scandal. Father Varin and other friends advised unconditional submission, but it soon became apparent that the letter had been sent without any authority. Its authorship was afterwards traced to

M. de St. Estève himself, and in consequence of his conduct he was obliged to leave Rome. His patrons disowned his acts, and his influence was at an end.

In the early days of the troubles Father de Clorivière had advised Mother Barat "to pray, to suffer, to wait and to hope": to her fidelity in carrying out this advice the salvation of the Society was due.

The Constitutions and Rules drawn up by Father Varin and Mother Barat were examined and adopted at the second General Congregation of the Society, held at Paris in 1815. They were received with delight by all the houses, and the diocesan Bishops gave them complete approbation. Mother Barat herself read them to the community at Amiens, and a perfect and lasting recon-

ciliation of all differences followed. After this, her Society developed rapidly.

In 1816 a general noviceship was established in Paris, and about this time foundations were made at Lyons, Bordeaux and Chambéry. The King granted a munificent subsidy by means of which the Hôtel Biron in Paris was bought. Its school soon became famous, and after a while the noviceship was also established under the same roof. However, even when despoiled of its worldly ornaments, such as mirrors, gilding and pictures, the house was, in Mother Barat's eyes, far too magnificent for the spouses of the God of Nazareth. It was therefore made over entirely to the school, and the religious occupied only outbuildings which had formerly been the servants'

quarters, the stables and the small low rooms in which they were lodged still bearing the names and marks of their former occupants, the cooks, scullions, and grooms. Father Varin came to see the novices in their new abode, and when they told him that they had taken possession of it on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, he said with a smile, "This is rather a splendid house to come to on the feast of so poor a Saint;" but he added, "If St. Francis saw the part of it you have chosen, he would acknowledge you for his sisters in Jesus Christ." When any one expressed surprise at the establishment of the religious in the Hôtel Biron, his answer was: "They are there indeed, but they do not live in it."

In August, 1820, Mother Barat called

together the Superiors of her Society in Paris, to organize a plan of studies. Father Varin impressed upon the Mothers present that the supreme end of education is the love and knowledge of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The chief aim of the plan of education pursued by the Society of the Sacred Heart is thoroughness as regards the religious, intellectual, and moral training of the pupils. The children are to learn everything it is most important for them to know in view of the life they are to lead, and the society they are to mix in. Their welfare was the constant solicitude of Mother Barat. She treated them with what has been well called a "royal respect," and she drew them to her by the irresistible force of her great love for them. When she was

organizing the school in Paris she set herself to the work as though she had nothing else to attend to, and no detail was too small to come under her personal supervision. Children whose character made school-life difficult to them, or those who were unmanageable and troublesome, were especially amenable to the influence of her gentle and loving kindness. She had a mother's true instinct of discerning good, and this very discernment in one so holy and so gifted gave her the power of developing the good seed often underlying many faults.

The following extract from a letter written a few years later to the children in answer to their good wishes sent every year for her feast, on St. Mary Magdalen's day (July 22nd), expresses some of her

desires for them. "It is not without a special design of God's mercy that the title of "Children of the Sacred Heart," of a Heart burning with zeal and charity, is yours, in an age so given over to selfishness. The name you bear points out the important mission entrusted to you. It is your task to continue, I would even say to complete, our mission, to devote yourselves to the love of Jesus Christ and to the salvation of souls to whom He is unknown. More even than your words, your example in the world will speak eloquently of Him; but that this may be so you must profit by the innumerable graces you now enjoy. Your desire to do this is the offering that will give me most pleasure, and in return I will most heartily pray that Jesus Christ and your

dear Mother Mary may bless you, and not suffer any one of you to be unworthy of the name you bear, nor to be wanting one day to the summons that will gather together Mother and children in the common centre of their love."

Love of the poor was one of the strongest feelings of Mother Barat's heart, and innumerable are the beautiful and touching stories of her charity. Poor children were assuredly the best beloved of her large family, and she made every possible sacrifice to maintain poor schools and orphanages in connection with all her convents.

The year 1823 was marked by a great joy. Eight years previously a convent founded at Ghent had separated from the other houses, to Mother Barat's intense

grief; but during this year a number of the community sought and obtained readmittance. Two amongst them afterwards rendered great services to this Society: these were Mother Henriette Coppens, afterwards Mistress of novices, and Mother de Limminghe. The latter was appointed Superior at Turin, and when Mother Barat's love of subjection and humility made her wish to place herself under obedience to one of her daughters in all that concerned her personal conduct, it was on Mother de Limminghe that her choice fell. During the seven years that this relation existed between them, Mother Barat and she were seldom separated, but when they were apart, a close and frequent correspondence maintained the bond in all its integrity.

The fourth General Congregation was held in Paris in 1826, and various strict regulations concerning enclosure, poverty and simplicity were made ; and whilst it was still sitting, the long-desired brief of Approbation was signed by Pope Leo XII. (December 22, 1826).

New foundations at Lille and at Lyons followed, and the convent of the Trinità dei Monti in Rome became the property of the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1828.

When the summer of 1830 began, all seemed full of hope and promise, but the revolution of July checked progress for the time. For some days the danger in Paris was imminent. Barricades had been raised just under the windows of the convent of the Sacred Heart. At one moment the insurgents scaled the walls

and rushed into the garden, and a desperate fight ensued between them and the Swiss Guards. But the house stood unscathed, preserved by the unceasing prayers of its inmates.

It was impossible for the nuns not to laugh, when on the following day they recognised Father Varin in secular disguise, and wearing the indispensable knot of tricolor ribbon in the button-hole of his great coat. He came thus into the noviceship and began to speak with his favourite ejaculation of : "*Ita Pater.*" "Courage and Confidence" was then the burden of his discourse, and he assured his hearers that "if they were faithful to God He would be faithful to them."

The noviceship was dispersed for a time, whilst a suitable place of refuge was

sought. Montet, near Fribourg in Switzerland, was fixed upon, and there the novices were gathered together again as soon as the necessary arrangements were made. They were placed under the charge of Mother de Charbonnel and Mother Henriette Coppens. All hardships, and there were many, were cheerfully endured, and this noviceship has always been admired for its special spirit of mortification and holy joy. Among the novices was an Alsatian named Joséphine Gœtz, who even then gave promise of those great virtues which on Mother Barat's death led to her election as second Superior General. Six months before she entered, her vocation was undecided, and she was still at school: she had seen Mother Barat, and, writing at a later time, she thus

described the interview : "I shall never forget the impression Mother Barat made upon me then. A supernatural influence took hold of me, and entered into the very depths of my soul. I felt that I was in the presence of one who was clothed with the presence of God Himself." This, in fact, decided her vocation. The day of Mother Gœtz's clothing, a holy Sister also received the habit, who, under the name of Sister Elizabeth, and the life of a humble lay-sister, concealed a distinguished name, and many and varied talents. This immolation, maintained till death, was undertaken to obtain from God the conversion of those near and dear to her.

