

the Marist missionaries appealed for assistance to a religious Order, to the Institute of the Incarnate Word in London, an institute which had been originally founded for the foreign missions. Unfortunately, this Order was then in a state of transition. It was about to change its name and to abandon one of its principal works—to give up its primary object, namely, the foreign missions, in order to devote itself entirely to the work of education in England. Hence the Superiors were obliged to refuse the work offered them by the Marist Fathers. But there was one member of that Institute, known in the world as Euphrasie Barbier, and in religion as Sister Mary of the Heart of Jesus, who did not change with the Order. She held the important offices of First Assistant and Novice Mistress, and was thus the soul of the Institute and of its good works; yet she still felt that her vocation to the religious life was primarily that of a religious missionary. The Superioress of the Convent well knew Sister Mary's leanings; and as she appreciated her high qualities she informed the Marist Fathers as to how matters stood, when, on a second occasion they knocked at the door of the Convent and asked for assistance. After mature reflection and fervent prayer, Sister Mary of the Heart of Jesus looked upon the appeal of the Superior General of the Society of Mary as the voice of God, as a direction and as a line of conduct traced for her by Heaven. She consented to undertake the work offered her by the Marist Missionaries; and with the approbation of the Superiors both religious and ecclesiastical, and the permission of the Holy See, accompanied by a novice, Sister Mary St. Wilfrid, she bade farewell to her Sisters in London. Under the protection of the Queen of Heaven, and the guidance of Father Favre (Superior General of the Society of Mary), our two pilgrims reached Lyons on August 15, 1861, that is, just fifty years ago; and laid the foundation of the Institute of Notre Dame des Missions.

Here at the Very Dawn of Your Existence, dear Sisters, it seems to me that, more than at any other period in the history of your Institute the finger of God and the designs of Divine Providence in your regard are clearly manifested. Your Venerated Mother Foundress intended to spend a few days in Lyons and then sail for New Zealand. Divine Providence, however, arranged everything so that she was forced to stay. She did not even become a missionary; but she remained at home to lay the foundations of an Institute which was to give to the Church hundreds of missionaries, who were to carry the blessings of faith and of education to every part of the world, not only to New Zealand, but to the Islands of the South Pacific, to America, to India, and other parts. Was not this a reason for the angels to rejoice on August 15, 1861, as they had rejoiced on the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary?

The beginnings of this Institute were humble and small, as became the followers of the humble Virgin of Nazareth. A house was rented which was approved by the Holy See as a Novitiate House; and on Christmas Day of the same year, his Eminence Cardinal de Bonald, Archbishop of Lyons, delegated the Superior General of the Society of Mary to give the holy habit of the Institute de Notre Dame des Missions to the Venerated Foundress and Sister Mary St. Wilfrid. Rev. Father Yardin assisted at the ceremony, and preached on the occasion. Two young ladies were present, one of whom became a member of the Institute and later on was sent to New Zealand, where for about thirty years she devoted herself to the manifold activities of the Institute, and is known to many of the old friends of Christchurch as Mother Mary St. John. She is still devoting herself to the good works of the Institute in England.

The First Novices

knocked at the door of the Institute in February of the following year; and then another Assumption Day arrived when the angels again rejoiced, for on the 15th August, 1864, four Sisters destined for the first foundation in New Zealand, made their Holy Profession. This foundation was made in Napier; where, a

few months later, the Sisters arrived and had the happiness of being welcomed by Bishop Viard, of Wellington, and a few days later by Rev. Fathers Forest and Reignier. The Novitiate prospered; and in 1867, another foundation, that of Christchurch, was made. The Venerated Foundress pursued her work: she gave to the Order its characteristic spirit, which is the spirit of zeal for God's greater glory, the spirit of humility and modesty, of simplicity and charity, modelled on the interior dispositions of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, and thus uniting the contemplative with the active life. Having formed her daughters on that beautiful model, she sent them to their Spouse's work in every part of the world. She then perfected the Constitutions, which were finally approved by the Holy See, July 6, 1906. But this definite approbation the Venerated Foundress had not the happiness of receiving during her lifetime, as she was called to her Eternal reward in 1893. On the other hand, however, she was spared the cruel pain of witnessing the banishment of her Institute, together with other religious Orders, from her beloved country; and the surrender of her Mother House, her convents, and all her property to the rapacity of the unworthy Government of France.

To-day we have assembled here to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Institute, the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. Fifty years have flown by since your Venerated Foundress commenced its work, and humbly laid the foundations of the Institute. And although fifty years in the life of a religious Order are no more than a year in the life of an individual, is it not worth asking ourselves: 'What has the result been?' 'Have the angels of this day reason to rejoice and bless the Son of God? Has the Institute been true to the ideals of its Venerated Mother Foundress, and to the holy men who were associated with her in that great work? Has it been a centre of piety, truth, and virtue, of religious spirit and intellectual life, a fountain of pure and refreshing waters?' Let the works of the Sisters of Notre Dame des Missions speak. Are they not an eloquent testimony to the marvellous progress made in educational and charitable works? Look at this Institution here in Christchurch, at the different works in Nelson, Napier, and in many other parts of New Zealand. Has not the grain of mustard seed sown in privation and penances, has not the little plant tended with untold care, in the midst of manifold trials and difficulties become a tree which, as your Very Rev. Mother General makes mention of in her jubilee circular, spreads its branches from Europe into Asia, America, Australia, and even to the uttermost bounds of the earth—to New Zealand, which contains one of your most flourishing provinces?

Fifty Years Ago the Institute Consisted of Two Novices,

your Mother Foundress, and Sister Mary St. Wilfrid; to-day it numbers over five hundred Sisters and novices, not including the one hundred and twenty-five who have already gone to their eternal reward. Fifty years ago the Institute dwelt in a small house which the Foundress could not even call her own; to-day, the Order possesses, scattered throughout the world, over fifty convents, most of which are ornaments to the towns in which they have been erected, and all of which are a shelter for the orphans, and a sanctuary of piety and learning for the children entrusted to their care. These pupils and orphans number at present about five thousand; but think of the thousands of others who, during the last fifty years, have received from you a Christian education, have led a life of virtue and innocence, and have exercised a wholesome influence on those with whom they lived. Surely this is sufficient reason for the angels to rejoice to-day! But there is a still greater reason; and that is, the fact that even according to the testimony of your Superioress General herself, the religious spirit is ever progressing in the Order, that after the lapse of fifty years there is no diminution, but rather an increase in the religious fervour of the Institute; and that each one of the Sisters is striving to acquire a more intimate union with God, and a filial and simple obedience to the rule. This is, after all, the secret of their success.