On leaving Montet, Mother Barat went to Turin. All her journeys were,

at this time especially, sources of intense suffering from a severe injury to her foot, and the journey to Turin was full of difficulty. It was necessary to cross the Col di Tenda, and the descent on the Italian side could only be made in sledges. The road was precipitous and the snow deep, and Mother Barat's helpless condition increased the peril. But nothing stopped her when God's work had to be done. At Turin her foot was miraculously cured, and she was able to continue her journey to Rome, where an important work awaited her, the establishment of a Roman noviceship.

She had scarcely arrived at the Trinità, when a great honour was paid to her. Pope Gregory XVI., hearing of her arrival, and that an accident prevented

her from leaving the house, visited her even in her own room, and gave her a most paternal blessing. She tried to kneel, but the Pope raised her up, and made her sit by his side, saying, with great emphasis : "I have greatly at heart the prosperity of so useful, edifying and well-governed an Institute."

There had been a time, as she herself said, when the classical memories of Rome and its treasures of art would have moved her soul to its depths ; but now, when the interests of the Church, of the Holy See and of souls absorbed her heart, the sacred shrines of Rome and its sanctuaries were all she cared to visit. The noviceship was established at the convent of Santa Rufina in the Trastevere, and Mother Desmarquest was installed as its Novice

Mistress. The Roman novices, like those of Montet, counted at this time amongst their number a future Superior General, Adèle Lehon, who governed the Society of the Sacred Heart for twenty years, until her holy death at Easter, 1894.

Passing through Lyons on her way to Rome in 1832, Mother Barat instituted the Congregation of the Children of Mary, and the work of Retreats for ladies living in the world.

In 1836 she was again in Rome, and at this time the noviceship was removed from Santa Rufina to the Villa Lante. In dealing with those who sought admission into the Society, Mother Barat always united in a remarkable manner cordiality and discretion. Her feeling about vocations was most reverential; what is so

especially the work of God was not, she thought, to be approached in any other spirit. Nothing could exceed the reserve with which she acted from the fear of interfering with grace, or the care she took to enlighten those who seemed prompted by mistaken motives to embrace religious life. Her heart used to ache for parents who generously gave up to God their dearest treasures, but when for worldly motives a child was refused the liberty of following her vocation, Mother Barat was known to feel and to speak with strong indignation.

Her "white flock," as she called her novices, engrossed a large share of her time and thoughts, and their spiritual education was one of her great preoccupations, and as they gathered around her,

whether in Rome or Paris, at Montet or later on at Conflans, she strove to inspire them with her own great love for the Sacred Heart, and for those great religious virtues by which even weak women become apostles. It was her constant endeavour to make them estimate at its full value the grace of their vocation. "Ah!" she said once, "if we only well understood, and kept always in view the grace of vocation what should we not do to correspond with it? We think we have done something for our Lord because we have left the world and suffer some things for His love, but it is nothing. Let us sacrifice ourselves wholly, and then He will make us the return of a hundredfold for what we have given up."

Another crisis was approaching for the

Society, a time when, but for Mother Barat's wonderful power of conciliation, unshaken confidence in God, and complete self-abnegation, its union, and therefore its well-being, if not its existence, would have been compromised. Some members of the Society, wishing to make it more closely resemble the Society of Jesus, were anxious to remodel the Rule, and make it as nearly as possible like that of St. Ignatius. Another proposed change was to fix the residence of the Superior General in Rome. At a general Congregation, held in Rome in 1839, Decrees were framed, of which some of the most important were to fix upon Rome as the residence of the Superior General, and to divide the Society into Provinces, to be under the government of Mothers Pro-

vincial. With regard to many of the Decrees there were no dissentient voices, but the one relative to the Superior General's residence in Rome raised much opposition. Mother Barat had endeavoured to enlighten the Council on the dangers of these alterations, but she yielded to the opinions of the majority, and the Decrees were made known to the religious by a circular letter from the Mother General. They were received with general regret and alarm, which was shared by friends of the Institute. Besides the fourteen houses in other countries there were at this time in France twenty-seven convents of the Sacred Heart, and the Bishops of the dioceses in which these convents were situated, with Mgr. de Quélen, Archbishop

of Paris, at their head, protested against the change; some of them had even addressed a complaint to the Pope. The same diversity of opinion reigned in Rome, and Mother Barat's appeals to the Holy Father for a decision remained unanswered.

Under these circumstances it was resolved to give the Decrees a trial for three years. Mother Barat informed the Society of this, and did all she could to facilitate the acceptance of the Decrees, giving on this occasion wonderful proofs of what can be effected by humility, prudence and gentleness. She never had an obstinate adherence to her own opinion. "You may differ from us in opinion," she wrote to Mother de Gramont, Superior of the house in Paris, whence the greatest

opposition proceeded, "but your duty and your heart will raise you above these dissensions." And to others she said : "I rely on Mother de Gramont as on myself." To Mother Grosier, who feared to wound their long-tried friendship, she said : "Say everything you like to me, good, bad or indifferent. I shall never doubt your love for your Mother and the Society." Throughout this affair she was ever ready to take the blame upon herself of what had been done against her own opinion. No one could persuade her to put down opposition with a high hand. Union of hearts remained intact throughout this trial, and even the opposition on the part of the nuns arose from the filial affection which feared to lose her.

Mother Barat passed the winter of 1839

and the spring of 1840 in Rome, but the following year she spent some months in France. After her return to Rome at the end of 1840, when in doubt as to her future residence, she was enlightened by Gregory XVI., who said that her habitual abode should be in France. A General Congregation was summoned to meet at Lyons in 1842, but affairs had become even more complicated at that time, and the meeting was indefinitely postponed. The Government, privately informed of the changes proposed by the Decrees, gave notice that the removal of the Superior General to Rome was contrary to the Statutes approved of by the State in 1827, and threatened the penalties of the law if the original Constitutions were not enforced. In answer to an appeal of

Mgr. Affre, who had succeeded to the Archiepiscopal See of Paris, the Holy Father had the Decrees examined by a commission of Cardinals, who were unanimous in condemning them, and desired that the Society of the Sacred Heart should be governed as before. The decision was confirmed by the Holy Father, and was received everywhere as final.

A trial such as this is never wanting in the history of great enterprises and of those who carry them through. Mother Barat met it, and all the sorrows that came with it, with the serene fortitude which was the result of her great sanctity and unshaken trust in God. Opposition and contradiction such as she now encountered must have overcome her and proved

fatal to the Society had she met them with mere human energy and determination. But she was in truth nothing in her own eyes, and God was all ; for the four years that this trial lasted, her intense hold of this truth enabled her to be in His hands the means, not only of keeping the Society in existence, but of strengthening and perfecting it. It was owing to her prudence at this crisis that she did not lose a single house or a single subject.

In 1842 the first foundation in England was made, and in 1844 Mother Barat visited her English community, established at that time in Berrymead Priory at Acton near London. As soon as the children saw her she completely won their hearts. As eagerly as in any of the French houses they crowded round her in the garden,

listening to all her words, and anxious to receive her blessing.

Several years of tranquillity followed for France, but it was only a calm before the revolutionary outbreak of 1848. The first effect of the storm was the loss of the house of Montet, as all religious Orders were expelled from Switzerland. The house at Turin had to be abandoned, and soon afterwards all the other houses of the north of Italy. When the news of the closing of these five houses reached Mother Barat she did not for one instant lose her self-possession, though the work of twenty years was swept away. After calmly reading the letters, she said : "God's will, not ours, be done," and she received the members of her dispersed communities with a calm strength and

motherly kindness that touched them to the heart.

In June came the outbreak in Paris, during which Mgr. Affre fell a martyr to his self-devotion, and with his last breath sent assurances of esteem and affection to the Society of the Sacred Heart.

One evening during the insurrection Mother Barat was told that the court of the Hôtel Biron was filled by a band of insurgents, who had brought thither a wounded man upon a litter. She lost no time in providing all that was necessary, sent for doctors, gave him up a room and a bed, and while the bullets were falling in the garden, and even striking the closed shutters of the room, she dressed his wound and prayed earnestly the while that the poor fellow might not die before

the priest could come. He recovered, went to his duties, and from that time never spoke of Mother Barat but as "My Mother General."

The end of 1848 and the early part of the next year Mother Barat spent in visiting various houses of the Society in France; but in the interval between these visits her favourite abode was at the venerable Abbey of Marmoutier, near Tours, which had become the property of the Society in the previous year. She was growing old, but old age could never diminish her extraordinary energy and courage. Each year, as it took from her the friends of a long lifetime, united her heart only more closely to that one Friend who never fails those who love Him as she did. In January, 1850, Father Varin

paid his last visit to the novices at Conflans, and his farewell to them was his favourite lesson, "Courage and Confidence." He died in April of that year.

In the autumn of 1850 Mother Barat for the last time visited Rome and knelt at the feet of the Vicar of Christ. It was during this visit that important additions were made to the Constitutions, promulgated by the Seventh General Congregation held at Lyons in the following year. The Society was divided into vicariates, under the charge of a Mother Vicar, who, besides the special charge of one house of which she is local Superior, has the supervision of the other houses comprised in her vicariate. The sixty-five houses which the Society possessed were divided into ten vicariates, eight in Europe and

two in America.* This and the other arrangements made at this time seemed to Mother Barat to complete her work, and she implored to be relieved from the charge of Superior General. The Mothers assembled were deaf to her supplications, but she still hoped that the responsibility would be removed from her before her death. This was not to be, however, but for the last two years of her life the appointment of a Vicar General relieved her from the burden of some of the ever-increasing work of her office.

She continued still for many years to visit the houses in France, though longer journeys at her advanced age were beyond her strength. From the time the Mother

* The number of houses of the Society of the Sacred Heart is now (1908) one hundred and forty-one,

House in the Boulevard des Invalides was built (1858) she lived there, devoting herself to the government of the Society, to the spiritual advancement of her many daughters, and to prayer, the occupation she had always loved above all others. It was by meditating on the mysteries and truths of religion that her faith had always been so lively, her confidence so unshaken, and her love so ardent. Supernatural favours were not wanting to her, but these were rarely manifested by their effects. Mother Barat's humility kept them concealed as much as possible. What was always manifest was her habitual union with our Lord. She saw Him in all his creatures, especially in His poor and little ones and in the suffering members of His mystical Body. She

loved Him in them and them in Him. Everything in nature raised her heart to God, and as she travelled she was always exciting her companions to praise the great Creator of the world. Everything to her, as to St. Francis of Assisi, was a step of the ladder whereby she ascended to the Supreme Perfection, and like him she looked upon each creature as a drop of the ocean of the Divine goodness. The Tabernacle was her refuge and her home, her heaven upon earth. In the morning, when the Sister went to open the door of the chapel before five o'clock, she generally found the Mother General in prayer before it, longing for the moment of entrance into our Lord's presence. For two or three hours she usually remained before the altar in humble adoration.

Sometimes in the course of the day she was seized with a sudden thirst for the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. "It is so long since I have seen our Lord," she would exclaim, and her face would express even more than her words. Then she would leave her work and almost run to the chapel.

Her thirst for the salvation of souls seemed to increase as her end approached. "The night is close at hand," she said in one of her letters, "the night, when we can no longer work, or merit, or save souls. This would be my deep regret, if regret were possible, when the Master comes and calls for me." She had said before that it was paradise on earth to make the Sacred Heart known and loved, and to wear oneself out for its glory, and

her constant teaching was complete forgetfulness of self for this end. "A religious of the Sacred Heart," she would say, "would be not only unworthy of her vocation, but incapable of acting up to it, if the fire of zeal for God's glory were not always burning in her soul."

Mother Barat's last days were saddened by the events in Italy, and the triumph of the Revolution led to the loss of several houses of the Sacred Heart. At that time her thoughts and her heart were in Rome, where the heroic and saintly Pius IX. was suffering at the hands of his enemies. In 1861 she wrote : "In the midst of our sorrows we are happy at following the bark of Peter and sharing the anguish of his Vicar. Let us try by our fidelity, by renewed fervour, to come forth like him

from the storm, purified by what we have suffered and enriched with merit."

The time for the convocation of another General Congregation was come, and feeling her strength declining rapidly, Mother Barat was anxious not to delay the meeting. She wished to see the Mothers for the last time, and give them her last instructions for continuing her work. When the Congregation met, in June, 1864, she presided at all its meetings, breathing into it her spirit, whilst at the same time with delicate tact she partially withdrew from active participation, as though to accustom those who were to succeed her to her absence. She again urged the Mothers to accept her resignation, but it was again refused. For another year, with the help of Mother

Joséphine Gœtz, whom she had named Vicar General, she continued to govern the Society of the Sacred Heart with that wonderful sweetness and prudence which had made it what it was, and which lives on in her successors. Every day detached her more completely from everything on earth, even from what was dearest to her, and made her more ready for Heaven. On the 23rd of March she wrote to her nephew : "Do not forget me at your daily Mass ; I am nearing the end, I am very old, and my failing strength shows me death is not far off. Help me to obtain mercy of our Lord ; I shall have great need of it." A few days later she wrote : "What a happiness when the end comes to have fought for Jesus Christ, to have loved and imitated our meek and

64 *Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat*

humble Lord ; this life seems but a short dream, compared to eternity !”

On the 9th of May 1865, she received under the cedar tree in the garden a little group of the youngest children in the school. She gave them presents of fruit, spoke loving motherly words to them, and when the time came to part gave them her blessing—the last blessing she was to give to children to whom her life had been devoted.

On the 21st, the Sunday before Ascension Day, on entering the room where her daughters were assembled for recreation, her first words were, “I was most anxious to see you to-day, for on Thursday we are going to Heaven.” The words were taken as an allusion to the spirit in which the feast was to be kept, but they were

literally fulfilled. The following morning she was attacked with congestion of the brain, and speech and movement were henceforth impossible. She was still conscious, however, and in this state received the last rites of Holy Church. She died without agony an hour before midnight on the Feast of the Ascension, and was buried at Conflans in a crypt. Twenty-eight years later the canonical exhumation of her remains took place and the body was found incorrupt. The Cause of Beatification was introduced in 1879 and completed in 1908.

No papers were found after her death which could reveal the secrets of her own soul. All had been most carefully destroyed. When Mother Gætz opened the little box where Mother Barat kept her

private notes, it was empty, except for a document which had evidently been left intentionally, to be read when she was gone. It was dated April, 1863, and was drawn up as though to form her last will and testament. It was intended for the Mothers forming the Council of the Society, but some parts of it were read to all. The *compte rendu* is full of the deepest self-contempt, and totally ignores her own great spiritual and administrative gifts.

“I have full confidence,” she wrote, “that those who come after me, as well as all the members of this dear family of the Sacred Heart, will profit by my avowals, will repair the shortcomings which I deplore, and will redouble their zeal in strengthening true religious spirit, especially in what concerns humility, our

Lord's darling virtue, poverty, its twin sister, and lastly obedience, the bond and guardian of all others, which, if they reign, will assure the prosperity and the very existence of the Society.

“I ought to ask for prayers. I expect them from your charity. I venture above all to rely upon the intention which I read in your souls to maintain fidelity to our Holy Rules at the cost of any sacrifice, to do your utmost to spread the knowledge and love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and lastly to become, wherever we may be, ‘the good odour of Jesus Christ,’ whose name, in spite of our unworthiness, we bear. Thus will you make good the many faults and negligences of your first Mother, for which again she begs your pardon.

“I thank you for the care you have so long bestowed upon me, and if God in His mercy soon calls me to Himself, I shall pray fervently that He may reward you for everything. I beseech Him to bless you all, and to engrave deeply in your souls the will and constant longing to immolate yourselves to your last breath to the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and, for His sake, to the salvation of souls, according to the end of your vocation.”

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II

CHARACTERISTICS OF BLESSED MADELEINE SOPHIE BARAT

The Mixed Life.—The mixed life to which Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat was called reproduces in a most perfect way the life of our Blessed Lord on earth, in it the contemplative element is the soul of the active and the tendency towards union with God is uninterrupted. Union with God is in fact the end of this life, active works are its result, prayer and work the expression of the love that animates it. The words in the Collect of the Mass for the Feast of the Sacred

Heart beseeching "that we may be clothed with the virtues and fired with the charity of the Heart of our Lord" were realised in a very perfect degree by the Foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart. She was unconsciously drawing the picture of her own life when she told her religious that at all times they should seek the glory of the Heart of Jesus in labouring for the sanctification of souls. This was to be done in laying the foundations of virtue in the hearts of children or teaching the poor how to sanctify their lowly condition or making the way to Heaven clearer to all with whom they came in contact or strengthening one another in the love of Christ in their community life, deriving from their hours of prayer and constant intercourse with God interior

spirit, charity and zeal. The Heart of Jesus was to Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat an open book in which she learnt the spirit and the practice of its chosen virtues.

Preparation for a life uniting action and contemplation.—God's greatest works are usually accomplished in a silent, hidden manner ; the early training of Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat was in accordance with this rule. Her home was an artizan's dwelling and she made early acquaintance with strenuous labour. She loved to work in her father's vineyard especially during the vintage season ; for household duties she ever evinced a special attraction and later on severe mental work was imposed by her brother Louis, who allowed her little relaxation though the bright joyous

child would have preferred a larger share in the games and ordinary pursuits of her companions. Sophie's was in some ways a solitary soul ; although in her intercourse with others she was ever gracious and loving, her thoughts soared higher than those of their companions. In the vineyard or by the banks of the slow winding Yonne, we read that the bright landscape often led her to speak of the love of the Creator, of truth and of beauty, recognizing in nature the image of God's goodness. The stories of Homeric heroes and heroines drew from her high thoughts of another kind, "there at least" she said in after years, "there is breathing room, the mind expands and the heart feels that it lives indeed." The Greek love for the beautiful, heroic tales like those of

Leonidas showing “how victories were won by a handful of men through the power that personal bravery and spirit possess over mere numbers” appealed strongly to her.

Among the lives of the saints, those of St. Teresa and of St. Francis Xavier filled her with an ardent desire on the one hand to seek God in the silence of the cloister, on the other, to satisfy her zeal in actual contact with souls. A small model of a Carmelite cell and a doll dressed in the habit of Carmel found in the attic where she studied and prayed as a child bore witness to her yearning towards a contemplative life. Her soul was prepared for prayer from her earliest years by singular purity of heart. No liberty could be taken with Sophie, no

questionable jokes made in her presence, and her fear of offending God in the slightest degree made her avoid all girlish vanity. She always sought to purify her heart before Holy Communion, trembling at her own unfitness, yielding only to the law of obedience in the frequency with which she received it.

The discipline of mind and earnestness of character which Sophie derived from her brother's training did not crush out her high ideals. "You will never be a great saint, Sophie," the stern director once said, but she quietly repeated to herself "at least I will take my revenge by being very humble."

"Out of the strong came forth sweetness." Sophie's serenity was not stoicism. "If pagans could make sacrifices

for the sake of their own glory, can I not bear crosses for the sake of the God of Heaven whom I serve." was her own explanation of the unfailing sweetness at which others marvelled. A motto she was fond of quoting in after years was "to suffer myself and not to make others suffer," and even during her girlhood she possessed the secret of giving joy to all those about her. When the Reign of Terror was at its height and Louis was in prison, Sophie kept up her mother's hopes and first practised devotion to the Sacred Heart, praying for her absent brother before the picture of the Sacred Heart which he had sent. By her letters she gave fresh courage to her sister Madame Dusaussay, at a time when the latter was undergoing severe trials : "I wish," she

says, "that I could share your burden, but you will find strength if you do not allow yourself to be weighed down by gloomy thoughts—make the best of your present position, it affords you the opportunity of giving a little more to God."

Love was already the key-note of Sophie's apostleship; one day Louis came into her room and stood for a few minutes watching a pet lamb which lay motionless at her feet: "Look Sophie, at your lamb and see what it is doing. It is loving," was his comment, and Sophie's life was to be one long act of love.

God made use of Father Varin as His instrument in the further development of Sophie's spiritual life, he led her to

the knowledge of devotion to the Sacred Heart, fostered in her a spirit of dauntless courage and trust and made clear to her the nature of God's call. When she spoke of her attraction towards Carmelite life—"No," he replied, "that is not your vocation. The gifts God has bestowed on you and the education you have received point in another direction, they must not be buried in a cloister," and he unfolded to her Father de Tournély's plan of a society of religious women consecrated to the glory of the Sacred Heart and promoting this glory by the education of children.

From the time that the lumbering old coach deposited Sophie in her print frock and peasant's cap on one of the squares of Paris to the time when she became

Superior of the first house of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Amiens, her life may be described as a quiet waiting for God's designs to unfold, in an atmosphere of prayer, poverty and hard work. Those who were her first associates left one by one, Sophie persevered in her vocation. "I have not to consider where I am or with whom, whether the kind of life I am leading is suited to my taste or not. I think I am doing God's will and that is enough. I will stay and do all I can," was her decision.

We read in the annals of the early days at Amiens of hard work all day in the school, of scanty fare, the leavings from the children's table furnishing the repast of the community, of long hours of prayer, of late vigils spent sewing round

a solitary candle to earn the money needed to support the house, of the "union of mind and heart" which was the source of strength and sweetness to the first religious of the Sacred Heart and the key-stone of the future Society.

The contemplative side of Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat's life.—Bl. Madeleine Sophie Barat showed throughout her life that her constant desire was to be hidden with God. During her girlhood she wished to be a Carmelite lay-sister, and, throughout her religious life, she looked upon the lowly functions of the lay-sisters, so closely resembling those of Jesus and Mary at Nazareth, with a holy envy. During one of her journeys to Italy, she made the acquaintance of some Poor Clares who lived in a convent so remote

from the world that they knew nothing of the Napoleonic wars, which were then going on, and where they enjoyed the fulness of the spiritual life in a state of absolute poverty and seclusion. "Had I been able to stay at the *Giglio* (the name of their convent) I should never have been able to tear myself away, that is why God did not allow it," said Mother Barat to the Abbess.

The house of the Sacred Heart at Poitiers was particularly dear to her, it was the first novitiate, and a special atmosphere of recollection and silence seemed to pervade the old monastic cloisters and the hidden nooks in the garden. Often she would be found under a walnut tree at the bottom of the garden and her burning words when she joined the novices

at recreation showed that she had been drawn very near to God and had received understanding concerning many of His secrets. The value of a hidden life was one of the truths she was wont to explain ; she wrote once as follows: "when the Holy Spirit finds a soul that is docile, stripped of self, content to suffer and to have no private interest, then He transforms it according to the words of the Apostle, it becomes hidden in God with Christ Jesus, buried in His death so as to rise with Him again." In a letter to Mother Adrienne Michel she said : "Let us place ourselves in this Divine centre, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, let us look at ourselves only in Him. What a happy lot is that of the soul that lives hidden in God." Again commenting one day to her daughters on

the lives of Martha and Mary she spoke of the necessity of uniting the activity of Martha to the contemplation of Mary "but," she added, "the latter element must predominate," and, speaking of prayer, "I beg our Divine Master to give you an attraction for prayer, a taste for that prayer of the heart which is paradise on earth when it is joined with fidelity."

Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat's intercourse with God was constant, on the busiest days she never failed to secure long hours of prayer, six or seven habitually; often when she was in the chapel, she became completely absorbed in God and her countenance glowed with a heavenly radiance. Once, when she had been ill, the Sister infirmarian came to fetch her away from the chapel, asking her whether

she had finished her prayers, "You know Sister," she answered, "that I have never finished." She never lost an opportunity of prayer, her long sleepless nights were spent in this holy exercise; once when she was recovering from a long illness and had fallen asleep towards morning, someone accidentally woke her, but she checked all apologies, thanking her for having thus given an opportunity of making an act of the love of God earlier than she would otherwise have done. During the long months of helplessness that followed the time when she severely injured her ankle she was carried about in a kind of basket chair and God no doubt allowed that she should often be forgotten, sometimes she was found after a long interval perfectly serene, rejoicing

in this opportunity for longer prayer. Prayer was the secret of her strength, that strength which triumphed over all the efforts made to destroy the Society of the Sacred Heart from its earliest years.

When in 1811 an attempt was made to set aside the Constitutions and change both the spirit and name of the Institute, she went from one house of the Society to another during four long years, keeping up devotion to the Sacred Heart in all hearts, praying and waiting for God's time with unalterable patience. Those whom she gathered round her felt when they left her presence as though overshadowed by the spirit of our Lord and filled with the charity, zeal and holy energy with which she had inspired them.

During this time of tribulation, she sought in prayer the spirit of those Constitutions which, together with Father Varin, she was drawing up for the Society. She spent some time at the Château of Chevroz where Father Varin was living with his sister; one of the family, then a boy of twelve, speaks thus of her stay among them. "Mother Barat spent hours and hours in the church. One evening she was not to be found and I was sent with a lantern to look for her. I saw no one in the church at first, so I went with my lantern from bench to bench and at last espied something black in one of them. It was Mother Barat, lost in prayer. I had to call her several times before I aroused her attention, 'yes, my child,' she answered

gently, rising up and emerging from her corner, 'I am coming, I will follow you,' and she followed the light of my lantern. Pondering over this afterwards I came to the conclusion that these long hours before the Blessed Sacrament in such close union with the Sacred Heart were spent in asking for and receiving light to frame or mature the Constitutions of her Institute."

Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat's spirit of prayer and unflinching trust enabled her to tide over the crisis of 1839 when a desire to adhere more closely to the rules of St. Ignatius threatened to alter the first spirit of the Society of the Sacred Heart. She met with opposition even from those in whom she had ever placed entire confidence yet

according to the testimony of her most determined opponents, "she was a true religious of the meek and humble Heart of Jesus, she did not open her mouth to excuse herself." She wrote to Mother d'Avenas at this time, "you must not say, 'so and so has done this.' It is the unfaithfulness of us all that brought these evils upon us. How can we repair them now? God alone knows, we must pray. When the night is darkest dawn is nearest." At length Rome decided that the Society was to be governed in accordance with the Rules approved by Leo XII. In the letter announcing this Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat said, "soon we shall be thanking our Lord for the trials we have passed through, we shall recognize that the Cross is always

the tree of life and that all good things come to us with it."

It was Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat's constant union with God which enabled her to bear up even to extreme old age through trials which were humanly speaking beyond her strength. For months together, year after year, sickness did not allow her to leave her room and her physical weakness was often so great that she could hardly hold a pen. Trials of every kind crowded in thickly upon her, persecution and troubles from within and from without; every foundation was marked in an especial manner with the seal of the Cross, all her first companions died before her yet none of these trials had power to ruffle even for an instant the deep peace of her soul. She

experienced the truth of the words which she had herself penned to one of her daughters, "speak little, pray much, always go onward, letting things pass by, holding only to what is eternal and seeking in all things the greater glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which will be to you at death what it has been to you during this fleeting life."

Mother Barat's recourse to prayer was continual; often she would wait a few minutes before giving an answer, then speak as if the message came straight from God. She said once in a letter to a religious that she wished for no congratulations on her feast day either from the nuns or from the children. "If they do write to me, let it be to say, 'we have prayed for you on such and such a day.'

That is short and precious—that is all I wish for.” Her own prayer made her truly “all powerful over the Heart of Jesus” and she accepted the prayers of others with the gratitude of a beggar receiving alms. To those who thought that a life of prayer was incompatible with a life of action, she once gave the following explanation. “What then is our interior life? is it a life of continuous prayer like that of contemplative Orders? no it is a mortified life, a life of abnegation, of freedom from all self-preoccupation, the life of one who seeks God everywhere and at all times. What life was busier than that of St. Francis Xavier when he was engaged in the conversion of the East. Do you think that when he was sharing the meals of the Indians and joining in their

games, he was not acting in accordance with interior spirit? St. Paul in the course of his apostolic journeys supported himself by tent-making, and God raised him to the third heaven. Interior life is the bond which binds together all other religious virtues and insures the strength of the spiritual building."

Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat was herself often raised to great heights of prayer. God gave her a wonderful knowledge of His adorable perfections and a profound understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation, yet there was nothing strained in her piety, she seemed as it were to live with the life of the Church and to study above all the love of God in all its manifestations.

In 1845 she visited the holy House of

Loreto on her way to Rome. She received Holy Communion and after her thanksgiving kissed the walls of the shrine saying: "Look at the lintel over that door, how often Jesus, Mary and Joseph must have beheld it, and this small hearth, no doubt that was where our Lady warmed and caressed the dear Holy Child on cold nights before putting Him back into His cradle." Her transports of love kept breaking forth at the sight of everything that had belonged to the Holy Family.

She could not bear people to have hard thoughts about God, she wrote once: "if the world only knew how beautiful Jesus is, and how His Heart is burning with love for us, who could help loving Him! how foolish are those who seek to limit God's mercy."

The sufferings of our Lord's Passion and the mysteries of His life in the Blessed Sacrament were the subject of Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat's constant meditation. In 1852 after a severe fall she was unable to go up and down stairs, the Archbishop of Paris knowing what privations this would entail, allowed the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in an oratory adjoining her room. Mother Barat spoke with delight of her close neighbourhood to the tabernacle and spent all her free moments in the oratory ; one day when she hoped to have a longer time than usual with our Lord the portress came to call her away. Mother Barat opened a tiny crack of the oratory door, as if fearing to yield to temptation, and making a low genuflection kissed her hand

to the altar whispering "I shall not be long my Lord, as soon as my visitors are gone, I will come back to you." Mother Barat kept her crucifix beside her on her bureau and while she was writing she would stop now and then, take it up and kiss it. "When God asks a sacrifice of you," she was wont to say, "kiss your crucifix, you will then be eager to give Him all that you can." The Sacred Heart of Jesus was for her the treasure-house of sanctity, she summed up the characteristics of this devotion in three words : "Adoration, Reparation, Expiation." "Love, that is what is meant by devotion to the Sacred Heart, humility and meekness must be the virtues which distinguish those who in the face of Heaven and earth bear the name of

religious of the Sacred Heart. What heart would not be fired with love beholding the Heart of our Lord and saying to itself, 'that Heart is my portion.'" Mother Barat turned to God all that was most beautiful in earthly love, the holy affections of home, and love for those entrusted to her care.

As a mark of her devotion towards our Lady, Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat consecrated her Society to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as well as to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She looked upon Our Lady of Sorrows as the special protectress of the Society and said that it was the duty of each of its members to make her known and loved. "I have never asked anything of her in vain," she said, "gratitude compels me to proclaim it."

Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat's whole life was the outcome of her prayer ; she distrusted any work that had not been rooted in prayer ; the wisdom and heavenly-mindedness by which her soul was enlightened imparted a supernatural charm to her whole exterior, it filled her with reverence for the things of God, for His representatives, for His priests, for the person of His poor, for the souls of children.

The most trifling incidents recalled God's presence to her, and in the course of conversation her mind turned instinctively towards heavenly things. Once, she saw some flowers thrown away which had scarcely lost their freshness, "God," she said, "worked to create those flowers for you, and you do not even take the

trouble to keep them alive." Another time, she stood for some time silently watching a freshly opened rosebud sparkling in the dew, then turned away quickly exclaiming: "How beautiful it is, yet it is nothing compared to Thee my God!" In 1856 she visited the convent of Riedenburg. Looking out upon the beautiful expanse of lake and mountain scenery which stretched around her, "How beautiful it all is!" she exclaimed, "how can you help becoming contemplative souls living as you do in the midst of such loveliness! It raises the soul to God."

Speaking to some of the young religious who were about to make their profession she made use of the following simile. "See," she explained, "wherever sunflowers are grown, they always turn to the

sun. God is the sun of our life, our minds and hearts must ever be turned towards Him." Such was Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat's own constant practice, in her person was realised the portrait that she herself drew of an interior soul: "One whose faculties are concentrated on her Beloved. God is her life, her treasure, her all."

Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat's Apostleship.—Father Varin in a letter to Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat once wrote, "a soul who is to win others or to train them must not be little or narrow, but great and wide. St. Francis Xavier undertook to convert the world because his soul was greater than the world." This greatness of soul was truly hers, her constant union with God gave her a

keenness for God's interests and a zeal for souls, which never for an instant forsook her. Those who are very near to God are allowed a special understanding of the value of a human soul, "I would willingly have worked in the founding of the Society to save the soul of a single child," Mother Barat would say, yet dear to her as were the souls of the children, she looked upon the sanctification of her religious as her first duty. She knew that the souls of the perfect give most glory to the Heart of Jesus and that in training them, she was training apostles.

The noviceship was the object of her special solicitude, she recognised it as the time during which the foundations of religious life were laid, and she thought that two years spent in prayer and prepara-

tion, apart from the stir of active life, were needed as an apprenticeship. From the journal of the first novitiate at Poitiers we learn Mother Barat's methods of training. "God has great plans for you to carry out," she said to the novices on the eve of the feast of St. Teresa, 1806, "let the thought that you are to be saints take root in your hearts, draw from prayer and recollection the means of working with fruit for the sanctification of souls. There must be no half-measures, now is the time to begin work in real earnest, give yourselves over entirely to the love of our Lord, strive to acquire humility, interior mortification and detachment from creatures."

The studies which the novices began during the second year of their novice-

ship were to be undertaken in the same spirit, "study" Mother Barat would say, "*because* it is God's will, *according* to God's will and for His sake;" and again, "the children whose education will be entrusted to you are God's children, He confides them to us, in order to gain their hearts we must come down to their level without losing anything of our religious dignity or letting go of authority, so as to win their respect and their love. Let us be saints, Sisters, for our vocation is the same as that of the Saints."

An incomplete, imperfect religious was an anomaly in Mother Barat's eyes; she did not refuse to admit persons with great difficulties of character and she followed up the work of spiritual transformation throughout long years, but she said that

cowardly, slothful souls should find no place in the Society, that coldness and selfishness were incompatible with the whole-hearted devotedness required of a religious of the Sacred Heart.

Lack of fortune was never a hindrance to the admission of a postulant, "money, money," Mother Barat would exclaim indignantly, "let there be no question of refusing anyone admission on this account, I have never refused a postulant for want of a dowry and God has always blessed the Society in consequence."

Blessed Madeleine Sophie's direction was strong and practical. She once found a novice sweeping a room carelessly, "you do not know how to set about your work, my child," she said quietly and taking the broom herself she finished the

work with that perfection which marked her most ordinary actions. She was careful to develop in each of her daughters the measure of grace which God had bestowed; at first she showed great indulgence towards their weakness, but as years went on she exacted from them the maturity of true religious. She encouraged souls called like Mother Duchesne or Aloysia Jouve to a very high degree of union with God, to tread in the royal road of the Cross. Mother Duchesne, eager for holy vigils and austerities of every kind, found her self-will opposed at every turn; twelve long years of waiting were to precede her departure for the American missions while Mother Barat playfully reminded her of the story of a Jesuit who having asked for years to be

sent to the missions, was sent at last, baptised an old Indian shortly after he landed on heathen shores and died on the very threshold of apostolic life. "Do not forget our motto," she said to Mother Duchesne, "'Love and endure,' be patient, remember that God's works are wrought silently and slowly."

To Mother Aloysia Jouve, crippled with disease, suffering intense pain from the wounds which allowed her no rest by day or by night she wrote: "My child, make yourself very lowly so that God may guide you, receive passively the blows dealt you by His loving hand, He has placed you on the Cross, how blessed is your lot." And Aloysia for a time added to the burden of sickness that of superiority, suffering with joy till death set the

seal on a life which had truly been that of a "victim wholly consecrated to the glory of the Sacred Heart."

The many letters addressed by Blessed Madeleine Sophie to Mother Adrienne Michel show with what persistency she followed up the workings of God's grace in a soul. "Do not be troubled," she said, "even at your inconstancy in virtue, meet the small disturbances which arise in your soul with a determined will never voluntarily to give in, and with the firmness of a soul resolved to overcome all temptations to sadness and despondency; drive out thoughts of discouragement, seek the glory of God by closer attention to your studies and to your duties with regard to the children."

Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat often

reminded her daughters that the education of youth was the special work for which the Society of the Sacred Heart had been approved by the Sovereign Pontiff. Children whose irritable temperament or difficulties of character made them almost intolerable in school life were often the objects of her special care. She would take them for walks with her in the garden, reward efforts too feeble to deserve any one else's notice and lead them almost imperceptibly to love God and to conquer themselves. The most celebrated of these "children of Mother Barat" as they were called was a girl, probably of gipsy extraction, who was brought by a Russian lady to the school of the Sacred Heart in Paris. The depraved nature of the girl, her untruthfulness, her violent

temper made her the scourge of her benefactresses yet Mother Barat's patience with her never wearied through long years. Again and again, she afforded her the means of making a fresh start in life, her very last letter written only a week before her death ended with the words : " I shall love you more and more if you are faithful." Here was no call to high sanctity but a battle for the salvation of a soul, fought inch by inch, and, thanks to Mother Barat's prayers, Julia who only survived her seven years received the last sacraments and made a good death ; more than two hundred letters written to her by Mother Barat's own hand have been preserved.

When the children were ill, Mother Barat would sit by their bedside, tell them

fairly stories, bring them dainties and leave them cheered and brightened. The last Sunday before her death she gathered round her the children of the junior school under a large spreading cedar in the garden of the Mother House. She spoke to them of the malice of sin "which wounds the Heart of our Lord, and keeps us from being with God after our death" and of the happiness of Heaven where she hoped to meet them all. Her heart may truly be said to have gone out to all those with whom she came in contact. She loved the poor and took the most motherly interest in their wants. When she had given a shawl or some other article of clothing for a poor woman, she would ask whether she had liked it, whether it was just what she wanted.

Once on a very busy day she came downstairs to see a poor man who in his gratitude called to show the Mother General a pair of hob-nailed boots which she had enabled him to buy, and she turned them over with evident satisfaction.

A portress one day rather grudgingly mentioned the request of a poor man who asked for some snuff, she added that it would be better to give him some bread as that was a real necessity. "Why should he not have some snuff if he feels he would be the better for it?" was the quick rejoinder, and after this Mother Barat made provision for him to have a weekly allowance of snuff.

Her tender charity was also shown towards those who came to work in the

house ; one day that she was too tired to see a rich benefactress she went to say a few words to the washerwomen, as she had promised them a visit. Seeing a gardener asleep in the sun, Mother Barat passing by covered his face with a handkerchief, "Ah! Mother General, Mother General!" he exclaimed as soon as he awoke. Thus to each and all the charity of Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat was extended, her apostleship was truly modelled on that of our Lord, drawing all men by the cords of love.

III

SAYINGS OF

BLESSED MADELEINE SOPHIE BARAT

Personal intercourse with God.

THE mystery to me is how, looking on the Crib and the Cross, a religious can ever cling to the pettiness of self-love. Our God, Eternal Wisdom, the Word of the Father is reduced to silence, or utters only inarticulate cries, and lives in subjection to two of His own creatures, very perfect creatures no doubt, but still only creatures. And after this, can we not submit to Him in the person of our superiors?

The Holy Ghost requires minute fidelity from a soul that is wholly given up to His guidance ; in this happy state we may say : “ my life is hid with Christ in God.” Such a one does nothing out of the common, but as the exterior and interior senses are mortified, and the powers of the soul under control, every action, whether great or small, is referred to God as its centre.

A strong determination of the will is necessary in order that we may be closely united to God. We must give ourselves generously to His service, our dependence on grace must be perfect and absolute. If our one desire is to be solely and precisely what God wants us to be, we must take leave of self and of all

self-interest and abandon ourselves entirely into the hands of God. Once this gift of self is made God's work can begin and for us faithful correspondence to His grace is all that remains, we need take no further initiative.

The Crucifix is a sure means of comfort in affliction; all the saints have had recourse to it. If we rightly understood all of which it puts us in remembrance we should rejoice in our sufferings. In moments of temptation or desolation, the thought of the Agony in the Garden would be our comfort and strength. If we receive correction that we have not deserved, a look at our Lord standing in silence before His judges would check excuses and complaints. When we feel

a repugnance for those corporal austerities which are either prescribed or allowed to us, the sight of our Lord scourged and outraged will rouse us and put us to shame. We are afraid of death, and in a measure rightly so, we have done so little for God, yet how much the thought that God died for us on the Cross speaks to us of absolute detachment; the Son of God was abandoned by all even by His Heavenly Father.

The greater our love, the nearer we are drawn to our Lord, there is in fact no true suffering for a soul whose love is strong; it is in the half-heartedness of a hesitating, shrinking disposition that suffering consists. To be sanctified in truth is to be sanctified by the Cross, to

love suffering and humiliation as our Blessed Lord loved them, any other type of sanctity is unreal.

Love our Lord deeply, love to imitate His spirit of sacrifice; can you wish for nothing but roses when you contemplate His Heart encircled with thorns? When He truly loves a soul, He keeps for it a place at the foot of the Cross as He did for His Blessed Mother, for St. Mary Magdalen and for St. John—at the foot of the Cross, because it is through the Cross that God is glorified, the Cross is the seal of love.

Charity.

Greatness and breadth of love is a gift from God. When we realize that our heart has been given to us that we may

love the Sovereign Good we understand its longing to attach itself to the only object which can satisfy its desires, according to the expression of St. Teresa, we gasp like fish out of water until our soul is absorbed in this ocean of goodness.

Things both new and old concerning you ever arouse in me the same interest, our affections do not wear out like the things of this world because they rest on the Heart of our Lord and that foundation stone can never crumble away.

If we understood the charity of Jesus Christ we should bear with one another's faults and failings not only with patience but with joy. We shall be truly charitable if we learn from the meek and humble Heart of Jesus its chosen virtues.

Whence come faults against charity?
From pride, from over-sensitiveness, from
self-love ever grasping and exacting.

This morning when I was reading the Gospel of the day, I pictured to myself St. Mary Magdalen pouring her fragrant ointment on the feet of her dear Master while He praised her, saying: "the poor you have always with you, Me you have not always." It seemed to me that you who love our Lord so much (my desire that it should be so makes me speak as if it had already come to pass) should have two marked forms of devotion—to the person of our Blessed Lord and to His poor.

Humility.

Are not all things possible with the God who has created and redeemed us?

118 *Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat*

The short cut to the destruction of our evil inclinations, the high-road to every virtue is true humility.

Look at our Blessed Lord's humility, it is revealed throughout His life ; in His choice of family, it belonged to the working-class ; in the call of His Apostles, they were poor fishermen. The mysteries of His life are mysteries of humility ; the Incarnation, the lowliness of His birth, His hidden life. Throughout His Passion He went to the very depths of annihilation.

A hidden life, a life yielding a full share of humiliation and contempt is very dear to God and those to whose lot it falls are worthy of envy.

Let us learn of the meek and humble Heart of Jesus that sooner or later wherever this Heart has established its dwelling in obscurity and lowliness, it will reveal its presence by signal graces ; the more hidden the sowing has been, the greater will be the harvest. Let us wait for God to work out His designs in His own good time, we are the refuse of the world. If all the souls now on earth had received the graces and training that we have received, crowds of sinners would have become saints ; are we not truly therefore the last and the least.

Be faithful to prayer and you will find that humility will not be difficult to acquire, your study of our Lord will teach you to esteem and love this virtue which

was so dear to Him. Jesus Christ will never recognize as His own a proud and cowardly soul. Pride is a matter in which we must conquer or die. Great disasters follow on pride, much harm is done, and, for such a trifle ! It blinds souls until the example of our Blessed Lord no longer appeals to them and they can only think of self.

Nature is full of parables. Is not everything that is most precious found in the depths of the earth or of the sea : gold, silver, choice marbles, pearls—and do we not make similar discoveries in a life that is truly hidden with God ?

Seek humility with all your strength, it is the groundwork of the virtues ; count as lost a day without an act of humility.

Love to be unknown, seek the lowest place, rejoice when God allows you to be humbled.

Do not forget that humility is a necessary preparation for Holy Communion while love is the fruit borne by this great Sacrament. Christ has delivered Himself up for me and I must yield myself up to Him, now and for ever.

We are only weak instruments in the hands of our Divine Master, our nothingness cannot produce anything of itself. He alone can carry out His work in souls. To Him alone belongs our tribute of thanks for what He has been pleased to effect by means of us. Like our Blessed Lady and with far greater reason, we can say that God has looked

upon the lowliness of His little handmaids. We ought to be so convinced of this that humility becomes to us a second nature.

Those who see one of ours ought to be able to say : “that is a religious of the Sacred Heart, we know her by her meekness and humility.” We ought to have a special attraction for humility, for we shall never understand the Heart of Jesus unless we ourselves are meek and humble. Every success ought to be founded on this solid basis, let it be the mainspring of all your actions.

The Education of Youth.

To those engaged in teaching. We must strenuously endeavour to implant in our children fear of God and horror of

sin, we must lay stress on motives of faith, on the great truths, on our last end, thoughtlessness is a most dangerous fault of youth, therefore the children's religious sense must be strongly tempered, mere tender piety will not sustain them in after life, they need convictions. We must teach them to put up with small inconveniences, otherwise later on they will neglect the Sacraments if difficulties are thrown in their way.

To a nun entrusted with the care of the younger children. How privileged you are to be entrusted with the care of little ones. It means working underground, developing roots; only God and their Angel Guardians see what is going on in these dear little souls, yet it

is at that age that the City of God is founded on an indestructible basis. I think that a child who is thoroughly well prepared for her First Communion and receives our Lord for the first time with fervour will never lose her soul. Her piety may grow cold but there is no reason to lose confidence, we little know how her conscience may be pricking her. It is not always possible to sow the seed of perfection, but the root of repentance is usually firmly set. Through its means God raises the barrier which keeps back a soul that is rushing headlong to destruction. As we grow older, we become less exacting and are positively haunted by the determination to prevent souls from being cut off from the Heart of Jesus for all eternity.

To Mother d'Avenas. We must be occupied about our children from morning till night and quite forgetful of ourselves. We must enter into everything that concerns their souls and bodies, listen to them with interest, comfort and encourage them, in fact we must sacrifice everything except our own souls ; and to be useful to them we must be gentle, patient, indulgent—true mothers.

To the mistress general of a school. Speak words of comfort and encouragement more often than words of reproof. Those who are closely united to the Heart of Jesus in prayer obtain a share of His spirit and acquire marvellous influence over the most unmanageable characters. You will draw down graces on souls by

helping them to remove any obstacles that stand between them and God, to carry out this work is a real apostleship, much self-denial is needed and a complete forgetfulness of self, any limit which we set to our devotedness hinders God's work.

Written in 1861. Many will fall away but the host of the elect remains. We must prepare them by our teaching and by inculcating devotion to the Sacred Heart. But if the salt lose its savour, if the torch burns dim and the lamp goes out, woe to us! The Bridegroom will come in the night of this world. Let us then work more zealously than ever, first at our own perfection, and that of our Sisters, then for the souls entrusted to us. The hope of the Church is in the young generation.